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# MAHATMA GANDHI

An enlarged and *up-to date* Edition of Gandhiji's life and teachings with an account of his activities in South Africa and India, a sketch of the non-co-operation movement, his great march in connection with "Salt Satyagraha", his arrest and internment, the Gandhi Irwin Pact, the Round Table Conference, his differences with Lord Willingdon after his return to India, his conflict with authorities, his correspondence with the Viceroys, his latest activities in connection with Congress politics and of the All-India Congress Committee, his arrest and detention in the Aga Khan Palace, Poona, his correspondence with Lord Linlithgow, his Fast, down to the leaders' demand for his release etc.

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TENTH EDITION

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THIRTY-TWO years ago when the agitation on behalf of Indians in South Africa was at its height, Mr. H. S. L. Polak, a warm friend and admirer of Mr. Gandhi with whom he had worked for the Indian cause in South Africa wrote, at the request of the publishers a sketch of Mr. Gandhi for the benefit of readers in India. The first edition was sold out within a short time and the publishers have already issued as many as nine editions, with additions as occasions demanded. In this the tenth edition, an attempt is made to bring the story of Mahatma Gandhi's life up-to-date. It is a clear and succinct narrative of his remarkable career in South Africa and India, including a sketch of the Non-Co-operation movement, his historic trial and imprisonment, together with a full account of his great march to the salt pans of Surat, his arrest and internment, the Round Table Conference, the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement, the Rupture and the Agreement with Lord Willingdon after his return to India, his conflict with authorities, his correspondence with the Viceroys, his latest activities in connection with Congress politics and of the All-India Congress Committee, his arrest and detention in the Aga Khan Palace, Poona, his correspondence with Lord Linlithgow, and his Fast, down to the leaders' demand for his release.

Apart from its purely biographical interest, the sketch is a rapid review of the social and political history of modern India, as the Mahatma's life and activities are so intimately bound up with almost every phase of the nation's activity during the last three decades.

It is hoped that this critical and comprehensive study of his life and career, coupled with appreciations of the Mahatma by distinguished persons, will be welcomed by the public not only in India but in other countries as well.

*June 1943.*

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# APPRECIATIONS

## RABINDRANATH TAGORE

We who follow Gandhi Maharaja's lead have one thing in common among us,

We never fill our purses with spoils from the poor nor bend our knees to the rich.

When they come bullying to us with raised fist and menacing stick,

We smile to them and say·

Your reddening stare may startle babies out of sleep but how frighten those who refuse to fear?

Our speeches are straight and simple, no diplomatic turns to twist their meaning, confounding penal code they guide with perfect ease the victims to the border of jail.

And when these crowd the path of the prison gate their stains of insult are washed clean, their age-long shackles drop to the dust, and on their forehead are stamped Gandhiji's blessings.—*V. B. Quarterly, March, 1941.*

# WORLD'S TRIBUTE TO GANDHIJI

Gandhi is unique in political history. He has invented an entirely new and humane technique for the liberation struggle of an oppressed people and carried it out with the greatest energy and devotion The moral influence which he has exercised upon thinking people through the civilized world may be far more durable than would appear likely in our present age, with its exaggeration of brute force. . . We are fortunate and should be grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary—a beacon to the generations to come —*Albert Einstein.*

* * * * *

In an age when violence has been given a fresh lease of life, when the only hope of man in the West seems to be in the "collective security" of greater armament than the most determined aggression can produce, when even an Archbishop can only suggest that "*might must* be massed on the side of right" as the first step towards ultimate peace, we have before our eyes—if only we would open them and see—one man, of slender physique, precarious health and no outstanding abilities, who is demonstrating in his own life and in the magic power he exerts among his fellow Indians that the human spirit, when lit by a divine power, is stronger than the mightiest armament.—*Horace G. Alexander.*

His manner and spirit, contrasted markedly with the ruthless and brutal forcefulness which is the vogue in our day. There was no hatred or personal ill-feeling, the spirit of humanity was never absent, and when the fight was over, there was the atmosphere in which a decent peace could be concluded.

He left South Africa to undertake his Herculean task in India and to impress his spirit and personality on the masses of that great country to a degree which has no parallel in recent Indian history. His style of doing things is individual, is his own and as in the case of other great men, does not conform to the usual standards. His outlook has nothing sectional about it, but is distinguished by that universal and eternal humanity which is the hall-mark of true greatness of spirit. Among the greatest men on the public stage of the world to-day are two Asiatics—Gandhi and Chiang Kai-shek, both moving immense masses of men along noble lines to a destiny which in essence is one with the high Christian ideal which the West has received but no longer seriously practises. —*Gen. Smuts* in October 1939.

From a distant country, from a quite alien civilization, with different views from his on many practical questions, out of the careworn and striving movements of thought in Europe, where the human conscience and intellect seem for the moment to stand helpless under the bludgeons of ignorance and brute force, I gladly give this great man the title his disciples claim for him and hail with reverence "Mahatma Gandhi."—*Gilbert Murray.*

Gandhi is not only for India a hero of national history, whose legendary memory will be enshrined in the millennial epoch. He has not only been the spirit of active life which has breathed into the peoples of India the proud consciousness of their unity, of their power, and the will to their independence. He has renewed, for all the peoples of the West, the message of their Christ, forgotten or betrayed. He has inscribed his name among the sages and saints of humanity; and the radiance of his figure has penetrated into all the regions of the earth.

—*Romain Rolland.*

. . . . . His noble spirit and warm human kindness have endeared him to all humanitarians throughout the world.

—*Upton Sinclair.*

He has helped the people of India to find their souls in an age when it is becoming more urgently necessary than ever before that we should find a way of solving vital human problems by methods of peace.—*H. Compton.*

He is a superb judge of other men. His humanity is one of the profoundest things that history has seen.

—*Edward Thompson.*

It is a strange thing that Christians should feel, as many of us do, that the best Christian in the world to-day is a Hindu. The more I see of Gandhiji's work and read of his teaching, the more I feel that this is the case. —*Miss Maude Royden.*

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## JESUS AND GANDHI

When I think of Rollard, I think of Tolstoi. When I think of Lenin, I think of Napoleon. But when I think of Gandhi I think of Jesus Christ.

The parrallel with Jesus constantly presents itself. The Nazarene was a divine personality: he taught the law of Love and laid a programme of Non-Resistance for its fulfilment, he sought to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth by dethroning Mammon in favour of God. So also with Gandhi. —*Rev. J. H. Holmes.*

## THERE IS A RULER OF INDIA HERE

There is a ruler of India here, Mahatma Gandhi, whose sway is greater than all imperial power. His name will be remembered and sung by the village people long after the names of the modern Governors in their palaces at New Delhi are forgotten. When all the buildings of Raisina have crumbled into ruins, such as those around the Kutub Minar and Taghlakabad, the name of Mahatma Gandhi will still be taught by mothers to their little children as one of the greatest of India's saints and saviours.

For there is a spiritual palace which Mahatma Gandhi has built up out of an eternal fabric. Its foundations are deeply and truly laid in the Kingdom of God No oppression of the poor has gone to build it. Love and devotion and service to the poor are its golden decorations. No military pomp reigns within its borders, but only the peaceful harmony of human souls. No race or colour distinctions have any place in it No clash of religious controversy mars its silence. Its empire is the heart.

—*C. F. Andrews*, 21st February 1924

Speaking at Birmingham, Mr. Laurence Housman said that the man who tries to separate politics from religion does not know what religion is. Mr Gandhi's method is the Christian method "The real test of any state is not what it does at its best, but how it behaves at its worst.

*Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is the last article of my creed.*

*Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical force. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—the strength of the spirit.*

*Non violence is a perfect state. It is the goal towards which all mankind moves, naturally though unconsciously.*

*Non-violence is the way to freedom—not the forced non-violence of the slave, but the willing non-violence of the brave and free.*—GANDHIJI.

*We must remove hatred for the British from our hearts. At least in my heart there is no such hatred. As a matter of fact, I am a greater friend of the British now than ever was. . . . It may be that in a moment of anger they might do things which might provoke you. Nevertheless, you should not resort to violence and put non-violence to shame. When such a thing happens you may take it that you will not find me alive, wherever I may be. Their blood will be on your head.*—GANDHIJI.

# MAHATMA GANDHI

## THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

### A SCENE IN JOHANNESBURG

THE scene is laid in Johannesburg. Summer is coming and the days are lengthening out. At Park Station, at 6 o'clock on a Sunday evening, in September, 1908, whilst it was still broad daylight, a small animated group of dark-skinned people might have been observed eagerly looking in the direction from which the mail train from Natal, that stops at Volksrust, was expected. The watchers were Madrassi hawkers, who were apparently awaiting the arrival of one affectionately regarded by them. Punctually to time, the train steamed in and there was observed, descending from a second-class compartment, attended by a prison-warder in uniform, a small, slim, dark, active man with calm eyes and a serene countenance. He was clad in the garb of a South African native convict—small military cap, that did not protect him from the sun, loose, coarse jacket, bearing a numbered ticket and marked with the broad arrow, short trousers, one leg dark, the other light, similarly marked, thick grey woollen socks and leather sandals. But it was plain that he was not a South African native, and upon closer

scrutiny, one became aware that he, too, was an Indian, like those who respectfully saluted him, as he turned quietly to the warder for instructions. He was carrying a white canvas bag, which held his clothing and other effects found upon him when he was received by the gaol authorities, and also a small basket containing books. He had been sent by the Government to travel nearly two hundred miles, for many hours, without food or the means of procuring it, as the warder had no funds for that purpose, and but for the charity of a European friend—a Government official—he would have had to starve for twenty-four hours. A brief consultation ensued between the prisoner and the warder. The latter appeared to realise the incongruity of the situation, for he bore himself towards the prisoner with every reasonable mark of respect. The latter was evidently a person of some importance, to whom a considerable amount of deference should be shown. The subject of conversation was whether the prisoner preferred to go by cab or to walk to the gaol. If the former, he (the prisoner) would have to pay for it. He, however, declined the easier method of locomotion, choosing to walk three-quarters of a mile in broad daylight, in his convict suit to the gaol and resolutely shouldering his bag, he briskly stepped out, the Madrassi hawkers shamefacedly following at some distance. Later, he disappeared within the grim portals of the Johannesburg gaol, above which is carved, in Dutch, the motto, "Union makes strength".

Five years have passed. On the dusty, undulating road from Standerton to Greylingstad, for a distance of three miles, is seen a long, trailing "army" of men who, on closer inspection, are recognisable as Indians of the labouring classes, to the number of some two thousand. Upon questioning them, it would be found that they had been gathered from the coal mines of Northern Natal, where they had been working under indenture, or as "free" men, liable to the £3 annual tax upon the freedom of themselves, their wives, their sons of 16 years and their daughters of thirteen. They had marched from Newcastle to Charlestown whence they had crossed the border into the Transvaal, at Volksrust. They were now marching stolidly and patiently on until they reached Tolstoy Farm, near, Johannesburg, or they were arrested, as prohibited immigrants, by the Government. Thus they had marched for several days on a handful of rice, bread and sugar a day, carrying with them all their few worldly belongings, hopeful that, at the end the burden of the hated £3 tax would be removed from their shoulders. They appeared to place implicit trust in a small, limping, bent, but dogged man, coarsely dressed and using a staff painfully marching at the head of the straggling column, but with a serene and peaceful countenance, and a look of sureness and confidence. A nearer inspection of this strange figure discloses the same individual that we have already seen entering the forbidding portals of the "Fort", at Johannesburg. But

how much older looking and care-worn? He has taken a vow to eat only one poor meal a day, until the iniquitous tax upon the honour and chastity of his brothers and sisters shall have been repealed. Upon him, as the foremost protagonist of the movement, has fallen the main burden and responsibility of organising one of the greatest and noblest protests against tyranny that the world has ever seen during the preceding seven years. Time has left its mark upon him!

FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO INDIA

Nine more years have passed. Bent down by the weight of years, but resolute of heart, that same figure is yet the cynosure of all eyes. The scene is laid now in Ahmedabad where thousands of Khadder-clad pilgrims march in solemn array to the court-house and await "the man of destiny". It was twelve noon on the 18th of March. That same frail figure in a loin cloth, with the dear old familiar smile of deep content, enters the court-house. The whole court suddenly rises to greet the illustrious prisoner. "This looks like a family gathering," says he with the benignant smile of his. The heart of the gathering throbs with alternate hopes and fears, but the august prisoner, pure of heart and meek of spirit, is calm like the deep sea. In a moment, the great trial had begun; and as the prisoner made his historic statement, tears were seen trickling down the cheeks of the stoutest. "I wish to endorse all the blame that the Advocate-General has thrown on my shoulders," says he with perfect candour. "To preach disaffection to the

existing system of government has become almost a passion with me . . . I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen." And then follows the terrible indictment of the Government. The Judge himself is deeply moved. He feels the greatness of the occasion and, in slow and deliberate accents, he says: "It would be impossible to ignore the fact that you are in a different category from any person I have ever tried or am *likely to try. It would be impossible* to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life." "But," he continued, "I have to deal with you in one character only . . . to judge you as a man subject to the law who has by his own admission broken the law, committed, what to an ordinary man must appear to be grave offences against the State." A sentence of six years' simple imprisonment is passed, but the Judge adds: "that, if the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I." And the prisoner thanks the Judge, and there is perfect good humour. Was there ever such a trial in the history of British Courts or a other court for the matter of that? And fir

he bids farewell to the tearful throng pressing forward to touch the bare feet of him whose presence was a benediction!

The man is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Dewan's son, Barrister-at-Law, scholar, student, cultured Indian gentleman, "farmer and weaver", and leader of his people. Because he perferred to obey the dictates of conscience, because he placed honour before comfort or even life itself, because he chose not to accept an insult to his Motherland, because he strove so that right should prevail and that his people might have life, a civilised, Christian Government in a Colony over which waves the British flag, deemed that the best way to overcome such dangerous contumacy was to cast his body into gaol, where at one time he was compelled to herd with and starve upon the diet of the most degraded aboriginal native felons, men barely emerging from the condition of brute-beasts, or rather, with all their human aspirations and instincts crushed out of them by the treatment accorded to them under the "civilising" process of the Transvaal's colour legislation. And, again obeying the behests of conscience, believing that he best serves India so, he again chooses the refuge of prison, convinced like Thoreau that he is freer than his gaolers or those who mourn for him, but do not liberate themselves from bondage.

## EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on the 2nd October, 1869. Though he has a Brahmin's spirituality and desire to serve and teach, he is

not a Brahmin. Though he has a Kshattriya's courage and devotion, he is not a Kshattriya. He belongs to an old Bania family resident in Kathiawar, politics being a heritage of the family. His forefathers were Dewans of the State of Porbandar in that Province, his father having been Dewan of that State for 25 years, as also of Rajkote and other States in Kathiawar. He was likewise, at one time, a member of the Rajasthanik Sabha, having been nominated thereto by the Government of Bombay. Mr. Gandhi's father was known to, and loved by, all with whom he came in contact and he did not hesitate, if need came, to oppose the will of the Rana of Porbandar and of the Political Agent, when he thought that they were adopting a wrong or unworthy line of conduct. This particular trait has evidently descended to his youngest son. Mr. Gandhi's mother was an orthodox Hindu lady, rigid in her observance of religious obligations, strict in the performance of her duties as wife and mother, and stern in her determination that her children should grow up good and honest men and women. Between her youngest son and herself existed a strong affection, and her religious example and influence left a lasting impression upon his character. Mohandas Gandhi received his education partly in Kathiawar and partly in London. It was only with the greatest difficulty that his mother could be prevailed upon to consent to his crossing the waters, and, before doing so, she exacted from him a threefold vow, administered by a Jain priest that he would

abstain from flesh, alcohol and women. And this vow was faithfully and whole-heartedly kept amidst all the temptations of student life in London. Young Gandhi became an under-graduate of the London University and afterwards joined the Inner Temple, whence he emerged in due course a barrister-at-law. He returned to India immediately after his call, and was at once admitted as an Advocate of the Bombay High Court, in which capacity he began practice with some success.

## VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA

In 1893, Mr. Gandhi was induced to go to South Africa, proceeding to Natal and then to the Transvaal, in connection with an Indian legal case of some difficulty. Almost immediately upon landing at Durban, disillusionment awaited him. Brought up in British traditions of the equality of all British subjects, an honoured guest in the capital of the Empire, he found that in the British Colony of Natal, he was regarded as a pariah, scarcely higher than a savage aboriginal native of the soil. He appealed for admission as an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Natal, but his application was opposed by the Law Society on the ground that the law did not contemplate that a coloured person should be admitted to practise. Fortunately, the Supreme Court viewed the matter in a different light and granted the application. But Mr. Gandhi received sudden warning of what awaited him in the years to come.

In 1894, on the urgent invitation of the Natal Indian community, he decided to remain in the

Colony, in order that he might be of service in the political troubles that he foresaw in the near future. In that year, together with a number of prominent members of the community, he founded the Natal Indian Congress, being for some years its honorary secretary, in which capacity he drafted a number of petitions and memorials admirable in construction, lucid and simple in phraseology, clear and concise in the manner of setting forth the subject-matter. He took a leading part in the successful attempt to defeat the Asiatics' Exclusion Act passed by the Natal Parliament and in the unsuccessful one to prevent the disfranchisement of the Indian community, though the effort made obliged the Imperial authorities to insist that this disfranchisement should be effected along non-racial lines. At the end of 1895, he returned to India, being authorised by the Natal and Transvaal Indians to represent their grievances to the Indian public. This he did by means of addresses and a pamphlet, the mutilated contents of which were summarised by *Reuter* and cabled to Natal, where they evoked a furious protest on the part of the European colonists. The telegram ran thus: "A pamphlet published in India declares that the Indians in Natal are robbed, and assaulted and treated like beasts, and are unable to obtain redress. *The Times of India* advocates an enquiry into these allegations."

This message was certainly not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, though it had elements of truth in it. About the same time, Mr. Gandhi returned to Durban

with his family, and with him, though independently of him, travelled several compatriots. The rumour arose that he was bringing with him a number of skilled Indian workers with the express object of ousting the European artisans from the field of employments, and the two circumstances combined to stimulate in the colonists, high and low alike, all the worst passions, and feeling ran so high that the Attorney-General, Mr. Escombe, felt himself obliged to side with the popular party, and accordingly gave instructions that the vessel bringing Mr. Gandhi and his companions should be detained in quarantine. The quarantine was only raised when the ship-owners announced their intention of taking legal action against the Government. The vessels now came alongside the wharf, but the crowd that assembled became so hostile that a police inspector, who came on board, warned Mr. Gandhi of his own personal danger if he landed then, and he urged him to delay the landing until night. A little later, however, a well-known member of the Natal Bar came on board specially to greet Mr. Gandhi and offer his services, and Mr. Gandhi at once determined to land without waiting for darkness to come, trusting, as he himself expressed it, to the British sense of justice and fair-play. He was soon recognised, however, set upon, and half-killed, when the wife of the superintendent of police, who recognised him, ran to his rescue, and, raising her umbrella over him, defied the crowd, and accompanied him to the store of an Indian friend. Mr. Gandhi was, however, in order to

save his friend's property, obliged to escape disguised as a police constable.

The affair was at an end, popular passions calmed down, and the newspapers apologised to him, though the incident demonstrated the temper of the mob towards the resident Indian community. Years afterwards, meeting Mr. Gandhi one day, Mr. Escombe expressed profound regret at his connection with this unsavoury business, declaring that, at the time, he was unacquainted with Mr. Gandhi's personal merits and those of the community to which he belonged. Half an hour later he was found dead in the streets, stricken down by heart-disease.

BOER WAR AND THE INDIAN AMBULANCE CORPS

In 1899, at the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, Mr. Gandhi, after considerable opposition, induced the Government to accept the offer of an Indian Ambulance Corps. The Corps was one thousand strong and saw active service, being on one occasion, at least, under heavy fire, and on another removing the dead body of Lord Robert's only son from the field. The Corps was favourably reported on, and Mr. Gandhi was mentioned in despatches and afterwards awarded the war medal. His object in offering the services of a body of Indians to do even the most menial work was to show that the Indian community desired to take their full share of public responsibilities, and that just as they knew how to demand rights, so they also knew to assume obligations. And that has been the key-note of Mr. Gandhi's public work from the beginning.

## RETURN TO INDIA

In 1901, owing to a breakdown in health, Mr. Gandhi came to India, taking his family with him. Before he went, however, the Natal Indian community presented him, Mrs. Gandhi, and his children with a valuable gold plate and jewellery. He refused, however, to accept a single item of this munificent gift, putting it on one side to be used for public purposes, should the need arise. The incident but endeared him the more to the people, who realised once again how selfless was the work that he had so modestly and unassumingly undertaken. Before the Ambulance Corps left for the front, its members had been publicly entertained by Sir John Robinson, then Prime Minister of Natal, and on the occasion of the presentation to Mr. Gandhi by the Indian community, he addressed a letter to the organisers of the ceremony; in which, after excusing his unavoidable absence, he said:

> It would have given me great pleasure to have been present on the occasion of so well-earned a mark of respect to our able and distinguished fellow-citizen, Mr. Gandhi. . . . Not the less heartily do I wish all success to this public recognition of the good work done and the many services rendered to the community by Mr. Gandhi.

On his arrival in Bombay, Mr. Gandhi once more resumed practice, as he then had no intention of returning to South Africa, believing that with the end of the war, a new era had arrived.

## BACK TO SOUTH AFRICA

Scarcely, however, had he returned from the Calcutta Congress, where, under Dinshaw Wacha (later Sir Dinshaw), he did some very useful

organising work unobtrusively, when he received an urgent telegram from Natal, peremptorily calling him back to South Africa to draft the memorials to Mr. Chamberlain, whose visit was imminent, to take charge of the work required to secure the removal of existing grievances and to place Indian affairs finally on a higher level. Without a moment's hesitation, he obeyed the call of duty, and a new chapter opened in his life. In Natal, he had been able to overcome official prejudice and was high in the esteem of all those heads of departments and ministers with whom his public duties brought him into contact. But when, after heading a deputation to Mr. Chamberlain in Natal, he was called to the Transvaal for similar purpose he found all officialdom hostile, and he was refused the right to attend upon Mr. Chamberlain as a member of a deputation of Transvaal Indians: and it was only after the utmost endeavours that he prevailed upon the Indian community to send a deputation that did not include him. Finding that the situation was becoming rapidly worse, and being without a trained guide, the Transvaal Indians pressed him to remain with them, and this he at last consented to do, being admitted to practise as an Attorney of the Supreme Court of the Transvaal. In 1903, together with other communal leaders, he founded the Transvaal British Indian Association, of which, until his final departure from South Africa, he was the honorary secretary and principal legal adviser.

## FOUNDING OF "THE INDIAN OPINION"

About the middle of 1903, it had occurred to him that, if the South African Indians were to be brought into closer association with each other and with their European fellow-colonists, and to be politically and socially educated, it was absolutely necessary to have a newspaper, and, after consultation, he provided the greater part of the capital for its inauguration, with the late Mr. M. H. Nazar as editor, and thus the *Indian Opinion* was born. It was first published in English, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil. For various reasons, it afterwards became necessary to dispense with the Tamil and Hindi columns.

Towards the end of 1904, however, finding that the paper was absorbing most of the money that could be spared without making any appreciable financial headway, he went to Durban to investigate the situation. During the journey, he became absorbed in the perusal of Ruskin's "Unto This Last", and he received certain impressions that were confirmed whilst on a visit to some relatives, who had started a trading enterprise in an up-country village. His conclusions were that the town conditions in which the paper was produced were such as almost to compel unlimited waste, to act as a check upon the originality and individuality of the workers, and to prevent the realisation of his dearest desire to so infuse the columns of the paper with a spirit of tolerance and persuasiveness as to bring together all that was best in the European and Indian communities whose fate it was to dwell

side by side, either mutually hostile to or suspicious of each other, or amicably co-operating in the securing of the welfare of the State and the building-up of a wise administration of its assets.

## THE PHŒNIX SETTLEMENT

Accordingly, he determined that the very first thing to be done was to put an end to the workers from the land, and from this determination, arose what has since become known as a Phœnix Settlement. Phœnix is situated about 12 miles from Durban, in the midst of a sugar-growing country, and Mr Gandhi invested his savings in the purchase of an estate of about 100 acres of land about two miles distant from the station, on which were erected the press buildings and machinery. A number of selected Indians and Europeans were invited to become settlers, and the original conditions were these—that they should have entire management of all the assets of the press, including the land itself; that each should practically vow himself to a life of poverty, accepting not more than £3 (Rs. 45) a month, expenses being high in South Africa, and an equal share in the profits, if any; that a house should be built for him, for which he should pay when able, and in whatever instalments might seem suitable to him, without interest; that he should have two acres of land as his own for cultivation, payment being on similar conditions, and that he should devote himself to working for the public good, *Indian Opinion* being meanwhile the mainspring of the work. Whilst the fundamental principles remained, it became necessary later, in

the light of further experience, to modify these conditions. Subsequently, the Phœnix settlers extended the scope of their labours, to the task of educating some at least of the children of the lakh-and-a-half of Indians in South Africa.

### SERVICE IN PLAGUE AREAS

In 1904, an outbreak of plague occurred in the Indian Location, Jonannesburg, largely owing to gross negligence on the part of the Municipal authorities, in spite of repeated warnings of the insanitary conditions prevailing. A week before the official announcement of the outbreak, Mr. Gandhi sent a final warning that plague had already broken out, but his statement was officially denied. When, however, a public admission of the existence of plague could no longer be withheld, but before the Municipal authorities had taken any steps to cope with the disease, he at once organised a private hospital and nursing home, and, together with a few devoted friends, personally tended the plague patients, and this work was formally appreciated by the Municipal authorities.

### LEADING A STRETCHER-BEARER CORPS

In 1906, a native rebellion broke out in Natal due to many causes, but realising that bloodshed was imminent and that hospital work would necessarily ensue therefrom, Mr. Gandhi offered, on behalf of the Natal Indians, a Stretcher-Bearer Corps, which, after some delay, was accepted. Meanwhile he had sent his family to Phœnix, where he thought it was most proper that they should live, rather than in the dirt, noise, and restlessness of the town. He himself volunteered

to lead the Corps, which was on active service for a month, being mentioned in despatches and publicly congratulated and thanked by the Governor for the valuable services rendered. Each member of the Corps has had awarded to him the medal especially struck for the occasion, and as an indication of the manner in which the Transvaal Government appreciated the work so selflessly performed by Mr. Gandhi and his Corps, it may be noted that, together with at least three other members of the Corps, as well as some who belonged to or helped to fit out the old Ambulance Corps, he was flung into gaol to associate with criminals of the lowest type.

The work of the Corps was, besides that of carrying stretchers and marching on foot behind mounted infantry, through dense bush, sometimes thirty miles a day, in the midst of a savage enemy's country unarmed and unprotected, to perform the task of hospital assistants and to nurse the wounded natives, who had been callously shot down by the colonial troopers, or had been cruelly lashed by military command. Mr. Gandhi does not like to speak his mind about what he saw or learnt on this occasion. But many times he must have had searchings of conscience as to the propriety of his allying himself, even in that merciful capacity, with those capable of such acts of revolting and inexcusable brutality. However, it is well to know that nearly all his solicitude was exercised on behalf of aboriginal native patients, and one saw the Dewan's son ministering to the needs and allaying

the sufferings of some of the most undeveloped types of humanity, whose odour, habits and surroundings must have been extremely repugnant to a man of refined tastes—though Mr. Gandhi himself will not admit this.

ANTI-ASIATIC LAW AND PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Scarcely had he returned to Johannesburg to resume practice (he had left his office to look after itself during his absence) when a thunderbolt was launched by the Transvaal Government by the promulgation of the Draft Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance. After years of plotting and scheming, the anti-Asiatics of the Transvaal, having first secured the willing service of an administrative department anxious to find an excuse for the continuance, of its own existence, compelled the capitulation of the executive itself with the aforementioned result. Mr. Gandhi at once realised what was afoot, and understood immediately that, unless the Indian community adopted a decided attitude of protest, which would be backed up, if necessary, by resolute action, the whole Indian population of South Africa was doomed and he accordingly took counsel with the leading members of the community, who agreed that the measure must be fought to the bitter end. Mr. Gandhi was chiefly responsible for the initiation of the policy of passive resistance that was so successfully carried out by the Indians of South Africa during the next eight years. Since that day, Mr. Gandhi's history has been mainly that of the Passive Resistance struggle. All know how he took the oath not to submit to the

Law on the 11th September, 1906: how he went to England with a compatriot in the same year, and how their vigorous pleading induced Lord Elgin to suspend the operation of the objectionable piece of legislation: how, when the law finally received the Royal assent, he threw himself into the forefront of the fight and by speech, pen, and example, inspired the whole community to maintain an adamantine front to the attack that was being made upon the very foundations of its religion, its national honour, its racial self-respect, its manhood. No one was, therefore, surprised when, at the end of 1907, Mr. Gandhi was arrested, together with a number of other leaders, and consigned to gaol or how, when he heard that some of his friends in Pretoria had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour, the maximum penalty, he pleaded with the Magistrate to impose that penalty upon him too, as he had been the acknowledged leader and inspirer of the opposition against this Law. To him it was a terrible shock that his followers were being more harshly treated than he himself, and it was with bowed head and deep humiliation that he left the court, sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment only. Happily, the Government realised the seriousness of the situation, and after three weeks' imprisonment of the leading passive resisters, General Smuts opened negotiations with them, and a compromise was effected between him and the Indian community, partly written, partly verbal, whereby voluntary registration, which had been repeatedly offered, was accepted conditionally

upon the Law being subsequently repealed. This promise of repeal was made personally to Mr. Gandhi by General Smuts in the presence of official witnesses. When, shortly afterwards, Mr. Gandhi was nearly killed by a few of his more fanatical countrymen (who thought he had betrayed them to the Government) as he was on his way to the Registration Office to carry out his pledge to the Government, he issued a letter to the Indian community in which he definitely declared that promise of repeal had been made. General Smuts did not do so until several months later. No one was, however, astonished to find Mr. Gandhi charging General Smuts with breach of faith, and absolutely refusing to compromise himself or the community that he represented by accepting further legislation that would, in the end, have still further degraded the Indians of South Africa. Having convinced his colleagues that such acceptance on their part was impossible, the struggle re-commenced.

Twice again, during the period of passive resistance, was he sent to gaol, and then the Government sought to seduce his followers from their allegiance, by imprisoning them in hundreds and leaving him free. In 1909, whilst his friend and fellow-worker, Mr. Polak, was in India, on behalf of the South African Indian community, he and a colleague had gone to England to endeavour to arouse the public conscience there to the enormities that were being perpetrated in South Africa in the name of the British people. Whilst he failed in his main purpose to secure

from General Smuts, through the mediation of the Imperial Government, the removal of the racial bar in the Immigration Law, he nevertheless sowed the seeds of the subsequent settlement, for his suggestions were embodied, and their adoption was recommended by the Imperial Government in their Despatch to Lord Gladstone, shortly after the creation the Union of South Africa in the following year.

MR. GOKHALE'S HISTORIC VISIT

In 1911, the second "provisional settlement" was effected after the Union Government had, notwithstanding prolonged and sympathetic negotiations with Mr. Gandhi, found themselves unable to discover a formula acceptable alike to the Indian community, the Government themselves and Parliament. Nor did the year 1912 show any better promise in the direction of a final settlement. Meanwhile, there occurred the historic visit to South Africa of India's great statesman-patriot, the Hon. Mr. Gokhale, who, even then, was suffering from ill-health. Mr. Gandhi, who, for years had regarded him as his own political leader, had invited him to South Africa, not primarily for political reasons, but so that he might nurse his *guru* back to health. Circumstances combined, however, to impose upon Mr. Gokhale a greater physical strain than had been anticipated in spite of Mr. Gandhi's own devoted personal service. It was pathetic and beautiful to observe the way these two old friends refused to see anything but the best in each other, in spite of their fundamental differences, of temperament and often

of outlook. To Gandhi, Gokhale was the gallant and selfless paladin, whom the whole of India looked up to as her noblest son. To Gokhale, Gandhi was the very embodiment of saintly self-abnegation, a man whose personal sufferings, splendid and chivalrous leadership and moral fervour, marked him out as one of the most outstanding figures of the day, the coming leader of his people, who had made the name of his adored Motherland, revered and honoured throughout the Empire and beyond, and who had proved beyond dispute the capacity of even his most insignificant countrymen to live and die for her.

In a speech at the Bombay Town Hall, soon after his return from South Africa, in December 1912, Mr. Gokhale bore eloquent testimony to the high character and remarkable leadership of Gandhi in the Indian South African struggle.

> Only those who have come in personal contact with Mr. Gandhi as he is now, can realise the wonderful personality of the man He is without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. Nay more He has in him the marvellous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs. During the recent passive resistance struggle in the Transvaal—would you believe it?—twenty-seven hundred sentences of imprisonment were borne by our countrymen there under Mr. Gandhi's guidance to uphold the honour of their country. Some of the men among them were very substantial persons, some were small traders, but the bulk of them were poor humble individuals, hawkers, working men and so forth, men without education, men not accustomed in their life to think or talk of their country. And yet these men braved the horrors of jail life in the Transvaal and some of them braved them again and again rather than submit to degrading legislation directed against their country. Many homes were broken in the course of that struggle, many families dispersed, some men at one time wealthy lost their all and became paupers, women and children endured untold hardships. But they were touched

by Mr. Gandhi's spirit and that had wrought the transformation, thus illustrating the great power which the spirit of man can exercise over human minds and even over physical surroundings. In all my life I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Mr. Gandhi does—our great patriarch, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and my late master, Mr. Ranade—men before whom not only are we ashamed of doing anything unworthy, but in whose presence our very minds are afraid of thinking anything that is unworthy The Indian cause in South Africa has really been built up by Mr. Gandhi. Without self and without stain, he has fought his great fight for this country during a period now of twenty years, and India owes an immense debt of gratitude to him.

## FURTHER STAGES OF THE STRUGGLE

During his visit, Mr. Gokhale extracted a promise (afterwards denied) from the principal Union Ministers, that they would introduce legislation repealing the £3 tax. When, therefore, in 1913, Mr. Gandhi discovered that the Government were not going to fulfil their pledges of 1911, and that they refused to repeal the £3 tax, he denounced the "provisional settlement", and, in September, announced the revival of Passive Resistance and its bodily extension to Natal, where he promptly organised and carried through the now historic strike. The events of this last phase of the struggle are of historic interest—the campaign of the Indian women whose marriages had been dishonoured by a fresh decision of the Supreme Court at the instigation of the Government, the awakening of the free and indentured labourers all over Natal, the strikes, and the historic march into the Transvaal, the scenes enacted later in the effort to crush the strikers and compel them to resume work.

the arrest and imprisonment of the principal leaders and of hundreds—many thousands—of the rank and file* the enormous Indian mass meetings held in Durban, Johannesburg, and other parts of the Union, the fierce and passionate indignation aroused in India, the large sums of money poured into South Africa from all parts of the Motherland, Lord Hardinge's famous speech at Madras† in which he placed himself at the head of Indian public opinion and his demand for a Commission of Inquiry, the energetic efforts

* The accounts of the struggle and the sufferings borne by the Indian passive resisters under the lead of Mr. Gandhi were so poignant that the Lord Bishop of Madras—Bishop Whitehead—was moved to exclaim in a memorable speech at the Y.M.C.A. auditorium in December 1913:

"I frankly confess, though it deeply grieves me to say it, that I see in Mr. Gandhi, the patient sufferer for the cause of righteousness and mercy, a true representative of the Crucified Saviour, than the men who have thrown him into prison and yet call themselves by the name of Christ."

† Lord Hardinge's historic speech, in reply to an address presented by the Mahajana Sabha, Madras, in December 1913, may be recalled. This courageous utterance of the Viceroy and head of the Indian Government, showed for the first time, in no uncertain manner, that the Government of India were in complete accord with the public in their resentment and indignation against the treatment of our countrymen overseas:

". . . . it is unfortunately, not easy to find means by which India can make her indignation seriously felt by those who hold the reins of Government in that country. Recently your compatriots in South Africa have taken matters into their own hands by organising what is called passive resistance to laws which they consider invidious and unjust, an opinion which we who watch their struggles from afar cannot but share They have violated, as they have intended to violate those laws with full knowledge of the penalties involved, and ready with all courage and patience to endure those penalties. In all this they have the sympathy of India—deep and burning—

of Lord Ampthill's Committee*, the hurried intervention of the Imperial authorities, the appointment over the heads of the Indian community of a Commission whose *personnel* could not satisfy the Indians, the discharge from prison of the leaders whose advice to ignore the Commission was almost universally accepted, the arrival of Messrs. Andrews and Pearson and their wonderful work of reconciliation, the deaths of Harbat Singh and Valliamma,† the strained position relieved only by the interruption of the second European strike, when Mr. Gandhi, as

and not only of India but of all those who, like myself, without being Indians themselves, have feelings of sympathy for the people of this country. But the most recent developments have taken a very serious turn, and we have seen the widest publicity given to allegations that this movement of passive resistance has been dealt with by measures which would not for a moment be tolerated in any country that claims to call itself civilised."

*Lord Ampthill himself wrote of Mr. Gandhi and his doings in South Africa with marked respect and appreciation. In an introduction to the Rev. Mr. Doke's book *An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, Lord Ampthill wrote:

Mr. Gandhi has been denounced in this country, even by responsible persons, as an ordinary agitator; there have not even been wanting suggestions that his motives are those of self-interest and pecuniary profits.

A perusal of these pages (Doke's Gandhi) ought to dispel any such notions from the mind of any fair man who has been misled into entertaining them. And with a better knowledge of the man, there must come a better knowledge of the matter.

I have no more earnest hope than that Mr. Gandhi and his fellow-countrymen may see the accomplishment of that end, for which they have struggled so bravely and sacrificed so much, before this book is published.

†Widow of a Harijan worker in one of the mills, who died as a result of the firing.

on an earlier occasion, undertook not to hamper the Government whilst they had their hands full with the fresh difficulty, and when it had been dealt with, the entirely new spirit of friendliness, trust, and co-operation that was found to have been created by the moderation of the great Indian leader and the loving influence spread around him by Mr. Andrews as he proceeded with his great Imperial mission.

All these things are by now matters of history, as are the favourable recommendations of the Commission on practically every point referred to it and out of which Passive Resistance had arisen, the adoption of the Commission's Report in its entirety by the Government, the introduction and passing into law of the Indians' Relief Act, after lengthy and remarkable debates in both Houses of the Legislature, the correspondence between Mr. Gandhi and General Smuts, in which the latter undertook, on behalf of the Government, to carry through the administrative reforms that were not covered by the new Act, and the final letter of the Indian protagonist of Passive Resistance —formally announcing the conclusion of the struggle and setting forth the points upon which Indians would sooner or later have to be satisfied before they could acquire complete equality of civil status,—and the scenes of his departure for his beloved Motherland.

### Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi in London

Faithful to his instinct for service, Mr. Gandhi hurried to England, where he heard that Gokhale was critically ill, and arrived, on the outbreak of

the Great War, to find that his friend was slowly recovering from the almost fatal attack that had overwhelmed him. Here, too, his sense of responsibility revealed itself. He recognised that it was India's duty, in the hour of the Empire's trial, to do all in her power to help, and he at once set about the formation of the Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps in London, enrolling himself and his devoted wife, who had herself been barely snatched from the jaws of death but a few weeks earlier, amongst the members. But the years of strain, his neglect of his own physical well-being, and his addiction to long fasts as a means to spiritual purification, had undermined a never very robust constitution, and his condition became so serious that private and official friends insisted upon his proceeding immediately, with Mrs. Gandhi, to India.

RETURN TO THE MOTHERLAND

On his return to the Motherland, at the beginning of 1915, Mr. Gandhi was naturally very much before the public eye. His progress through India, from the day of the public landing and welcome at the Apollo Bunder, was, in the nature of a veritable triumph, marred only by the sudden death of his beloved teacher, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who had sacrificed health and life itself upon the altar of his country's welfare.

The Government of India marked their appreciation of Mr. Gandhi's unique services by recommending him for the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal, which was conferred upon him by the King-Emperor amongst the 1915 New Year

Honours. To Gokhale he had given a promise to make no public utterance on Indian affairs until at least a year had passed, and he had visited the principal centres of public life in India. This promise, which was faithfully kept, was extracted, because Gokhale, hoping to see in him his own successor, had been somewhat disturbed by the very advanced views expressed by Mr. Gandhi in the then proscribed pamphlet —*Hind Swaraj** whose pages, we now know, were written to show the basic similarity of civilisation the world over, the superiority of India for the particular Indian phase of that civilisation and the stupidity of the barriers of luxury created by the modern industrial civilisation of the West, that constantly separate man from man and make him a senseless machine drudge, and that threaten to invade that holy Motherland that stands in his eyes for the victory of spirit over matter. He had condemned some things of which he had disapproved in Gokhale's opinion, somewhat hastily, and the older man had thought that, after an absence from India of so many years, during which he had perhaps idealised certain phases of Indian life, a year's travel and observation would be a useful corrective. Which of the two, if either, has correctly diagnosed the situation, time alone can show.

But one thing is clear. Mr. Gandhi has consistently maintained these views in the face

* HIND SWARAJ OR INDIAN HOME RULE. By Mahatma Gandhi. Price Annas Eight. G. A. Natesan & Co., Publishers, Madras.

of adverse criticisms from friends and foes. And it is interesting that writing over a decade after the publication of the book, Mr. Gandhi observed in his English weekly *Young India* (26th January 1921).

> It is certainly my good fortune that this booklet of mine is receiving wide attention. In my opinion, it is a book which can be put into the hands of a child It teaches the gospel of love in the place of that of hate. It replaces violence with self-sacrifice. It pits soul force against brute force. It has gone through several editions and I commend it to those who would care to read it I withdraw nothing except one word of it and that in deference to a lady friend

SATYAGRAHASHRAM

Mr. Gandhi, however, made his headquarters at Ahmedabad, the capital of his own Province of Gujarat, and here he founded his *Satyagrahashram*, where he was, endeavouring to train up from childhood public servants upon a basis of austerity of life and personal subordination to the common good, the members supporting themselves by work at the handloom or other manual labour.

TRAVELS IN INDIA

True to his promise to Mr. Gokhale, Mr. Gandhi, on his return to India, started on an extensive tour through the country. Though his idea was merely to visit every place of importance and acquaint himself thoroughly with the conditions of the country and thus acquire first-hand knowledge of men and things, he had of course to speak wherever he went. He was given a warm and enthusiastic welcome at every station, and the magnificent demonstrations in his honour bore eloquent testimony to the great

regard in which his countrymen have always held him. Mr. Gandhi accepted these marks of affection and respect with his accustomed grace, but spoke out his mind with freedom and unconventionality on every subject as the occasion demanded. One characteristic feature of these speeches was that Mr. Gandhi seldom repeated second-hand opinions and his views on every subject were, therefore, refreshingly original. As a reformer, his interests were encyclopædic and he touched life at many points at once. It is convenient, therefore, in a review of his travels and opinions, to record his views on the many public questions that confronted him as he passed from place to place in his first great pilgrimage through the country. Undeterred by fear or any exaggerated sense of conventional respectability, he retained his independence, indifferent to the applause or contumely of his listeners.

## ANARCHICAL CRIMES

Speaking at the Students' Hall, College Square, Calcutta, in March 1915, under the presidentship of the Hon. Mr. Lyon he said, with reference to anarchical crimes, that

> whatever his personal views were, he must say that misguided zeal that resorts to dacoities and assassinations cannot be productive of any good These dacoities and assassinations are absolutely a foreign growth in India. They cannot take root here and cannot be a permanent institution here. History proves that assassinations have done no good. The religion of the country, the Hindu religion, is abstention from "himsa", that is, taking animal life. That is, he believes, the guiding principle of all religions. The Hindu religion says that even the evil-doer should not be hated. It says that nobody has any right to kill even the evil-doer These assassinations are a

Western institution, and the speaker warned his hearers against the Western methods and Western evils.

That was a striking pronouncement of a public man denouncing anarchical crimes not on mere grounds of political inexpediency but on deeper grounds of morality and religion. That was the first public utterance of a man who scorned the shibboleths of lip loyalty quite as much as the subterfuges of secret societies. Mr. Gandhi thus vindicated his great principle that the means are a part of the end and that in his politics at any rate he would countenance no questionable methods for the attainment of quite undeniably legitimate and honourable aims. It was the same principle that he vindicated at the Karachi Congress of 1931, when he denounced political violence while appreciating the heroism of Bhagat Singh. Thus he struck a blow at the root of all Machiavellian politics that the end justifies the means.

## LOYALTY TO THE BRITISH RAJ

At the British Law Dinner at Madras in April of the same year, he observed in proposing (at the request of the President, the Hon. Mr. Corbett, the Advocate-General), the toast of the British Empire:—

> As a passive resister, I discovered that a passive resister has to make good his claim to passive resistance, no matter under what circumstance he finds himself, and I discovered that the British Empire had certain ideals with which I have fallen in love, and one of those ideals is that every subject of the British Empire has the freest scope possible for his energies and honour and whatever he thinks is due to his conscience. I think that this is true of the British Empire, as it is not true of any other Government. (*Applause*) I feel, as you here perhaps

know, that I am no lover of any Government, and I have more than once said that that Government is best which governs least. And I have found that it is possible for me to be governed least under the British Empire Hence my loyalty to the British Empire. (*Loud applause*)

The speech doubtless made a deep impression not only by the vigour and originality of his exposition but also by a certain consistency to his own ethical principles. "The right to rebel", as an inalienable right of a British citizen—that was quite a characteristic and rather curious vindication of the British Raj. And so we find in every one of his public utterances Mr. Gandhi familiarised his countrymen with his singular opinions.

## ADDRESS TO THE STUDENTS

Addressing the students of Madras at the Y.M.C.A., with the Hon. Mr. (now the Rt. Hon.) V. S. Srinivasa Sastri in the chair, Mr. Gandhi made a characteristic criticism of European civilization. He made it plain that in tolerating a foreign rule, India never bargained for foreign culture. We were quite content to have our own, and Mr. Gandhi argued that we dare not give up our cultural inheritance at the risk of our soul.

I am and I have been a determined opponent of modern civilisation. I want you to turn your eyes to-day upon what is going on in Europe, and if you have come to the conclusion that Europe is to-day groaning under the heels of the modern civilisation, then you and your elders will have to think twice before you can emulate that civilisation in our Motherland. But I have been told, "How can we help it, seeing, that our rulers bring that culture to our Motherland." Do not make any mistake about it at all. I do not for one moment believe that it is for any rulers to bring that culture to you, unless you are

prepared to accept it, and if it be that the rulers bring that culture before us, I think that we have forces within ourselves to enable us to reject that culture without having to reject the rulers themselves

He concluded:

I ally myself to the British Government, because I believe that it is possible for me to claim equal partnership with every subject of the British Empire. I to-day claim that equal partnership I do not belong to a subject race I do not call myself a subject race. (*Applause*) But there is this thing: it is not for the British Governors to give you, it is for you to take the thing I want and I can take the thing That I want only by discharging my obligations. Max Muller has told us,—we need not go to Max Muller to interpret our own religion—but he says, our religion consists in four letters "D-u-t-y" and not in the five letters "R-i-g-h-t". And if you believe that all that we want can flow from a better discharge of our duty, then think always of your duty and fighting along those lines you will have no fear of any man, you will fear only God.

BRAHMINS AND PANCHAMAS

If Mr. Gandhi was plain-spoken in regard to his political opinions and in his views of British rule and foreign culture, he was no less outspoken in his condemnation of certain aspects of Hindu society. In his speech at Mayavaram on May 22, 1915, he touched on social reform and uttered some home truths in that centre of orthodoxy.

In so far as I have been able to study Hinduism outside India, I have felt that it is no part of real Hinduism to have in its hold a mass of people whom I would call "untouchables" If it was proved to me that this is an essential part of Hinduism, I for one would declare myself an open rebel against Hinduism itself.

Are the Brahmins in Mayavaram equi-minded towards the Pariah and will they tell me, if they are so equi-minded, that others will not follow? Even if they say that they are prepared to do so but others will not follow, I shall have to disbelieve them until I have revised my notions of Hinduism. If the Brahmins themselves consider they are holding high position by penance

and austerity, then they have themselves much to learn; then they will be the people who have cursed and ruined the land.

This was the beginning of a social controversy which has not ended yet. Indeed, Mr. Gandhi's social heresies brought on his devoted head the fury of a considerable section of conservative opinion in the country—a section which is hard put to it to march with the times. And yet Mr. Gandhi has gone his way, pressing his opinions in diverse ways with the persistency of a reformer.

Swadeshi industries and Swadeshi culture, or rather the neglect of these, then came in for severe handling, and he gave utterance to some unwelcome truths in the matter of leadership by example and by precept.

There are, I understand, one thousand handlooms. So much the worse for the leaders! (*Loud applause.*) If those one thousand handlooms are kept chiefly in attending to the wants of our women, double this supply of our handlooms and you will have all your wants supplied by our own weavers and there will be no poverty in the land. I ask you and ask your friend the President, how far he is indebted to foreign goods for the outfit and if he can tell me that he has tried his utmost and still has failed to unfit himself or rather to fit himself out with Swadeshi clothing and therefore he has got this stuff, I shall sit at his feet and learn a lesson. What I have been able to learn to-day is that it is entirely possible for me, without any extra cost, to fit myself with Swadeshi clothing.

Surely here we find the genesis of the great Khaddar campaign and the yarn franchise of the latter-day Congress!

These passages on diverse subjects culled from Mr. Gandhi's Speeches and Writings reveal the mentality of the man as he was in 1915. The

succeeding years have merely tended to confirm these opinions, and in many ways Mr. Gandhi has progressed in the direction of his own genius. It is remarkable that, in the light of subsequent history and his role as leader of the people, there is a singular uniformity, we had almost said, continuity, in Mr. Gandhi's original ideas. They have seldom been shaken by opinions, however influential nor by all the vicissitudes of circumstance. This only brings in relief the firmness and tenacity of his convictions which have grown with the passage of years in the very direction indicated by his attitude to the varied problems that confronted him in the days when, like a pilgrim from abroad, he travelled up and down the country in search of knowledge. Knowledge, indeed, he must have gathered in a remarkable degree, for he spared no pains to equip himself for the great task that lay before him, but he had also managed to impress himself more indelibly on the habits and opinions of his countrymen. Like all strong and original minds, Gandhi reacted on his countrymen with extraordinary vigour and the impact of such a mind on the tendencies of the age has been dynamic—altogether wholesome as some conceive it or thoroughly devastating in the view of others. Whatever it is, the fact remains that his influence on recent history has been potent and decisive.

### UNVEILING Mr. GOKHALE'S PORTRAIT

Towards the end of May 1915, he was invited to Bangalore to unveil the portrait of

Mr. Gokhale, when he made a brief and highly suggestive speech.

> I saw in the recitation,—the beautiful recitation that was given to me,—that God is with them whose garment was dusty and tattered My thought immediately went to the end of my garment; I examined and found that it is not dusty and it is not tattered; it is fairly spotless and clean. God is not in me There are other conditions attached, but in these conditions I may fail; and you, my dear countrymen, may also fail, and if we do lend this veil, we should not dishonour the memory of one whose portrait you have asked me to unveil this morning. I have declared myself his disciple in the political field and I have him as my *Raja Guru*: and this I claim on behalf of the Indian people. It was in 1896 that I made this declaration, and I do not regret having made the choice.

That reference to the garment that is not dusty and tattered is truly inspired! There is in it something soul-stirring that moves us to heights of great feeling as in the hymns and psalms of the poet-saints of Mediæval India. Nowhere else have we a note of such pathos and grandeur touched with noble passion for humanity.

Later in the year Gandhi presided over the anniversary function at the Gurukul and spoke in Hindi on the meaning of true Swadeshism, the doctrine of Ahimsa and other kindred topics.

## HINDU UNIVERSITY SPEECH

On February 4, 1916, he attended the Hindu University celebrations and delivered an address which unfortunately was intercepted. But the regrettable incident of which far too much was made at the time, revealed the hold that he possesses upon the esteem and affection of his countrymen,

for his* version of what transpired was generally accepted. Since then Mr. Gandhi has been taking a prominent part in the building up of the Indian nation along his own peculiar lines. For, he teaches both by precept and by example. But he goes his own way, untramelled by precedent, carefully analysing the criticism to which he is naturally subjected, holding himself answerable, however, to his own conscience alone. For he is of the prophets, and not merely of the secondary interpreters of life.

The same month he came to Madras and on the 10th spoke on Social Service to a large audience presided over by Mrs. Whitehead.† On the 14th he spoke on Swadeshi before the Missionary Conference, and a couple of days later gave a lucid account of his Satyagrahashram to a large gathering of students in the precincts of the Young Men's Christian Association, Madras, the Hon. Rev. G. Pittendrigh of the Christian College presiding. He then went back to Ahmedabad to look after his Ashram. Late in the year on December 22, he made a remarkable speech on "Economic *versus* Moral Progress" at the Muir Central College, Allahabad, Mr. Stanley Jevons presiding. The address contains some of his most mature and thoughtful reflections on life, and, both in style and sentiment, is one of the most characteristic of Mr. Gandhi's utterances.

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* *Vide* p. 317. SPEECHES AND WRITINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI. G. A. Natesan and Co., Madras.

†Wife of Dr. Whitehead, Bishop of Madras.

## Mr GANDHI IN CHAMPARAN

Then came the Champaran incident which at the time created quite a sensation, and was, in fact, the forerunner of civil disobedience. In the Lucknow Congress of December 1916, Mr. Gandhi, though pressed by some of the citizens of Behar, declined to talk about grievances of the labourers in the Behar plantations without first-hand knowledge of the real state of affairs. This he resolved to acquire soon after the Congress session: and in response to an insistent public demand to inquire into the conditions under which Indians worked in the indigo plantations, Mr. Gandhi was in Muzaffarpur on the 15th of April, 1917, whence he took the mid-day train for Motihari. Next day he was served with a notice from the Champaran District Magistrate to quit the district "by the *next available train as his presence will endanger* the public peace and may lead to serious disturbance which may be accompanied by loss of life". But the local authorities in issuing this mandate counted without the host. For Mr. Gandhi, who had initiated the Passive Resistance Movement in South Africa, replied in a way that did not surprise those who had known him:

> Out of a sense of public responsibility, I feel it to be my duty to say that I am unable to leave this district, but if it so please the authorities, I shall submit to the order by suffering the penalty of disobedience.
>
> I most emphatically repudiate the Commissioner's suggestion that "my object is likely to be agitation". My desire is purely and simply for "a genuine search for knowledge" and this I shall continue to satisfy so long as I am left free.

Mr. Gandhi appeared before the District Magistrate on the 18th, when he presented a statement. Finding that the case was likely to be unnecessarily prolonged, he pleaded guilty, and the judgment was deferred pending instructions from higher authorities. The rest of the story is pretty familiar. The higher authorities subsequently issued instructions not to proceed with the prosecution, while a Commission of Enquiry was at once instituted to enquire into the conditions of the Behar labourers with Mr. Gandhi as a member of that body. As might be expected, Mr. Gandhi worked in perfect harmony with the other members, and though with the findings of his own private enquiry he could have raised a storm of indignant agitation against the scandals of the plantations, he refrained from using his influence and knowledge for a merely vindictive and vainglorious cry. He worked quietly, with no thought of himself, but absorbed in the need for remedial measures, and when in December 1917 the Champaran Agrarian Bill was moved in the Behar Legislative Council, the Hon. Mr. Maude made a frank statement of the scandals which necessitated an enquiry by a Commission, and acknowledged Mr. Gandhi's service in handsome terms:

> It is constantly asserted, and I have myself often heard it said, that there is in reality nothing wrong or rotten in the state of affairs; that all concerned are perfectly happy so long as they are left alone, and that it is only when outside influence and agitators come in, that any trouble is experienced. I submit that this contention is altogether untenable in the light of the history of the last fifty years. What is it we find on each individual occasion

when fresh attention has been, at remarkably short intervals, drawn once more to the conditions of the production of the indigo plant? We do not find on each occasion that some fresh little matter has gone wrong which can be easily adjusted, but we find on every occasion alike that it is the system itself, which is condemned as being inherently wrong and impossible, and we see also repeated time after time the utter futility of bringing the matter to any lasting or satisfactory settlement by the only solutions that have so far been attempted, namely, an enhancement of the price paid for indigo and a reduction of the tenant's burden by reducing the limit of the proportion of his land which he would be required to ear-mark for indigo cultivation. Repeatedly, those expedients have been tried—repeatedly they have failed to effect a lasting solution, partly because they could not be universally enforced, but chiefly because no thinking can set right a system which is in itself inherently rotten and open to abuse.

The planters, of course, could not endure this. They took occasion to indulge in the most rabid and unbecoming attacks on Mr. Gandhi. One Mr. Irwin earned an unenviable notoriety by writing scurrilous articles touching personalities which had nothing to do with the subject of enquiry. Columns of such stuff appeared in the pages of the *Pioneer*: but Mr. Gandhi with a quiet humour replied in words which should have made the soul of Mr. Irwin penitent. The controversy on Mr. Gandhi's dress and Mrs. Gandhi's stall-keeping reveals the character of the two men—Mr. Irwin fussy, vindictive, violent, ill-tempered, writhing like a wounded snake in anger and agony, and Mr. Gandhi secure in his righteousness, modest, quiet, strong and friendly with no malice and untainted.

### THE CONGRESS-LEAGUE SCHEME

By this time Mr. Gandhi had made the Guzerat Sabha a well-equipped organisation for

effective social service. When in August 1917 it was announced that Mr. Montagu would be in India in connection with the scheme of post-War Reforms, the Guzerat Sabha, under the direction of Mr. Gandhi, devised in November the scheme of a monster petition in connection with the Congress-League Scheme. The idea and the movement alike were opportune. Mr. Gandhi himself undertook the work in his province of Guzerat and carried it out with characteristic thoroughness. The suggestion was taken up by the Congress and the Home Rule League and piles of books containing the monster signatures were duly presented to Mr. Montagu at Delhi.

Meanwhile Mr. Gandhi was not idle. On the 17th September he presided over the Bombay Co-operative Conference. On November 3, he delivered a remarkable address as president of the Guzerat Political Conference and later, of the Guzerat Educational Conference. Then came the Congress week in Calcutta in December and he presided over the First Session of the Social Service League when he made a striking speech. Mr. Gandhi has always travelled in the third class in all his journeyings and the grievances of the third class passengers are driven home in his address to the Social Service League. But even before this he had already sent a letter to the press on the subject on the 25th September 1917, in which he gave a vivid and true account of the woes of the third-class passengers.

## FAMINE IN THE KAIRA DISTRICT

After his return from the Calcutta Congress of December 1917, Mr. Gandhi was occupied in connection with the famine in the Kaira district and his labours resulted in some material relief to the people. The facts of the story can be easily told in Mr. Gandhi's own words uttered at a meeting in Bombay on February 5, 1918:

> The responsibility for the notice issued by the Guzerat Sabha of Ahmedabad was his; and nobody expected that the Government would misinterpret the objects of the notice. The Guzerat Sabha had sufficient proof of the plight of the people in the Kaira district and that the people were even obliged to sell their cattle to pay taxes, and the notice was issued to console those suffering from hardships. The Sabha's request was to suspend the collection of dues till negotiations were over. If the Commissioner of the Division had not been angry with the deputation and had talked to them politely, such crises would not have happened. He fully expected that the deputation which would wait on the Governor would be able to explain the situation to His Excellency and the people's cause would succeed in the end. Public men had every right to advise the people of their rights. He trusted that those who had given the people the right advice would stand by them and would not hesitate to undergo hardships in order to secure justice.
>
> The first and last principle of passive resistance is that we should not inflict hardships on others but put up with them ourselves in order to get justice, and the Government did not fear anything if we make up our mind as we are bent on getting sheer justice from it and nothing else. We can have two weapons on occasions like this, revolt or passive resistance, and my request is for the second remedy always. In order to remove distress through which the Guzerat people are passing, it is my firm conviction that if we tell the truth to the Government, it will ultimately be convinced and if we are firm in our resolve, the Kaira district people shall suffer wrongs no more.

## INTEREST IN SOUTH AFRICA

In spite of all these activities in India, Mr. Gandhi could never forget the scene of his early

labours. His South African friends and fellow-workers are always dear to him. In a communication to the *Indian Opinion*, he wrote under date 15th December, 1917:

When I left South Africa, I had fully intended to write to my Indian and English friends there from time to time, but I found my lot in India to be quite different from what I had expected it to be. I had hoped to be able to have comparative peace and leisure but I have been irresistibly drawn into many activities I hardly cope with them and local daily correspondence. Half of my time is passed in the Indian trains. My South African friends will, I hope, forgive me for my apparent neglect of them. Let me assure them that not a day has passed but I have thought of them and their kindness South African associations can never be effaced from my memory.

I note, too, that our people in South Africa are not yet free from difficulties about trade licences and leaving certificates My Indian experience has confirmed the opinion that there is no remedy like passive resistance against such evils. The community has to exhaust milder remedies but I hope that it will not allow the sword of passive resistance to get rusty. It is our duty whilst the terrible War lasts, to be satisfied with petitions, etc., for the desired relief but I think the Government should know that the community will not rest until the questions above mentioned are satisfactorily solved It is but right that I should also warn the community against dangers from within. I hear from those who return from South Africa that we are by no means free of those who are engaged in illicit traffic. We who seek justice must be above suspicion, and I hope that our leaders will not rest till they purged the community of internal defects.

## AHMEDABAD MILL STRIKE

Passive Resistance in some form or other has always been Mr. Gandhi's final panacea for all ailments in the body politic. He has applied it with resolute courage, both in his private and public dealings, and has at least as often succeeded as he has failed. But success or failure in the pursuit of a righteous cause is seldom the determining factor with men of

Mr. Gandhi's moral stamina. When in March 1918 the mill-hands at Ahmedabad went on strike, Mr. Gandhi was requisitioned to settle the dispute between the millowners and the workmen, and he arranged a compromise satisfactory to both.

He was guiding the latter to a successful settlement of their wages when some of them betrayed a sense of weakness and despair, and demoralisation was apprehended. At a critical stage in the crisis Mr. Gandhi and Miss Anasuyabhai took the vow of fast. This extreme action on the part of Mr. Gandhi was disquieting to friends and provoked some bitter comments from the unfriendly. He, of course, would be the last person to resort to such a method of forcing the millowners by appealing to their sense of pity, knowing that they were his friends and admirers. He explained the circumstances in a statement issued subsequently:

> I am not sorry for the vow, but with the belief that I have, I would have been unworthy of the trust undertaken by me if I had done anything less. Before I took the vow, I knew that there were serious defects about it. For me to take such a vow in order to affect in any shape or form the decision of the millowners would be a cowardly injustice done to them, and that I would so prove myself unfit for the friendship which I had the privilege of enjoying with some of them. I knew that I ran the risk of being misunderstood. I could not prevent my fast from affecting my decision. That knowledge, moreover, put a responsibility on me which I was ill able to bear. From now I disabled myself from gaining concessions for the men which ordinarily in a struggle such as this I would be entirely justified in securing. I knew, too, that I would have to be satisfied with the minimum I could get from millowners and with a fulfilment of the letter of the men's vow rather than its spirit and so hath it happened. I put the defects of my vow in one scale and the merits of it in the

other "There are hardly any acts of human beings which are free from all taint. Mine, I know, was exceptionally tainted, but better the ignominy of having unworthily compromised by my vow the position and independence of the millowners, than that it should be said by posterity that 10,000 men had suddenly broken a vow which they had for over twenty days solemnly taken and repeated in the name of God I am fully convinced that no body of men can make themselves into a nation or perform great tasks unless they become as true as steel and unless their promises come to be regarded by the world like the law of the Medes and Persians, inflexible, and unbreakable and whatever may be the verdict of friends, so far as I can think at present, on given occasions, I should not hesitate in future to repeat the humble performance which I have taken the liberty of describing in the communication.

## DELHI WAR CONFERENCE

Mr. Gandhi was one of those invited to attend the Delhi War Conference in April 1918. At first he refused to participate in the discussions, on the ground that Mr. Tilak, Mrs. Besant and the Ali Brothers were not invited to the Conference. He, however, waived the objection at the pressing invitation personally conveyed by H.E. Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, in an interview. At the Conference he spoke briefly, supporting the loyalty resolution and urged his countrymen to give in the hour of danger ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire of which "we aspire in the near future to be partners in the same sense as the Dominions overseas".

He explained his position more clearly in a *communique* issued by him soon after the Conference. He pointed out:

I recognise that in the hour of its danger we must give, as we have decided to give, ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire of which we aspire in the near future to be partners in the same sense as the

Dominions overseas. But it is the simple truth that our response is due to the expectation that our goal will be reached all the more speedily. On that account, even as performance of duty automatically confers a corresponding right, people are entitled to believe that the imminent reforms alluded to in your speech will embody the main general principles of the Congress-League scheme, and I am sure that it is this faith which has enabled many members of the Conference to tender to the Government their full-hearted co operation If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions and not whisper "Home Rule" or "Responsible Government" during the pendency of the War. I would make India offer all her able bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment and I know that India, by this very act, would become the most favoured partner in the Empire, and racial distinctions would become a thing of the past. But practically the whole of educated India has decided to take a less effective course, and it is no longer possible to say that educated India does not exercise any influence on the masses.

I feel sure that nothing less than a definite vision of Home Rule to be realised in the shortest possible time will satisfy the Indian people. I know that there are many in India who consider no sacrifice is too great in order to achieve the end, and they are wakeful enough to realise that they must be equally prepared to sacrifice themselves for the Empire in which they hope and desire to reach their final status It follows then that we can but accelerate our journey to the goal by silently and simply devoting ourselves heart and soul to the work of delivering the Empire from the threatening danger. It will be a national suicide not to recognise this elementary truth. We must perceive that, if we serve to save the Empire, we have in that very act secured Home Rule.

Whilst, therefore, it is clear to me that we should give to the Empire every available man for its defence, I fear that I cannot say the same thing about the financial assistance. My intimate intercourse with the raiyats convinces me that India has already donated to the Imperial Exchequer beyond her capacity I know that, in making this statement, I am voicing the opinion of the majority of my countrymen.

It is interesting to note that even so early as this, Mr. Gandhi foreshadowed his views on the Khilafat question of which we shall read so

much indeed in the subsequent pages. Mr. Gandhi wrote these words in a letter to Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy:

Lastly, I would like you to ask His Majesty's Ministers to give definite assurance about the Muhammadan States. I am sure you know that every Muhammadan is deeply interested in them. As a Hindu I cannot be indifferent to their cause Their sorrows must be our sorrows. In the most scrupulous regard for the rights of these States and for the Muslim sentiment as to the places of worship and in your just and timely treatment of the Indian claim to Home Rule lie the safety of the Empire. I write this, because I love the English nation and I wish to evoke in every Indian the loyalty to Englishmen.

## LORD WILLINGDON AND THE HOME RULERS

On June 10, 1918, Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, presiding over the Bombay War Conference, happened to make an unfortunate reference to Home Rulers. Mr. Tilak who was on the war-path resented what he deemed an unwarranted insult to Home Rulers and instantly launched on a downright political oration. His Excellency ruled him out of order and one by one the Home Rulers left the Conference. Mr. Gandhi was asked to preside over the protest meeting in Bombay held on the 16th June. He spoke as follows.

Lord Willingdon has presented them with the expression Home Rule Leaguers distinguished from Home Rulers, and I cannot conceive the existence of an Indian who is not *a Home Ruler; but there are millions like myself* who are not Home Rule Leaguers. Although I am not a member of any Home Rule League, I wish to pay on this auspicious day my humble tribute to numerous Home Rule Leaguers whose association I have ever sought in my work and which has been extended to me ungrudgingly. I have found many of them to be capable of any sacrifice for the sake of the Motherland.

## RECRUITING FOR THE WAR

Mr. Gandhi did a great deal to stimulate recruiting for the War. Some thought it queer business for the apostle of ahimsa and non-violence. Though he did not hesitate to criticise the bureaucracy for individual acts of wrong, he went about in the districts of Kaira calling for recruits. Time and again he wrote to the press urging the need for volunteers, and he constantly spoke to the educated and the illiterate alike on the necessity for joining the Defence Force.

On one occasion he said in Kaira where he had conducted Satyagraha on an extensive scale:

> You have successfully demonstrated how you can resist Government with civility, and how you can retain your own respect without hurting theirs. I now place before you an opportunity of proving that you bear no hostility to Government in spite of your strenuous fight with them.
>
> You are all Home Rulers, some of you are members of Home Rule Leagues. One meaning of Home Rule is that we should become partners of the Empire. To-day we are a subject people. We do not enjoy all the rights of Englishmen. We are not to-day partners of the Empire as are Canada, South Africa and Australia. We are a dependency. We want the rights of Englishmen, and we aspire to be as much partners of the Empire as the Dominions overseas. We wish for the time when we may aspire to the Viceregal office. To bring such a state of things we should have the ability to defend ourselves, that is, the ability to bear arms and to use them. As long as we have to look to Englishmen for our defence, as long as we are not free from the fear of the military, so long we cannot be regarded as equal partners with Englishmen. It, therefore, behoves us to learn the use of arms and to acquire the ability to defend ourselves. If we want to learn the use of arms with the greatest possible despatch, it is our duty to enlist ourselves in the Army.

The easiest and the straightest way to win *Swaraj*, said Mr. Gandhi, is to participate in

the defence of the Empire. This argument, doubtless, went home, and he appealed in the following words:

There are 600 villages in the Kaira district. Every village has on an average a population of over 1,000 If every village gave at least twenty men, the Kaira district would be able to raise an army of 12,000 men. The population of the whole district is seven lakhs and this number will then work out at 17 per cent.—a rate which is lower than the death-rate If we are not prepared to make even this sacrifice for the Empire and Swarajya, it is no wonder if we are regarded as unworthy of it. If every village gives at least twenty men, they will return from the war and be the living bulwarks of their village. If they fall on the battle-field, they will immortalise themselves, their villages and their country, and twenty fresh men will follow suit and offer themselves for national defence.

That was in the last War—Gandhi in the role of a recruiting sergeant! But much water has flowed under the bridge, since then!

## THE MONTAGU REFORMS

We have noticed how Mr. Gandhi took a leading part in the agitation for post-War reforms and how his idea of a monster petition was taken up by every political body of importance in the country. But his enthusiasm for the reforms was by no means sustained as he was absolutely engrossed in other affairs. On the publication of the Joint Report in July 1918, Mr. Gandhi wrote to the *Servant of India* at the request of the Hon. Mr. V. S. S. Sastri for an expression of opinion:

No scheme of reform can possibly benefit India that does not recognise that the present administration is top-heavy and ruinously expensive and for me, even law, order and good government would be too dearly purchased if the price to be paid for it is to be the grinding poverty of the masses. The watchword of our Reform Councils

will have to be not the increase of taxation for the growing needs of a growing country, but a decrease of financial burdens that are sapping the foundation itself of organic growth. If this fundamental fact is recognised there need be no suspicion of our motives and I think I am perfectly safe in asserting that in every other respect British interests will be as secure in Indian hands as they are in their own.

It follows from what I have said above that we must respectfully press for the Congress League claim for the immediate granting to Indians of 50 per cent. of the higher posts in the Civil Service.

## THE ROWLATT BILLS AND SATYAGRAHA

But soon there began a movement which was to tax the utmost energies of Mr. Gandhi—a movement fraught with grave consequences. The Government of India persisted in passing a piece of legislation known as the Rowlatt Laws which were designed to curb still further what little liberty is yet possessed by Indians in their own country. The legislation was presumed to be based on the Report of the Rowlatt Committee which announced the discovery of plots for the subversion of Government. Friends of Government, solicitous of the peaceful and well-ordered condition of society, warned it of the danger of passing such Acts which betrayed a tactless want of confidence and trust in the people at a time when Responsible Government was contemplated. The Bill was stoutly opposed by the public and the press. It was denounced by every political organisation worth the name. It was severely and even vehemently attacked in the Imperial Council (the Central Legislature). Irrespective of parties, the whole country stood solid against a measure of such iniquity. The Hon. Mr. (now

the Rt. Hon.) Sastri and Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya, and in fact every one of the non-official members, condemned the Bill as outrageous and forebode grave consequences if it should be passed. But Government was obstinate and the Bill was passed in the teeth of all opposition.

Mr. Gandhi, who travelled all over the country and wrote and spoke with amazing energy, was not to be easily silenced. Every other form of constitutional agitation having failed, he resorted as *usual to his patent—Satyagraha. On February 28*, 1919, he published a momentous pledge which he asked his countrymen to sign and observe as a covenant binding on them. The pledge ran as follows.

> Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bill known as the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. I of 1919, and Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No. II of 1919, are unjust, subversive of the principle of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the State itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a Committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit, and further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property.

He then started on an extensive tour through the country educating the learned and the unlearned in the principles and practice of Satyagraha. At Bombay, Allahabad, Madras, Tanjore, Trichy, Tuticorin and Negapatam, he addressed large gatherings in March. Sunday, the 6th April, was appointed the Satyagraha day when complete *hartal* was to be observed

prayers offered and the vow to be taken amidst great demonstrations. Delhi observed the Satyagraha day on the 30th, and there ensued a scuffle between the people and the police who fired on the mob, which resulted in heavy casualties. It was alleged against the Delhi people at the railway station

(1) that some of them were trying to coerce sweetmeat sellers into closing their stalls, (2) that some were forcibly preventing people from plying tram-cars and other vehicles; (3) that some of them threw brick-bats, (4) that the whole crowd that marched to the station demanded the release of men who were said to be coercers and who were for that reason arrested at the instance of the Railway authorities, (5) that the crowd declined to disperse when the Magistrate gave orders to disperse.

Swami Shraddhananda (the well-known Mahatma Munshi Ram of the Gurukula, who had taken the Orders of the Sannyasi), denied the first three allegations. Granting they were all true there was no need, argued Mr. Gandhi, for the interference of the military who were called on to fire on the unarmed mob. But the crowd was completely self-possessed, and though there was some loss of life, it spoke volumes in praise of the Delhi people that they conducted a meeting of 40,000 in perfect peace and order. But the Delhi tragedy had burnt itself into the soul of Mr. Gandhi and his friends. "The incident," he said, "imposed an added responsibility upon Satyagrahis of steeling their hearts and going on with their struggle until the Rowlatt Legislation was withdrawn." The whole country answered Mr. Gandhi's call in a way that was at once significant and impressive.

Tens and hundreds of thousands gathered in different cities, and never within living memory had such demonstrations been witnessed.

In the meanwhile, the Satyagraha Committees in different centres of India were actively carrying on their propaganda. The Central Committee, of which Mr. Gandhi was the president, advised that for the time being laws regarding prohibited literature and registration of newspapers might be civilly disobeyed. Accordingly on the 7th April, Mr. Gandhi issued a notice to organise, regulate and control the sale of these publications. A leaflet called *Satyagrahi* was at once brought out as also some early writing of Mr. Gandhi's which was pronounced to be seditious. The first print stated among other things:

> The editor is liable at any moment to be arrested, and it is impossible to ensure the continuity of publication until India is in a happy position of supplying editors enough to take the place of those who are arrested. It is not our intention to break for all time the laws governing the publication of newspapers This paper will, therefore, exist so long only as the Rowlatt Legislation is not withdrawn.

Meanwhile, as contemplated by Mr. Gandhi, he was arrested at Kosi on his way to Delhi on the morning of the 10th April and served with an order not to enter the Punjab and the district of Delhi. The officer serving the order treated him most politely, assuring him that it would be his most painful duty to arrest him, if he elected to disobey, but, that there would be no ill-will between them. Mr. Gandhi smilingly said that he must elect to disobey as it was his duty, and that the officer ought also to do

what was *his* duty. Mr. Gandhi then dictated a message to Mr. Desai, his secretary, laying special emphasis in his oral message that none should resent his arrest or do anything tainted with untruth or violence which was sure to harm the sacred cause.

Mr. Gandhi arrived in Bombay on the afternoon of the 11th April, having been prevented from entering the Provinces of the Punjab and Delhi. An order was soon after served on him requiring him to confine his activities within the limits of the Bombay Presidency. Having heard of the riots and the consequent bloodshed in different places, he caused the following message to be read at all the meetings that evening:

I have not been able to understand the cause of so much excitement and disturbance that followed my detention. It is not Satyagraha. It is worse than *duragraha*. Those who join Satyagraha demonstrations are bound one and all to refrain at all hazard from violence, not to throw stones or in any way whatever to injure anybody.

I therefore suggest that if we cannot conduct this movement without the slightest violence from our side, the movement might have to be abandoned or it may be necessary to give it a different and still more restricted shape. It may be necessary to go even further. The time may come for me to offer Satyagraha against ourselves. I would not deem it a disgrace that we die. I shall be pained to hear of the death of a Satyagrahi but I shall consider it to be the proper sacrifice given for the sake of the struggle.

I do not see what penance I can offer excepting that it is for me to fast and if need be by so doing to give up this body and thus prove the truth of Satyagraha. I appeal to you to peacefully dispense and to refrain from acts that may in any way bring disgrace upon the people of Bombay.

But the *duragraha* of the few upset the calculations of Mr. Gandhi, as he had so constantly

been warned by many of his friends and admirers who could not however subscribe to his faith in civil disobedience. The story of the tragedy needs no repeating. It is written on the tablet of time with bitter memories, and the embers of that controversy have not yet subsided. But Mr. Gandhi, with a delicacy of conscience and a fine appreciation of truth, which we have learnt to associate with his name as with that of Newman, felt for the wrongs done to Englishmen with the same passionate intensity with which he felt for those inflicted on his own countrymen. Few words of remorse in recorded literature are more touching than those uttered by Mr. Gandhi in his speech at Ahmedabad on the 14th April, 1919. They are in the supreme manner of Cardinal Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua*:

> Brothers, the events that have happened in the course of the last few days have been most disgraceful to Ahmedabad, and as all these things have happened in my name, I am ashamed of them, and those who have been responsible for them have thereby not honoured me but disgraced me. A rapier run through my body could hardly have pained me more. I have said times without number that Satyagraha admits of no violence, no pillage, no incendiarism; and still in the name of Satyagraha we burnt down buildings, forcibly captured weapons, extorted money, stopped trains, cut off telegraph wires, killed innocent people and plundered shops and private houses. If deeds such as these could save me from the prison house or the scaffold, I should not like to be so saved.
>
> It is open to anybody to say that but for the Satyagraha campaign, there would not have been this violence. For this I have already done a penance, to my mind an unendurable one, namely, that I have had to postpone my visit to Delhi to seek re-arrest, and I have also been obliged to suggest a temporary restriction of Satyagraha to a limited field. This has been more painful

to me than a wound, but this penance is not enough, and I have therefore decided to fast for three days, *i.e.*, 72 hours. I hope my fast will pain no one, I believe a seventy-two hours' fast is easier for me than a twenty-four hours' fast for you. And I have imposed on me a discipline which I can bear.

In consequence of the violence, he ordered a general suspension of the movement on the 18th April, only to be resumed on another occasion which was soon to follow in the heels of the Punjab tragedy.

## THE PUNJAB DISORDERS

To cope with the disturbances in several centres martial law was declared in the Punjab. Perhaps it was necessary. But the unimaginative and frankly brutal manner in which it was administered by the local Government culminated in a tragedy the like of which had not been witnessed in this or any other country for centuries. It was the utterly wanton massacre at Jallianwala on April 13, 1919—a black day in the annals of British India. The tragic story of this unfortunate happening, which has not yet ceased to have its repurcussions even to this day, may well be told in the words of Sir Valentine Chirol in the London *Times*. He wrote after a visit to the scene of this gruesome tragedy:

> I stood on the same rising ground on which he stood when, without a word of warning, he (Gen. Dyer) opened fire at about 100 yards range upon a dense crowd, collected mainly in the lower and more distant part of the enclosure around a platform from which speeches were being delivered. The crowd was estimated by him at 6,000, by others at 10,000 and more, but practically unarmed, and all quite defenceless. The panicstricken multitude broke at once, but for ten consecutive minutes

he kept up a merciless fusillade—in all, 1,650 rounds—on that seething mass of humanity, caught like rats in a trap, vainly rushing for the few narrow exists or lying flat on the ground to escape the rain of bullets, which he personally directed to the points where the crowd was thickest.

The "targets," to use his own word, were good and when at the end of those ten minutes, having almost exhausted his ammunition, he marched his men off by the way they came, he had killed, according to the official figures only wrung out of Government months later, 379, and left about 1,200 wounded on the ground, for whom, again to use his own word, he did not consider it his "job" to take the slightest thought. . . . .

His purpose, he declared, was to "strike terror into the whole of the Punjab". He may have achieved it for the time, though the evidence on this point is conflicting, but what he achieved far more permanently and effectively was to create in the Jallianwala Bagh, a place of perpetual pilgrimage for racial hatred Then, two days after—not before—Jallianwala, came the formal proclamation of martial law in the Punjab, and though there were no more Jallianwalas, what but racial hatred could result from a constant stream of petty and vindictive measures enforced even after the danger of rebellion, however real it may at first have seemed, had passed away?

It is unnecessary to recount further the extraordinary happenings in the Punjab as time and vigilant enquiries have laid bare the unscrupulous methods of that Government. For months and years after the tale of the Punjab atrocities, the shooting down of a defenceless and unarmed gathering of some 2,000 men, women and children in cold blood at the Jallianwala Bagh, the barbarous methods of martial law administered by Col. Johnson and Bosworth Smith, the wanton indignities to which the poor people of the place were subjected, the callous disregard of life and respect with which Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Brigadier Dyer were inflicting some of the worst features of

Prussianism on a helpless people—the crawling order and the public flogging—these have been the theme of countless articles and speeches. The Punjab revelations have shocked the conscience of the civilized world which could scarcely believe that such frightful acts of brutality could be possible in the British Government till the Hunter Commission confirmed their worst apprehensions.

But it was long before the Government could be forced to appoint a Commission of Inquiry. And at last only a Committee was appointed while all India was anxious for a Royal Commission. It was, therefore, decided to proceed with an independent enquiry. Mr. Gandhi headed the Congress Sub-Committee and carried out a most searching and thorough investigation. It was a pity he could not lead the Congress evidence before the Hunter Committee, owing to differences between the two Committees in regard to the freedom of certain witnesses then under confinement. Suffice it to say that the Congress Committee decided not to give evidence, or in any way participate with the Hunter Committee.

But under the able and indefatigable guidance of Mr. Gandhi, the Congress Committee collected a great mass of material for judging the Punjab disorders. They examined over 1,700 witnesses and recorded the evidence of no less than 650. Mr. Gandhi's participation in the Committee was itself a guarantee to its merit as an authoritative and responsible body. In fact, no name could carry more weight than Mr. Gandhi's in the

matter of veracity in such an undertaking—an undertaking likely to prejudice and warp the judgment of many. When in April 1920 the Report was published, it was hailed everywhere as an unanswerable document—the result of patient industry and dispassionate judgment on a most brutal and savage episode in recent history.

Soon after, the Hunter Report which was for many months in the hands of the Cabinet, was also issued, accompanied by a despatch by the Secretary of State. The Report duly recorded many of the facts published already in the Congress Report, laid stress on the evils of Satyagraha, condoned the bloody exploits of Gen. Dyer as "an error of judgment" (a diplomatic euphemism for the slaughter of the innocents) and vindicated the statesmanship of Sir Michael O'Dwyer! The force of perversion could no further go! Mr. Montagu, however, passionately denounced Gen. Dyer's savagery as inconsistent with the principles of British Government, but curiously enough paid a tribute to Sir Michael's sagacity and firmness and the Viceroy's policy of masterly inactivity! This was bad enough from the Indian point of view. But there sprang up a wild scream from the Anglo-Indian Press, and Mem Sahebs in search of sensation and notoriety discovered in Gen. Dyer the saviour of British India. The *Pioneer* and other prints followed the lead of the London *Morning Post* and appealed for funds for a memorial to this gallant soldier who shot men like rabbits, while a section of the Indian Press

urged that "Chelmsford must go". Then followed the debate in the House of Commons which was looked forward to with some excitement. The House ultimately retained its honour in the debate and Mr. Montagu and Mr. Asquith spoke with a profound sense of justice and carried the day. But it was left to the House of Peers to betray the utter demoralisation that had set in. Lord Finlay's motion condoning Gen. Dyer was passed in spite of the masterly speeches of Lord Curzon and Lord Sinha. Though the noble Lords' action could have no constitutional value it was yet an index to the depth of English ignorance and prejudice. Above all, some officers who had misbehaved in the late tragedy still continued to exercise authority in the Punjab and the late Mr. Lajpat Rai started a propaganda to boycott the New Councils so long as they were not dispensed with. Mr. Gandhi who had already made up his mind to offer Satyagraha in varying forms in connection with the Khilafat question readily joined Lalaji and issued the following note to that effect in July 1920:

Needless to say, I am in entire accord with Lala Lajpat Rai on the question of a boycott of the Reformed Councils. For me it is but one step in the campaign of Non-Co-operation, as I feel equally keenly on the Punjab question as on the Khilafat. Lala Lajpat Rai's suggestion is doubly welcome. I have seen a suggestion made in more quarters than one that Non-Co-operation with the Reforms should commence after the process of election has been gone through. I cannot help saying that it is a mistake to go through the election farce and the expense of it, when we clearly do not intend to take part in the proceedings of these Legislative Councils. Moreover, a great deal of educative work has to be done among the people, and if I could I would not have the best attention of the country

frittered away in electioneering The populace will not understand the beauty of Non-Co-operation, if we seek election and then resign, but it would be a fine education for them if electors are taught not to elect anybody and unanimously to tell whosoever may be seeking their suffrage that he would not represent them if he sought election so long as the Punjab and Khilafat questions were not satisfactorily settled. I hope, however, that Lala Lajpat Rai does not mean to end with the boycott of the Reformed Councils We must take, if necessary, every one of the four stages of Non-Co-operation if we are to be regarded as a self-respecting nation The issue is clear. Both the Khilafat terms and the Punjab affairs show that Indian opinion counts for little in the counsels of the Empire. It is a humiliating position We shall make nothing of the Reforms if we quietly swallow the humilitation. In my humble opinion, therefore, the first condition of real progress is the removal of these two difficulties in our path, and, unless some better course of action is devised, Non-Co-operation must hold the field.

## THE KHILAFAT QUESTION

We have referred more than once to Mr. Gandhi's connection with the Khilafat question. The country was in the throes of a tremendous agitation—an agitation which gained enormously in intensity and popular appeal by the mere fact of Mr. Gandhi's participation in it. It would take us far afield to discuss the whole question of the history of the Khilafat movement. Briefly put, it resolves itself into two primary factors. The first was the then Premier's pledge and promise, that after the War nothing would be done to disturb the integrity of the Ottoman Empire both as a concession to Muslim loyalty and in accordance with the principles of self-determination. The second was that the violation of imperial obligation was thoroughly immoral and should at all costs be resisted by all self-respecting Mahomedans. In this gigantic enterprise Hindus must

help Mahomedans and join hands with them as a token of neighbourly regard. This, at any rate, was the interpretation put upon the Khilafat question by Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi would not stop to consider that the Government of India could possibly have no voice in the determination of an international negotiation. He knew that the Government of India had represented the Indian feeling with some warmth and that Mr. Montagu and Lord Sinha had done their best to voice the claims of India at the Peace Table. But he held that the Government of India had not done all in their power and when the terms of the Treaty with Turkey were published with a lengthy note from the Government of India to soothe the injured sentiment of the Muslim people, Mr. Gandhi wrote a remarkably frank letter to H. E. Lord Chelmsford on June 14, 1920, setting forth his reasons for resorting to Non-Co-operation. It throws a luminous light on Gandhi's conception of the identity of interests between Hindus and Muslims in India.

The Peace terms and Your Excellency's defence of them have given the Mussalmans of India a shock from which it will be difficult for them to recover. The terms violate Ministerial pledges and utterly disregard the Mussalman sentiment. I consider that as a staunch Hindu, wishing to live on terms of the closest friendship with my Mussalman countrymen, I should be an unworthy son of India if I did not stand by them in their hour of trial. In my humble opinion, their cause is just. They claim that Turkey must not be punished if their sentiment is to be respected. Muslim soldiers did not fight to inflict punishment on their own Khalifa or to deprive him of his territories. The Mussalman attitude has been consistent throughout these five years. My duty to the Empire to which I owe my loyalty, requires me to resist the cruel violence that had been done to Mussalman sentiment. So far as I am aware,

the Mussalmans and Hindus have, as a whole, lost faith in British justice and honour.

The report of the majority of the Hunter Committee, Your Excellency's despatch thereon, and Mr. Montagu's reply, have only aggravated the distrust. In these circumstances, the only course open to one like me is either in despair to sever all connection with British rule or if I still retained the faith in the inherent superiority of the British Constitution to all others at present in vogue, to adopt such means as will rectify the wrong done and thus restore that confidence.

Non-Co-operation was the only dignified and constitutional form of such direct action For it is a right recognised from times immemorial of the subjects to refuse to assist the ruler who misrules At the same time, I admit Non-Co-operation practised by the mass of people is attended with grave risks. But in a crisis such as has overtaken the Mussalmans of India, no step that is unattended with large risks can possibly bring about the desired change Not to run some risks will be to count much greater risks, if not the virtual destruction of law and order, but there is yet an escape from Non-Co-operation. The Mussalman representation has requested Your Excellency to lead the agitation yourself as did your distinguished predecessor at the time of the South African trouble, but if you cannot see your way to do so and Non-Co-operation becomes the dire necessity, I hope Your Excellency will give those who have accepted my advice and myself credit for being actuated by nothing less than a stern sense of duty.

Gandhi never starts a movement in a hurry. He gives due notice to the authorities and the public, and could not be easily hustled by friends or foes. He takes his own measure of things.

### THE NON-CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME

And what was the Non-Co-operation programme that Mr. Gandhi had worked out for the adoption of the country for rectifying the wrongs done to Muslim sentiment? He enunciated the four stages in the programme of Non-Co-operation in clear and unambiguous terms. The first was the giving up of titles and honorary offices, the second was

the refusal to serve Government in paid appointments or to participate in any manner in the working of the existing machinery of civil and judicial administration. The third was to decline to pay taxes, and the last was to ask the police and the military to withdraw co-operation from the Government. From the first Mr. Gandhi realised the full scope of the movement and he had no doubt of its far-reaching effects. It cannot, therefore, be said that he started the movement in a fit of indignation. Far from it, he had worked out his programme to the farthest limits of its logic and had a clear grasp of all its implications. From time to time he set right many a misconception in the mind of the non-co-operationists, such for instance, in regard to the position of the non-co-operationist Vakil. There is no ambiguity in what Mr. Gandhi said. The Vakil should quietly wash his hands off the Courts, cases and all. Mr. Gandhi took care to explain that no stage would be taken until he had made sure that he was on firm ground. That is, he would not embark on the last two stages till he had created an indigenous panchayat to dispense justice and an organization of volunteers to maintain peace and order. In any case, violence should be completely avoided.

Now it must be admitted that many people had only a vague and hazy notion of Mr. Gandhi's programme. There were, of course, those who plainly told Mr. Gandhi of the impracticability of his scheme and the dangers involved in it. Many Liberal League organizations implored

Mr. Gandhi not to lead the country to a repetition of the Punjab tragedy. Moderate leaders like Sir Narayan Chandavarkar argued the futility of methods leading to anarchy and chaos. But the most amusing, even at such serious times, was the attitude of some Congressmen. These were variously divided. All hailed Non-Co-operation in theory and were determined to uphold it any cost! But when the time came for practising it, they flooded the country with a mass of literature of the most tortuous kind. These friends and "followers" proved to be the real thorn on Mr. Gandhi's side. Aspirants after Council honours refused to commit what they called "political suicide" by boycotting the New Councils. Others affected to believe in the possibilities of further efforts of constitutional agitation. Still others detected illegalities in some stages of Non-Co-operation. And yet some would not commit themselves but await the verdict of the Special Congress. A minority would contest at the elections only to resign again and yet some others would join the New Councils just to wreck the Reforms! What a cloud of words and mystification of meaning! To all this warfare of words Mr. Gandhi's own direct and simple statements were in refreshing contrast. He spoke and wrote strongly on the subject. There could be no doubt of his intentions or his plans. There was no ambiguity in his language. His words went straight as a bullet and he had a wholesome scorn of diplomatic reserves in opinion.

Accordingly on the 1st August, 1920, as he had already announced, he led the movement by returning the *Kaiser-i-Hind* gold medal to the Viceroy. In returning it he wrote a letter to His Excellency from which we must quote the following sentences.—

> Events that have happened during the past month have confirmed me in the opinion that the Imperial Government have acted in the Khilafat matter in an unscrupulous, immoral, and unjust manner and have been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend their immorality. I can retain neither respect nor affection for such a Government. . . . .
>
> Your Excellency's light-hearted treatment of official crime, your exoneration of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Mr. Montagu's despatch, and above all, the shameful ignorance of the Punjab events and callous disregard of the feelings of Indians betrayed by the House of Lords have filled me with the gravest misgivings regarding the future of the Empire, have estranged me completely from the present Government and have disabled me from rendering as I have hitherto whole-heartedly tendered, my loyal co-operation.
>
> In my humble opinion, the ordinary method of agitating by way of petitions, deputations, and the like is no remedy for moving to repentance a Government so hopelessly indifferent to the welfare of its charge as the Government of India has proved to be. In European countries condonation of such grievous wrong as the Khilafat and the Punjab would have resulted in a bloody revolution by the people They would have resisted, at all costs, national emasculation. Half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance and the other half is unwilling to do so. I have, therefore, ventured to suggest the remedy of Non-Co-operation, which enables those who wish to dissociate themselves from Government, and which, if it is unattended by violence and undertaken in an ordered manner, must compel it to retrace its steps and undo the wrongs committed; but whilst I pursue the policy of Non-Co-operation, in so far as I can carry the people with me, I shall not lose hope that you will yet see your way to do justice. I, thereafter, respectfully ask Your Excellency to summon a conference of recognised leaders of the people, and, in consultation with them, to find a way

that will gladden Mussalmans and do reparation to the unhappy Punjab.

That has always been his way: to give due notice of his actions and await a change of heart in the adversary.

Soon after, Mr. Gandhi started on an extensive campaign preaching Non-Co-operation to large audiences. In August he came to Madras where he delivered a powerful speech advocating his scheme. Mr. Gandhi went to Tanjore, Trichy, Bangalore and other places and discoursed on the same subject with his accustomed energy, while his weekly *Young India* was replete with regular contributions from his indefatigable pen. Week after week *Young India* came out with a series of articles from Mr. Gandhi's pen answering objections and formulating methods of Non-Co-operation, which, whether one agreed with them or not, were undoubtedly an intellectual treat.

## THE SPECIAL CONGRESS AND NON-CO-OPERATION

Mr. Gandhi's immediate objective was to convert the Special Congress (to be held at Calcutta in September 1920 under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai who had just returned from America) to his creed. For, as we have said, though many had jubilantly proclaimed their faith in his programme, it was found that as time drew near for putting his plans into practice they were busy finding loopholes to escape the rigours of Mr. Gandhi's discipline. Everybody would throw everybody else into the struggle. A body of men who had sworn by Mr. Gandhi and denounced those who

had the courage to differ from him were suddenly faced with an awkward dilemma. They felt the inconvenience of suffering and sacrifice and would fain be relieved of their unwitting words of bravado. But Mr. Gandhi would stand four square to all the winds that blew. Nor could they with any grace secede from the Congress, having so violently denounced as treason the Moderates' disregard of the Delhi and Amritsar Resolutions. There was to their mind only one course left open, *i.e.*, to thwart Mr. Gandhi's resolution in the open Congress. But Mr. Gandhi had prepared the ground with characteristic thoroughness. Khilafat specials from Bombay and Madras had flooded the Congress with delegates sworn to vote for him. There was a tough fight in the Subjects Committee which sat for eight long hours without coming to any apparent decision. Over forty amendments (dear to the legal mind :) were brought in by different members, twelve of them were ruled out as mere verbal repetitions and there remained no less than 28 amendments to consider. The speeches in the Subjects Committee were remarkably frank. Messrs. Malaviya, Das, Pal, Jinnah, Baptista, all attacked the original resolution with warmth, while Dr. Besant vigorously assailed the very principle of Non-Co-operation. The debate was most exciting. The President, Mr. Lajpat Rai himself, spoke strongly against certain important provisions of the resolution. He would not agree to the withdrawal of boys from schools nor could he think it at all possible to call upon lawyers to

leave their practice. He was personally in favour of the principle of Non-Co-operation but he doubted the wisdom of committing the Congress to those extravagant and far-reaching items in Mr. Gandhi's programme.

BOYCOTT OF COUNCILS

But by far the most contentious item in the resolution was that relating to the boycott of Councils. The bulk of the Nationalists were strangely enough opposed to it and by a curious stretch of logic they considered obstruction in the Council as preferable to wholesale boycott.

Mr. C. R. Das, who was in charge of the main resolution on behalf of the Reception Committee, agreed to Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal's amendment of his resolution, but if it was defeated, he would stand by his own. Mr. Pal's amendment was put to the vote and was lost, 155 voting for and 161 against. Then another vote was taken on Mr. Das's resolution and Mr. Gandhi's resolution as amended by Pundit Motilal Nehru and as accepted by Mr. Gandhi himself was passed. It is said that in the final voting a poll was taken, 133 voting for Mr. Das's resolution and 148 for Mr. Gandhi's, giving a majority to Mr. Gandhi of only 15 votes and thus showing that the voting was very close. It is clear that the Subjects Committee consisted of 296 members present and that 15 of whom remained neutral. The greatest excitement prevailed both inside the Committee room and outside when it was known that Mr. Gandhi won the day. Nearly two thousand people collected

outside and shouted "Gandhi Mahatma Kee Jai" and "Bande Mataram."

THE NON-CO-OPERATION RESOLUTION

That gives the clue to the mentality of the Congress. If Mr. Gandhi could win in the Subjects Committee itself there was no doubt of his triumph in the open Congress. Still Mr. Das proposed to bring his amendments in the open Congress and take the verdict. That verdict was a foregone conclusion.

The Nationalists complained (what an irony of things!) that the Khilafats had packed the house and manœuvred a majority. There is no doubt that each party strove for victory. When the Congress met the next day, Sir Asutosh Choudhuri moved for adjournment of the question in the right legal way. Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao seconded it but the motion was lost by an overwhelming majority.

Mr. Gandhi then rose to move his famous Non-Co-operation Resolution amidst thunderous applause. The Resolution ran as follows:—

In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Mussalmans of India, and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them and that it is the duty of every non-Muslim Indian in every legitimate manner to assist his Mussalman brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him,

And in view of the fact that in the matter of the events of the April of 1919, both the said Governments have grossly neglected or failed to protect the innocent people of the Punjab and punish officers guilty of unsoldierly and barbarous behaviour towards them and have exonerated Sir Michael O'Dwyer who proved himself directly or indirectly responsible for most of the official crimes and callous to the sufferings of the people placed under

his administration, and that the Debate in the House of Commons and specially in the House of Lords betrayed a woeful lack of sympathy with the people of India and showed virtual support of the systematic terrorism and frightfulness adopted in the Punjab and that the latest Viceregal pronouncement is proof of entire absence of repentance in the matters of the Khilafat and the Punjab.

This Congress is of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of the two aforementioned wrongs and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of Swarajya This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent Non-Co-operation until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajya is established.

And inasmuch as a beginning should be made by the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion and inasmuch as Government consolidates its power through titles and honours bestowed on the people, through schools controlled by it, its law courts and its legislative councils, and inasmuch as it is desirable in the prosecution of the movement to take the minimum risk and to call for the least sacrifice compatible with the attainment of the desired object, the Congress earnestly advises :

(*a*) surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies;

(*b*) refusal to attend Government levees, durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials or in their honour;

(*c*) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided, or controlled by Government and in place of such schools and colleges, establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces,

(*d*) gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants and establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes,

(*e*) refusal on the part of military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia;

(*f*) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed Councils and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election.

(*g*) And inasmuch as Non-Co-operation has been conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice without which no nation can make real progress, and inasmuch as an opportunity should be given in the very first stage of Non-Co-operation to every man, woman and child, for such discipline and self-sacrifice, this Congress advises adoption of Swadeshi in piecegoods on a vast scale and inasmuch as the existing mills of India with indigenous capital and control do not manufacture sufficient yarn and sufficient cloth for the requirements of the nation and are not likely to do so for a long time to come, this Congress advises immediate stimulation of further manufacture on a large scale by means of reviving hand-spinning in every home and hand-weaving on the part of the millions of weavers who have abandoned their ancient and honourable calling for want of encouragement.

In moving the resolution, Mr. Gandhi spoke with compelling fervour. "I stand before you, in fear of God," he said, "and with a sense of duty towards my country to commend this resolution to your hearty acceptance." Mr. Gandhi said that the only weapon in their hands was Non-Co-operation, and non-violence should be their creed. Dr. Kitchlew seconded the resolution in Urdu.

Mr. Pal then placed his amendment which proposed a mission to England to present our demands and in the meanwhile to establish national schools, formulate arbitration courts and not to boycott the Councils.

Mr. Das in supporting the amendment made an appeal to Mr. Gandhi to consider the practical effect of his victory. Dr. Besant opposed both the resolution and the amendment, while Pundit Malaviya and Mr. Jinnah preferred the latter. Messrs. Yakub Hasan, Jitendra Lal Banerjea, Motilal Nehru and Rambhuji Dutt supported Mr. Gandhi whose resolution was finally carried.

The Congress re-assembled on the 9th and the whole morning was devoted to the taking of votes, province by province, for and against Mr. Gandhi's motion. Out of twelve provinces only the Central Provinces and Berar showed a majority against Mr. Gandhi's motion, while in the remaining ten provinces the majority of votes were in his favour. The President announced that out of 5,814 delegates, the registered number of delegates who took part in the voting was 2,728, while 68 did not vote. Actual voting showed that 1,855 voted for and 879 against Mr. Gandhi's motion.

### THE FATEFUL DECISION

After this fateful decision it was no wonder that Congressmen who were avowedly against Non-Co-operation found themselves in a difficult predicament. They hastily called for a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee and it was resolved to find a way out of the situation.

The mandatory nature of the Congress Resolution was relaxed at the instance of Pundit Malaviya and a few others who thought it suicidal to let slip the benefits of the new reforms. It was, however, thought inexpedient to impair the authority of the Congress, and Congressmen like Mr. Patel in Bombay, Mr. Das in Bengal, Pundit Motilal Nehru in U. P., Messrs. Madhava Rao and Vijayaraghavachariar in Madras—though they had opposed the resolution in the Congress—decided to abide by it, and withdrew their candidature from the forthcoming elections. Many leading Congressmen resigned their honorary

offices and relinquished their titles. While several office-bearers in the Provincial Congress Committees who were opposed to the resolution, resigned their offices so as to leave the Congress organisations free to work out Mr. Gandhi's programme.

If Mr. Gandhi's influence was so decisive at the Special Congress as to set at naught the opinions of Congressmen like C. R. Das and Bepin Chandra Pal, his authority was supreme at the Nagpur Session in December. Nagpur, in fact, witnessed the turning point in the history of the Congress, as in that year Mr. Gandhi, with an overwhelming majority, completely captured this institution and converted its leading spirits to his creed. Here it was that the old creed of the Congress was discarded for the new one of indifference to British overlordship.

With the change of creed and wholesale adoption of the programme of Non-Co-operation the old Congress was virtually dead. The new Congress was inspired by a new hope and sustained by new methods altogether alien to the faith of men like Dadabhai and Gokhale who had guided it in its years of infancy and adolescence.

Mr. Gandhi was not slow to use his great authority over the Congress to further the movement of which he was the directing head At his command were all the Congress and Khilafat organisations, and he set out on an extensive tour of the country preaching the new cult with the fervour of a prophet. Everywhere he was received with ovation.

As he went from place to place accompanied by the Ali Brothers, the movement became popular among the ignorant as well as the literate. His fourfold programme of boycotting schools, cloths, councils and Government service was the theme of multitudinous discourses. But the most painful result (at any rate to those who were not of his persuasion) was the calling away of youths from schools and colleges. Many a lad, led away by the glamour of the great ideal and the irresistible appeal of a saintly leader, gave up his school education—the only education available in the country.

One peculiarity of the programme was that emphasis was laid on each item as the occasion demanded. At one time it was the boycott of schools, again it was the collection of a crore of rupees for the Swarajya Fund, a third time it was the burning of mill cloths, and yet again it was the boycott of the Duke or the good Prince. Each was in turn to bring Swarajya within the year. Thus in February the agitation centred on the boycott of the Duke of Connaught to whom Mr. Gandhi addressed a dignified if uncompromising letter.

By May the spirit of lawlessness had spread far and wide, and strikes and *hartals* became the order of the day. Mr. Gandhi, however, resolutely discountenanced all violence and he was seldom sparing in his admonition of those who took part in the incident at Malegaon and other places. Again and again, he spoke strongly against the spirit of non-violence which for a

time broke out as often as he decried it in all earnestness.

INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW VICEROY

It was about this time too that Lord Chelmsford retired and his place was taken by Lord Reading (April 1921) who came to India with a great reputation as jurist and diplomat. An ex-Lord Chief Justice of England and sometime British Ambassador at Washington during the fateful years of the War—the new Viceroy inspired great hopes. His reputation for justice, strengthened by his repeated assurances, and his reputation for tactful dealing of delicate questions were just the things of momentous need for India. No wonder, an air of hope and expectancy hung over the whole country.

Soon after Lord Reading arrived in India, an interview was arranged by Pundit Malaviya between the new Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi. This interview, which lasted many hours, took place at Simla in May 1921. Much speculation was rife as to its result and Mr. Gandhi explained the circumstances and the results of his talk in an article in *Young India* under the title "The Simla Visit". What was the upshot of the visit? The leader of the Non-Co-operation movement and the head of the Government of India got to know each other. It was a great thing.

But the immediate result of this was the statement issued by the Ali Brothers—a statement in which they regretted their occasional lapse into excessive language and promised to refrain from writing or speaking in any manner likely

to provoke violence. This "definite result of the interview" was claimed as a victory for the Government. Others claimed that it was a victory for Mr. Gandhi who explained that it was no apology or undertaking to the Government, but a re-assertion of the principle of non-violence to which the Ali Brothers had subscribed. It was a statement to the public irrespective of what the Government might or might not do with them. In answer to criticisms against his advice to the Brothers, Mr. Gandhi stoutly defended his action, and praised the Brothers' attitude.

Indeed Mr. Gandhi's loyalty to his colleagues and particularly his affectionate and fraternal regard for the Brothers was beautiful and touching to a degree. And when in September 1921, the Brothers were prosecuted by the Bombay Government, Mr. Gandhi with fifty others issued a public manifesto that "it is the inherent right of every one to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety of citizens offering their services to, or remaining in the employ of, the Government whether in the civil or the military department". To think of those days and Mr. Shaukat Ali's later performances is a study in contrast. Who could have imagined that the "big brother" would lead the revolt against his erstwhile leader?

## THE BOMBAY RIOTS

Now to take up the thread of the story. Whatever the root-cause of the breaking out of violence and hooliganism, the landing of the Prince of Wales in Bombay on the 17th November

was made the occasion of a ghastly tragedy. Mr. Gandhi had since the announcement of the Royal visit appealed to his countrymen to refrain from participating in the functions got up in honour of the Prince. Non-Co-operators all over the country had organised what were known as 'hartals', closing of shops and suspending all work, and boycotting the Prince. In Bombay such activities resulted in a great riot in which all parties suffered owing to the hooliganism of the mischievous elements in the mob who violated Mr. Gandhi's injunctions to be non-violent and brought about a terrible riot. Mr. Gandhi was then in Bombay and after witnessing the scene of the tragedy, wrote some of the most stirring letters which, coupled with the exertions of men of all parties, restored peace in the city.

As a penance for this ghastly tragedy, he pledged himself to fast till complete peace was restored. Strangely enough, the situation was well in hand in a couple of days and on the fourth day in breaking the fast in the midst of a gathering of Co-operators, Non-Co-operators, Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis and Christians, Mr. Gandhi made a thrilling statement.

Warned by the disasters at Bombay and the Moplah rebellion which was still going on in Malabar, it was expected that Mr. Gandhi would reconsider his position and stop short of the extreme step in Non-Co-operation. But that was not to be. The Congress had by this time become an organ for registering his decrees. And the Committee met frequently to devise methods

in pursuance of Non-Co-operation. Thundering resolutions, alternating with hopes and warnings, came in quick succession. Province after Province vied with one another for the exciting novelty of Civil Disobedience.

Though the author of the Civil Disobedience movement in India, Mr. Gandhi was always alive to its dangers. He therefore insisted that his conditions should be fulfilled *in toto* before any taluka could embark on the campaign. And those conditions were very rigorous indeed.

### THE CALCUTTA HARTAL

Meanwhile the hartal organised by Non-Co-operators in connection with the Prince's visit was more or less successful in many places. It was alleged that by intimidation and otherwise, the hartal in Calcutta on the day of the Prince's landing in Bombay was phenomenally complete. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and the Anglo-Indian Press took an alarmist view of the situation and expressed grave indignation against the passivity of the Government. With a view to suppress the activity of the Congress in this direction, Government resuscitated Part II of the Criminal Law Amendment Act which was then literally under a sentence of death. When volunteering was declared unlawful, Congress leaders took up the challenge and called on the people to disobey the order and seek imprisonment in their thousands. Men like Messrs. C. R. Das in Calcutta, and Motilal Nehru in Allahabad, openly defied the order and canvassed volunteers in total

disregard of legal consequences. They sought imprisonment and called on their countrymen to follow them to prison. The situation was grave. It was then that Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sir P. C. Ray and others thought that the time had come when they should step into the breach and try to bring about a reconciliation between Government and Non-Co-operators. With this view, Pundit Madan Mohan and others interviewed leading Non-Co-operators and those in authority. Lord Ronaldshay, in his speech at the Legislative Council, referred to the gravity of the situation and defined the firm attitude of Government.

The Viceroy who had invited the Prince was naturally very indignant at the strange form of "reception" that awaited the innocent scion of the Royal House. Could anything be done at all towards a *rapprochement*?

## THE DEPUTATION TO THE VICEROY

A Deputation headed by Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya waited on His Excellency the Viceroy at Calcutta on December 21, and requested him to call a Round Table Conference of representatives of people of all shades of opinion with a view to bring about a settlement. Lord Reading replied at some length and defined the attitude of the Government. He regretted that "it is impossible even to consider the convening of a conference if agitation in open and avowed defiance of law is meanwhile to be continued in Mr. Gandhi's refusal to call off the hartal."

connection with H. R. H. the Prince of Wales' visit to Calcutta on December 24, apparently stiffened the attitude of the Government. Interviewed by the Associated Press, Mr. Gandhi made the following statement regarding the Viceroy's reply to the Deputation:—

I repeat for the thousandth time that it is not hostile to any nation or any body of men, but it is deliberately aimed at the system under which the Government of India is being to-day conducted, and I promise that no threats and no enforcement of threats by the Viceroy or any body of men will strangle that agitation or send to rest that awakening.

THE AHMEDABAD CONGRESS

Meanwhile the Annual Session of the Congress met at Ahmedabad, the headquarters of Mr. Gandhi. It was virtually a Gandhi session, for, always he has been the power behind the throne, whoever might be the President. The President-elect, Mr. C. R. Das, was in prison and so were many other leaders besides. Hakim Ajmal Khan was elected to take the chair and the proceedings were all in Hindi and Gujarati. Mr. Gandhi was invested with full dictatorial powers by the Congress.

There were yet some in the Congress who went a step further than Mr. Gandhi himself. Moulana Hazrat Mohani stood out for complete independence and it is interesting to note how valiantly Mr. Gandhi fought then against the motion of absolute severance from Britain. Mr. Gandhi opposed all his amendments and pinned the Congress down to his own resolution. Soon after the session, some of the Provincial thr[illegible]anisations were busy preparing for a no-tax
sum[illegible]

campaign. In U. P., Gujarat, the Andhra and in the Punjab, the movement threatened to assume a serious turn. Mr. Gandhi himself, while insisting that his conditions should be fulfilled before any taluka should embark on an offensive campaign, threw the onus of responsibility on the Province itself—Provincial autonomy with a vengeance! But then there were hopes of peace in the air.

### THE BOMBAY CONFERENCE

A conference of representatives of various shades of political opinion convened by Pundit Malaviya, Mr. Jinnah and others, assembled at Bombay on the 14th January, 1922, with Sir C. Sankaran Nair in the chair. On the second day, Sir Sankaran withdrew and Sir M. Visveswaraya took his place. Over two hundred leading men from different provinces attended. Mr. Gandhi was present throughout and though he refused to be officially connected—an attitude resented by many—with the resolutions, he took part in the debates and helped the conference in framing the resolutions which were also ratified by the Congress Working Committee.

### OPEN LETTER TO LORD READING

While negotiations were going on between the representatives of the Malaviya Conference and H. E. the Viceroy, Mr. Gandhi addressed an open letter to Lord Reading. The letter was a strong protest against the repression that was going on in the country and in effect an ultimatum holding out the threat of an immediate inauguration of civil disobedience in Bardoli. In that let-

Mr. Gandhi charged the Government of many crimes and misdemeanours and frankly held forth:

Repression of a virulent type has taken place with the concurrence of the Government of India, in Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, the Province of Delhi and in a way in Bihar and Orissa and elsewhere. I know that you have objected to the use of the word "repression" for describing the action of the authorities in these provinces In my opinion, when an action is taken which is in excess of the requirements of the situation, it is undoubtedly repression. The looting of property, assaults on innocent people, brutal treatment of the prisoners in jails, including flogging, can in no sense be described as legal, civilized or in any way necessary This official lawlessness cannot be described by any other term but lawless repression

Intimidation by Non-Co-operators or their sympathisers to a certain extent in connection with hartals and picketing may be admitted, but in no case can it be held to justify the wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering or equally peaceful public meetings under a distorted use of an extraordinary law which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action, nor is it possible to designate as otherwise than repressive action taken against innocent people under what has appeared to many of us as an illegal use of the ordinary law, nor again can the administrative interference with the liberty of the Press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression.

The immediate task before the country, therefore, is to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of Press.

In the present mood of the Government of India and in the present unprepared state of the country in respect of complete control of the forces of violence, Non-Co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference whose object was to induce Your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference. But as I was anxious to avoid all avoidable suffering, I had no hesitation in advising the Working Committee of the Congress to accept the recommendations of that Conference

Although, in my opinion, the terms were quite in keeping with your own requirements as I understood them through your Calcutta speech and otherwise, you have summarily rejected the proposal.

In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands; including the elementary rights of free speech, free association and free Press In my humble opinion, the recent events are a clear departure from the civilized policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditional apology of the Ali Brothers, *viz*, that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of Non-Co-operators so long as they remained non-violent in word and deed. Had the Government policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of Civil Disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents. But the lawless repression (in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country) has made immediate adoption of mass Civil Disobedience, an imperative duty The Working Committee of the Congress has restricted it only to certain areas to be selected by me from time to time and at present it is confined only to Bardoli. I may under said authority give my consent at once in respect of a group of 100 villages in Guntur in the Madras Presidency, provided they can strictly conform to the conditions of non-violence, unity among different classes, the adoption and manufacture of hand-spun Khaddar and untouchability.

But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass Civil Disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as the head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy and so free all the Non-Co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non violent activities and declare in clear terms the policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs or Swaraj or any other purpose and even though they fall within the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws, subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the Press from all administrative control and restore all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging I am asking Your Excellency to do what is to-day being done in every country which is deemed to be under civilised Government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advise

postponement of Civil Disobedience of an aggressive character till the imprisoned workers have after their discharge reviewed the whole situation and considered the position *de novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion and shall, therefore, have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding the public opinion without violent restraint from either side and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive Civil Disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality or refuse to yield to the clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India

The Government of India in a *communiqué* published on the 6th February in reply to Mr. Gandhi's letter, repudiated his assertion and urged that the issue before the country was no longer between this or that programme of political advance, but between lawlessness with all its consequence on the one hand, and on the other, the maintenance of those principles which lie at the root of all civilised Governments. Mr. Gandhi in a further rejoinder issued on the very next day, pointed out that the choice before the people was mass Civil Disobedience with all its undoubted dangers and lawless repression of the lawful activities of the people.

Mr. Gandhi then gave a comprehensive account of what he described as Government's lawlessness and barbarities with the following facts:—

(1) Official shooting at Entally in Calcutta and the callous treatment even of a corpse (2) The admitted brutality of the civil guards. (3) The forcible dispersal of a meeting at Dacca and the dragging of innocent men by their legs although they had given no offence or cause whatsoever. (4) Similar treatment of volunteers in Aligarh. (5) The conclusive (in my opinion) findings of the Committee presided over by Dr. Gokhul Chand about the

brutal and uncalled for assults upon volunteers and the public in Lahore (6) The wicked and inhuman treatment of volunteers and the public at Jullundur. (7) The shooting of a boy at Dehra Dun and the cruelly forcible dispersal of a public meeting of that place. (8) The looting admitted by the Bihar Government of villages by an officer and his company without any permission whatsoever, from any one, but, as stated by Non-Co operators at the invitation of a planter, assaults upon volunteers and the burning of Khaddar and papers belonging to the Congress at Sompur. (9) The midnight searches and arrests in the Congress and Khilafat offices

I have merely given a sample of the many infallible proofs of official lawlessness and barbarism. I have mentioned not even a tithe of what is happening all over the country. I wish to state, without fear of successful contradiction, that the scale on which this lawlessness had gone on in so many provinces of India puts into shade the inhumanities that were practised in the Punjab, if we except the crawling order and the massacre at Jallianwallabagh It is my certain conviction that the massacre at Jallianwallabagh was a clean transaction compared to the unclean transactions described above, and the pity of it is that, because people are not shot or butchered, the tortures through which hundreds of inoffensive men have gone through do not produce a sufficient effect to turn everybody's face against this Government.

And he wound up with the following challenge:

I venture to claim extreme reasonableness and moderation for the above presentation of the case. The alternative before the people, therefore, is not, as the *communique* concludes, between "lawlessness with all its disastrous consequences on the one hand and on the other the maintenance of those principles which lie at the root of all civilised Governments". Mass Civil Disobedience, it adds, is fraught with such danger to the State that it must be met with "sternness and severity". The choice before the people is mass civil disobedience with all its undoubted dangers and lawless repression of the lawful activities of the people. I hold that it is impossible for any body of self-respecting men for fear of unknown dangers to sit still and do nothing effective when looting of property and assaulting of innocent men are going on all over the country in the name of law and order.

## THE CHAURI CHAURA TRAGEDY

While Mr. Gandhi was about to inaugurate mass Civil Disobedience in Bardoli, there occurred a terrible tragedy at Chauri Chaura on the 14th February, 1922, when an infuriated mob, including some volunteers also, attacked the *thana*, burnt down the building and beat to death no less than twenty-two policemen. Some constables and chaukedars were literally burnt to death and the whole place was under mobocracy. Mr. Gandhi took this occurrence as a third warning from God to suspend civil disobedience, and the Bardoli programme was accordingly given up. Soon after, the Working Committee met at Bardoli and resolved to suspend all offensive action, including even picketing and processions. The country was to confine itself to the constructive programme of Khaddar manufacture. The Working Committee advised the stoppage of all activities designed to court imprisonment.

The suspension of mass civil disobedience in Bardoli, which was recommended by the Working Committee, at the instance of Mr. Gandhi, was resented by some of his colleagues and followers. In reply to correspondents who attacked him, he wrote as follows in *Young India* of February 23.

> I feel still more confident of the correctness of the decision of the Working Committee, but if it is found that the country repudiates my action I shall not mind it. I can but do my duty.

The All-India Congress Committee met on the 25th at Delhi to consider the Bardoli decisions, and though the latter were endorsed

it was not done without some important modifications, to feed the growing demand for aggressive action on the part of the extreme Non-Co-operators. From subsequent events it was fairly certain that the Delhi resolutions confirmed the Government's resolve to prosecute Mr. Gandhi, a resolve which was held in abeyance after the Bardoli programme was made known.

GANDHI'S ARREST

For months past the rumour of Mr. Gandhi's impending arrest was in the air. Expecting the inevitable, Mr. Gandhi had more than once written his final message. But in the first week of March the rumour became more wide-spread and intense. The stiffening of public opinion in England and Mr. Montagu's threatening speech in defence of his Indian policy in the Commons, revealed the fact that the Secretary of State had already sanctioned Mr. Gandhi's prosecution. Chauri Chaura and the Delhi decision were presumably the immediate cause of Government's action on Gandhi. Realising that his arrest would not long be deferred, Gandhi wrote a farewell message in *Young India* calling on his countrymen to continue the work of the Congress undeterred by fear, to prosecute the Khaddar programme, to promote Hindu-Muslim unity and desist from violence at any cost.

Meanwhile he was arrested at the Satyagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad, on Friday, the 10th March. On the 11th noon, Messrs. Gandhi and Sankarlal Banker, the publisher, were placed before Mr. Brown, Assistant Magistrate, the Court being held in the

Divisional Commissioner's Office at Sahibah. The Superintendent of Police, Ahmedabad, the first witness, produced the Bombay Government's authority to lodge a complaint for four articles published in *Young India*, dated the 15th June, 1921, entitled "Disaffection a Virtue", dated 20th September, "Tampering with Loyalty", dated the 15th December, "The Puzzle and Its Solution" and "Shaking the Manes", dated the 23rd February, 1922. Two formal police witnesses were then produced. The accused declined to cross-examine the witnesses. Mr. Gandhi, who described himself as farmer and weaver by profession, residing at Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, said.

I simply wish to state that when the proper time comes, I shall plead guilty so far as disaffection towards the Government is concerned It is quite true that I am the editor of *Young India* and that the articles read in my presence were written by me and the proprietors and publishers had permitted me to control the whole policy of the paper.

The case then having been committed to the Sessions, Mr. Gandhi was taken to the Sabarmati Jail where he was detained till the hearing, which was to come off on March 18. From his prison, Mr. Gandhi wrote a number of inspiring letters to his friends and colleagues urging the continuance of the Congress work.

## THE GREAT TRIAL

At last the trial came off on Saturday the 18th March before Mr. C. N. Broomfield, I.C.S., District and Sessions Judge, Ahmedabad. Of the trial itself it is needless to write at length. For it will be long before the present generation could

forget the spell of it. It was historic in many ways. Men's minds involuntarily turned to another great trial nineteen hundred years ago when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate. Mr. Gandhi's statement (both the oral and the written statements) was in its best form, terse and lucid, courageous and uncompromising, with just that touch of greatness which elevates it to the level of a master-piece. Never before was such a prisoner arraigned before a British Court of Justice. Never before were the laws of an all-powerful Government so defiantly, yet with such humility, challenged. Men of all shades of political opinion, indeed all who had stood aloof from the movement and had condemned it in no uncertain terms, marvelled at the wisdom and compassion and heroism of the thin spare figure in a loin cloth thundering his anathemas against the "Satanic" system. And yet none could be gentler nor more sweet-tempered than the prisoner at the bar with a smile and a nod of thanks and recognition for every one, including his prosecutors. An eye-witness has given an account of the scene and we cannot do better than quote his words.—

> Mahatmaji stood up and spoke a few words complimenting the Advocate-General on his fairness and endorsing every statement he made regarding the charges. "I wish to endorse all the blame that the Advocate-General has thrown on my shoulders," said Mahatmaji in pathetic earnestness, "and I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chauri Chaura or the mad outrages of Bombay". These words of confession seemed to penetrate every heart throbbing in that hall and make those present there feel miserable over the mad deeds of

their thoughtless countrymen. The speech finished, the Mahatmaji sat down to read his immortal statement. . . . . This historic production was the master's own. The ennobling confessions, the convincing logic, the masterly diction, the elevated thoughts and the inspiring tone—all produced instantaneous effect on the audience, including the Judge and the prosecutor. For a minute everybody wondered who was on trial—whether Mahatma Gandhi before a British Judge or whether the British Government before God and *Humanity*.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was present at the Court when Mahatma Gandhi was tried and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Describing the scene of the great trial in the *Bombay Chronicle*, Mrs. Naidu wrote in March 1922:—

A convict and a criminal in the eyes of the Law! Nevertheless, the entire Court rose in an act of spontaneous homage when Mahatma Gandhi entered—a frail, serene, indomitable figure in a coarse and scanty loin cloth, accompanied by his devoted disciple and fellow-prisoner, Shankerlal Banker.

"So you are seated near me to give me your support in case I break down," he jested, with that happy laugh of his which seems to hold all the undimmed radiance of the world's childhoood in its depths And looking round at the hosts of familiar faces of men and women who had travelled far to offer him a token of their love, he added, "This is like a family gathering and not a law-court."

A thrill of mingled fear, pride, hope and anguish ran through the crowded hall when the Judge took his seat—an admirable Judge deserving of our praise alike for his brave and resolute sense of duty, his flawless courtesy, his just perception of a unique occasion and his fine tribute to a unique personality.

The strange trial proceeded and so I listened to the immortal words that flowed with prophetic fervour from the lips of my beloved master, my thoughts sped across the centuries to a different land and different age when a similar drama was enacted and another divine and gentle teacher was crucified, for spreading a kindred gospel with a kindred courage I realised now that the lowly Jesus of Nazareth cradled in a manger furnished the only true parallel in history to this invincible apostle of India—

liberty who loved humanity with surpassing compassion, and to use his own beautiful phrase, "approached the poor with the mind of the poor"

The most epic event of modern times ended quickly.

The pent-up emotion of the people burst in a storm of sorrow as a long slow procession moved towards him in a mournful pilgrimage of farewell, clinging to the hands that had toiled so incessantly, bowing over the feet that had journeyed so continuously in the service of his country.

In the midst of all this poignant scene, of many-voiced and myriad-hearted grief he stood, untroubled, in all his transcendent simplicity, the embodied symbol of the Indian Nation—its living sacrifice and sacrament in one.

They might take him to the utmost ends of the earth, but his destination remains unchanged in the hearts of his people who are both the heirs and the stewards of his matchless dreams and his matchless deeds.

*Words truly fitting a matchless occasion!*

## GANDHI IN PRISON

In March 1922, Mr. Gandhi was interned in Yeravada Jail which for two years was looked upon as a place of pilgrimage. Thither went hundreds of devotees if only to have a vision of the august prisoner. Every three months or so his wife and sons or his friends got admission to approach Gandhi and converse with him—though in the presence of the Superintendent who seemed to have exercised a quite unnecessary vigilance. Such official vigilance was entirely out of court. For Gandhi was an ideal prisoner. He was true to his dictum: "My ideal of jail life, especially that of a civil resister," he wrote to Mr. Andrews, "is to be cut off entirely from all connection with the outside world. To be allowed a visitor is a privilege—a civil resister may neither seek nor receive a visitor." Though

political friends met him in jail he was too honourable to be drawn into a talk on current politics, and rarely a word escaped his lips that might in any way be construed as a message from behind the prison bars. One remembers too well Mr. Gandhi's mild surprise as he was told of Mr. Mahomed Ali's picturesque metaphor of a wireless from Yeravda!

Meanwhile, the Congress was drifting as it were without a rudder or compass. Distrust of one another and mutual recriminations among the leaders replaced the stern discipline of one-man leadership whatever might have been its other defects. Non-Co-operation of the Gandhian order was being diluted with partial Co-operation and leaders were divided among themselves as to aim and methods of work. Already the canker of communalism was slowly breaking in, while the Report of the Civil Disobedience Committee threw in a new apple of discord among the politicals.

But we must go back to Gandhi. In the latter years of his prison life, it was understood that he was ailing from some serious disease—never correctly diagnosed. It took a bad turn and developed into appendicitis. Luckily, the medical authorities discovered it in time and Mr. Gandhi was removed to the Sassoon Hospital, Poona, for operation. Mr. Gandhi had a very high regard for Col. Maddock, the surgeon who conducted the operation, and the mutual regard and esteem that the two had for each other developed into an ardent friendship.

of which both have spoken in feeling terms. Before the operation, Mr. Gandhi very thoughtfully sent for the Rt. Hon. Sastri who was then in Poona, and other friends, and the conversations at this supreme moment were reported by Mr. Sastri in words of inimitable grace, befitting "the calmness, wisdom and magnanimity of the great leader of the Non-Co-operation movement". The operation was successful and Mr. Gandhi was slowly recovering and preparing himself for the public life that was calling him. Mr. Gandhi was a model patient. It is pleasant to recall here what Col. Maddock himself wrote to Mr. G. A. Natesan, the editor of the *Indian Review*, months after he had left these shores. "Whilst in hospital," wrote the great surgeon, "Gandhi endeared himself to all those who came into contact with him, on account of his unfailing courtesy and patience, his wonderful cheerfulness, thoughtfulness for others, and complete forgetfulness of himself." Well, the same greatness and elevation of character throughout.

THE RELEASE AND AFTER

As he was convalescing, the first public message came appropriately enough in the form of a letter to Mr. Mahomed Ali, the President of the Congress. In this letter (dated 7th February, 1924), Mr. Gandhi, after thanking the doctors and nurses for their care and attention, and acknowledging numerous telegrams and messages of greeting, pointed out that release brought him no joy and that he was overwhelmed with the sense of

responsibility, he deplored the tension between Hindus and Muslims in his absence and appealed for a union of all ranks in the service of the country. He finally reaffirmed his faith in the principles of Non-Co-operation.

I had during the last two years ample time and solitude for hard thinking. It made me a firmer believer than ever in the efficacy of the Bardoli programme, and therefore in the unity between the races, the charka, the removal of untouchability and the application of non-violence in thought word and deed to our methods as indispensable for Swaraj. If we faithfully and fully carry out this programme, we need never resort to Civil Disobedience and I hope that it will never be necessary. But I must state that my thinking prayerfully and in solitude has not weakened my belief in the efficacy and righteousness of Civil Disobedience. I hold it as never before to be a man's or nation's right and duty when its vital being is in jeopardy I am convinced that it is attended with less danger than war and whilst the former when successful benefits both the resister and the wrong-doer, the latter harms both the victor and the vanquished.

Mr. Gandhi did not express any opinion on the question of Council entry until "he had the opportunity of discussing the question with our illustrious countrymen who have felt called upon in the interests of the country to advise the removal of the boycott of legislative bodies".

That opportunity was soon afforded at Juhu where came as to a shrine Congressmen of all shades of opinion. C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru were there too with their schemes of Non-Co-operation from inside the Council and then the orthodox non-co-operators who swore by the Bardoli programme. It was no light thing for a leader in convalescence to decide. His own faith in the original programme was unabated: but the forcing of his views at once

would be futile besides dividing the ranks irrevocably. Neither would he compromise his own position, and so he came to an understanding with his Swarajist friends, giving them freedom of action while he himself held a different opinion. This position, of course, led to further trouble with the no-changers while the Swarajists, as the elections were approaching, demanded a definite declaration of the Congress in their favour. And so came the agreement of November signed by Gandhi, Das and Nehru permitting those who cared to enter the Councils while compelling all to swear by Khaddar and the constructive programme. Thus was the Swarajist party given official sanction to work for elections on behalf of the Congress. In successive sessions of the All-India Congress Committee and the Congress, Congressmen were allowed to work in either direction. The Non-Co-operating Congress had a wing in the Swarajya party to practise Non-Co-operation from within the Councils. Indeed the Council programme being in the hands of the more energetic men, became, as it were, the more vital work of the Congress. Its results were more demonstrative and as every movement grows by opposition, the Swarajya party developed into a power as much by opposition in Council as by opposition in Congress. Though Mr. Gandhi could have carried the Congress with him in his orthodox programme, he recognised the strength of the opposition, and though in Congresses and Committees he was able to manage a small numerical majority, he knew

that it was mainly due to personal equation and scorned to take advantage of it. On the other hand, he felt "humbled and defeated" as he himself said after one of those stormy meetings of the A.I.C.C. at Delhi in June 1924.

*YOUNG INDIA*

After two years' interruption, Mr. Gandhi resumed editorial charge of his two weeklies, *Young India* and *Navajivan* (the Guzarati counterpart of *Young India*) in the first week of April 1924. To his followers his weekly articles were a guide and an inspiration while they were a pure joy to the rest of the world. In his opening article, Mr. Gandhi wrote in *Young India* :—

> It is not without much hesitation that I resume the editorship of *Young India*. I do not know whether my health can yet sustain the energy required for conducting the paper. But I cannot foresee, I can only dimly understand God's purpose in bringing me out of my retirement in Yeravada. In taking up the editorial control of *Navajivan* and *Young India*, I am following His light as far as I see it. Nor have I any new message to deliver to the reader. I had hoped for the release by the act of the Swaraj Parliament and to be able to take my humble share in serving free India. That was not to be. We have yet to attain freedom. I have no new programme. My faith in the oldest is just as bright as ever, if not brighter. Indeed one's faith in one's plans and methods is truly tested when the horizon before one is blackest. Though, therefore, so far as my mind can perceive, there will be no new method or policy developed in the pages of *Young India*, I hope they will not be stale. . . .
>
> God, I know, is truth, I live for India's freedom and would die for it, because it is part of the truth. Only free India can worship the true God. I work for India's freedom because my Swadeshi teaches me that, being born in it and having inherited her culture, I am the fittest to serve her and she has a prior claim to my service. But my patriotism is not exclusive. It is calculated not only not to hurt another nation but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. India's freedom, as conceived by me, can never be a menace to the world.

Apart from his comments on current politics, which gave direction to his followers and were generally made with a view to reconciling divergent interests and factions, Mr. Gandhi mainly devoted his pen to the furtherance of the constructive programme. The spinning wheel was still his *kamadhenu*. Hindu-Muslim tension and the curse of untouchability still supplied the theme for hundreds of notes and dissertations. He was and is perhaps the one no-changer still trusted by the Swarajists and the Parliamentarians and he has always held the scales even between the two wings of the Congress. *Young India* soon took up its unique place among the Indian weeklies. Gandhi's Jail Diary, so full of intimate touches of character and so fresh with the vivid colouring of his own reminiscences in jail, became an attractive feature of the journal. More than even the Diary was the Autobiography, published week after week, and the intimate revelations of a character in the making told in the simple yet telling style of the great master won universal appreciation. Hundreds of newspapers and periodicals in India as elsewhere reproduced Mr. Gandhi's "Experiments with truth", which formed the subject of absorbing interest in Europe and America. The Autobiography has attracted thousands of readers by its simplicity and *naivete*, its almost uncanny realism, and its compelling charm.

### THE FAST AND THE DELHI CONFERENCE

But there is no peace to a public man—least of all to one of Gandhi's sensitiveness. The Hindu-Muslim cloud which was no bigger than a

man's hand at the time of his release grew to portentous proportions within a few months. Riot followed riot and the blaze spread from city to city. Distrust and mutual recriminations, notwithstanding all efforts at organizing the forces of order and discipline, grew apace. Gandhi was probing the question with the acuteness of a trained surgeon and exhortations from his tongue and pen seemed of no avail. What was he to do?

On the 11th September 1924, all India was shocked to read the brief announcement in the papers that Mahatma Gandhi had undertaken a fast of twenty-one days both as "a penance and a prayer," because "recent events have proved unbearable" to him. The statement announcing this great resolve was couched in words so moving that we should quote the passage *in extenso*

> The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My helplessness is still more unbearable. My religion teaches me that whenever one is very distressed by something which one cannot remove one must fast and pray. I have done so in connection with my own dearest one.
>
> Nothing evidently that I say or write can bring the two communities together. I am, therefore, imposing on myself a fast of twenty-one days, beginning from to-day and ending on Wednesday, October 8. I reserve the liberty to drink water with or without salt.
>
> It is both a penance and prayer. As penance I need not have taken the public into my confidence, but I publish the fast as (let me hope) an effective prayer both to Hindus and Mussalmans who have hitherto worked in unison not to commit suicide.
>
> I respectfully invite the heads of all the communities, including Englishmen, to meet and end this quarrel which is a disgrace to religion and humanity. It seems as if God has been dethroned. Let us reinstate Him in our hearts

At the time of undertaking the fast, Mahatma Gandhi was the guest of Mr. Mahomed Ali in Delhi. Indeed some weeks before he had said that he would "bury" himself in the heart of the Punjab till the question of Hindu-Muslim unity was solved. But the solution seemed as remote as ever. Fresh riots were cropping up day after day. Delhi, Gulburga, Kohat, Lucknow—one after another in quick and unceasing succession, broke the heart of the great and good man who has done more than any other in our time to cement the two communities. As he himself explained in an inspiring article in *Young India*:

> I was violently shaken by Ameths, Shamlal, and Gulburga . . . . I was writing in deep pain and yet I had no remedy. News of Kohat set the smouldering mass aflame. Something had got to be done. I passed two nights in restlessness and pain. On Wednesday I know the remedy. I must do penance in Satyagraha Ashrama.

Such an ordeal undertaken so soon after his recovery from illness and without notice to his friends and colleagues naturally threw them into a great consternation. Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mr. Mahomed Ali, Dr. Ansari and others tried to argue the Mahatma out of his extraordinary act of self-abnegation but he was inexorable, as was feared.

> My fast is a matter between God and myself . . . . . (he said). When man wants to make up with his Maker, he does not consult a third party. He ought not to. If he has any doubt about it, he certainly must. But I had no doubt in my mind.

The announcement was also the signal for a great outburst of good feeling, and messages poured in at the Mahatma's residence imploring him to

cease-fasting and assuring him of whole-hearted support in his endeavours to secure unity. The Muslim Press of Lahore agreed to observe a week's truce to which the Mahatma answered that what was needed was a permanent heart-unity and not a temporary makeshift. Of the ethics of the fast we are not competent to speak; but nobody could deny that it did have a tremendous influence in drawing public attention to the one question which was uppermost in the minds of all parties. What could be the answer to an appeal so moving as the Mahatma's when he wrote.

> My penance is the prayer of a bleeding heart for forgiveness, for sins unwittingly committed. It is a warning to Hindus and Mussalmans who have professed to love me. If they have loved me truly and if I have been deserving of their love, they will do penance with me for the grave sin of denying God in their hearts.

But the immediate result was the calling of a conference of all parties and denominations to meet at Delhi and devise means for bringing about unity. The conference of 300 representatives, which included the Metropolitan of India, came off on the 26th and passed resolutions designed to secure that unity. At this distance of time we may say it did not result in all the good things expected of such a gathering, but for the time being it generated a degree of good feeling which paved the way for the second All-Parties' Conference at Bombay in November. As might be expected, Mr. Gandhi's part in such a conference was decisive and efforts were made to explore possibilities of a united Congress and to

find a common denominator on which all parties could take action with regard to the Bengal Ordinance.

PRESIDENT OF THE BELGAUM CONGRESS

It was only to be expected that Mr. Gandhi would be returned unanimously to preside over the Congress in December 1924. In fact the honour would have been his, years ago, if he had not persistently declined it and chosen to work behind the scenes. Whoever was the President, Gandhi had become the guiding, inspiring and leading hand in Congress deliberations. and Karnataka was determined to make the occasion thoroughly historic. The fact that Mahatma Gandhi was to preside over the deliberations added special importance to the session. And then certain events like the Unity Conference at Delhi and the All-Parties' Conference at Bombay paved the way for a fuller understanding of differences among diverse sections of Congressmen. The two outstanding questions of the hour—Hindu-Muslim Unity and the Gandhi-Das Pact—were expected to be settled and ratified in the Congress. The circumstances imparted special interest to the Belgaum session.

In the week preceding the actual session, Gandhiji prepared the ground for the decisions of the Congress in regard to the two or three vital issues before the country. He has always been the mediator and the reconciler between the extreme wings of the Congress and he now played his role with extreme tact. In accordance with previous arrangements, Mr. Gandhi met both

the No-Changers and Swarajists at informal Conferences when he tried to persuade them to see each other's points of view. Throughout the conversations he placed the *charka* in the forefront as an answer to critics and sceptics. When they wanted a fighting programme, Mr. Gandhi would say, "The fighting programme is there in the boycott of foreign cloth which, if properly carried out, will bring about an atmosphere for something like Civil Disobedience." He then referred to Hindu-Muslim Unity and removal of untouchability as two indispensable items in his constructive programme. But the discussion centred round the spinning franchise in lieu of the four-anna franchise. Indeed, as the *Mahratta* put it, this was the point which Mr. Gandhi claimed as a set-off against his readiness to suspend the Non-Co-operation movement, and the recognition of the Swarajists as Congressmen who could work in the Councils on behalf of the Congress.

Mr. Gandhi's presidential address having been circulated was taken as read, but in opening the proceedings he made a few general remarks first in Hindi and then in English. He said that the work they undertook in 1920 was still undone and if they wanted Swaraj for the masses, the only way was through the *charka*. If they disbelieved, they should not hesitate to reject it.

Mr. Gandhi's views on the leading topics of the day being so well known, there could not in the nature of the case be anything new or sensational in the address. For one thing it

was remarkable for its brevity: in fact, it was the briefest in Congress record as Mr. Mahomed Ali's was possibly the longest. Mr. Gandhi reaffirmed his faith in the spinning wheel, Hindu-Muslim Unity, the removal of untouchability and such other subjects with characteristic lucidity. He traced the course of the Non-Co-operation movement and pointed out why it was necessary to cry halt at this hour of disunion and weakness. But his own faith in Civil Disobedience still stood.

I swear by Civil Disobedience. But Civil Disobedience *for the attainment of Swaraj is an impossibility unless* and until we have attained the power of achieving boycott of foreign cloth.

Then he defined our immediate goal:—

Our goal must be the removal, at the earliest possible moment, of communal or sectional representation. A common electorate must impartially elect its representatives on the sole ground of merit. Our services must be likewise impartially manned by the most qualified men and women. But till that time comes and communal jealousies or preferences become a thing of the past, minorities who suspect the motives of majorities must be allowed their way. The majorities must set the example of self-sacrifice.

As regards India's political goal, Mr. Gandhi was for *inter-dependence* on the basis of perfect equality. He was for "a federation of friendly inter-dependent States rather than for independence".

In my opinion if the British Government mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection. I would, therefore, strive for Swarajya within the Empire but would not hesitate to sever all connection, if severance became a necessity through Britain's own fault. I would thus throw the burden of separation on the British people.

He concluded with an affirmation of his faith:—

As a Congressman wishing to keep the Congress intact, I advise suspension of Non-Co-operation, for I see that the nation is not ready for it. But as an individual,

I cannot, and will not, do so as long as the Government remains what it is. It is not merely policy with me, it is an article of faith. Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience are but different branches of the same tree called Satyagraha. It is my *kalpadrum—Jam-i-Jam*—the Universal Provider. Satyagraha is search for Truth; and God is Truth. Ahimsa or Non-violence is the light that reveals that Truth to me. Swaraj for me is part of that Truth. This Satyagraha did not fail me in South Africa, Khaira, or Champaran and in a host of other cases I could mention. It excludes all violence or hate Therefore, I cannot and will not hate Englishmen Nor will I bear their yoke I must fight unto death the unholy attempt to impose British methods and British institutions on India. But I combat the attempt with non-violence I believe in the capacity of India to offer non-violent battle to the English rulers. The experiment has not failed. It has succeeded, but not to the extent we had hoped and desired. I do not despair On the contrary, I believe that India will come to her own in the near future, and that only through Satyagraha The proposed suspension is part of the experiment Non-Co-operation need never be resumed if the programme sketched by me can be fulfilled Non-violent Non-Co-operation in some form or other, whether through the Congress or without it, will be resumed if the programme fails I have repeatedly stated that Satyagraha never fails and that one perfect Satyagrahi is enough to vindicate Truth. Let us all strive to be perfect Satyagrahis. The striving does not require any quality unattainable by the lowliest among us. For Satyagraha is an attribute of the spirit within It is latent in every one of us Like Swaraj it is our birth-right. Let us know it.

In concluding the proceedings of the Belgaum Congress, Mr. Gandhi, after thanking all concerned, wound up with the following exhortation:

I want you to transfer all this noble affection, all this generosity that you have shown me, to the thing which you and I hold dear, to the thing which alone binds you and me together, and that is Swaraj If we want Swaraj we must know the conditions of Swaraj. You have endorsed those conditions in the resolution moved by Mr. Das on the Pact Every one knows the conditions and I want you to fulfil them to the letter and in spirit and insist upon others that they will fulfil those conditions not by force but by love. Exert all the influence and all the pressure that love can exert upon every one concerned. Go throughout your districts and spread the message of

*khaddar*, the message of Hindu-Muslim Unity, the message of untouchability and take up in hand the youngsters of the country and make them real soldiers of Swaraj. But you will not do it if the No-Changers and the Swarajists still bear malice against each other, and if they still have jealousy against one another. It will be possible only if you bury the hatchet, leave all the jealousies, all anger and all that is bad in your heart Bury it underground, cremate it, do whatever you like, but take away the sacred resolution with you that let heavens fall but the tie that binds to-day or has bound the Swarajists and the No-Changers shall never snap.

## LORD IRWIN'S VICEROYALTY

In April 1926, Lord Irwin (Viscount Halifax) succeeded Lord Reading as Viceroy of India. Ever since the days of the Punjab tragedy, the estrangement between the people and the Government was growing apace. Alternate doses of reform and repression, which became the normal feature of the Government, did not work well.

The Government was ill-advised enough to set up a Rowlatt Committee in order to supplement existing Defence and Press Acts. Its recommendations coincided with the Reforms. Thus, in the words of Lord Halifax's biographer[1]

> it came about that the Indians nursed from the outset a sense of grievance, a belief that there was a catch in British democracy when it was applied to those who were not Britons.
>
> By the time Irwin had come on the scene this concept of British duplicity had hardened into a dogma, but it has its roots in the misunderstandings and mistimings at the end of the war It was not a happy period; there was an after-victory arrogance in British rule; a resolve to restore pre-war conditions. The Punjab, from whom the overwhelming majority of India's native army had been

[1] VISCOUNT HALIFAX: A BIOGRAPHY. By Alan Campbell Johnson. Robert Hale, Ltd., London.

recruited, became the centre of acute disturbance, which culminated in the massacre at Amritsar. The memory of Gen. Dyer was still a disturbing factor in Irwin's time . . From this welter of suffering and discontent the figure of Gandhi emerged proclaiming his nationalism in the dialect of Hindu religious practice Satyagraha, ahimsa or the doctrine of harmlessness, hartal or day of fasting, became symbols of moral and physical resistance to the entire British system of Government. It was Gandhi's purpose to raise his political controversies on to the plane of moral conduct.

## "SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN SETTLEMENT"

Before taking up the thread of Gandhi's activities in the cause of social, economic and political reform in India, we must pass in review his activities in connection with the Indian South African problem.

Since his return to India, Mahatma Gandhi had always too many irons on the anvil to devote himself adequately to South African questions. And yet from time to time when there was any trouble in South Africa, his words of counsel always counted and his authority was undisputed. When the Class Areas Reservation Bill was before the Transvaal Legislature, Gandhi wrote some illuminating criticisms guiding, inspiring and helping our countrymen abroad with practical advice as to how best to deal with the situation. But he did not actively engage himself in South African problems as before, as he has always held that it is part of the trouble arising from India's dependent position. South Africa had to be fought and won in India, he said, and the success of the Swaraj movement in India would automatically lead to success abroad. On the failure of Non-Co-operation he realised that every

step in the South African settlement was a move in the right direction, and he warmly commended the work of the Habibullah Deputation. Indeed before the publication of the Agreement, Gandhi's advice had been sought for, and the simultaneous publication of his views and the text of the Agreement did not a little to guide public opinion in its favour. Gandhi called it an "Honourable Compromise" in *Young India* of 24th February 1927:

> Sir Mahomed Habibullah and his colleagues are to be congratulated upon having secured a settlement that is honourable to both parties. It is not the best that could be conceived, but it is the best that was possible. I doubt if any other deputation could have done more. The Class Areas Bill, which brought about the Conference and round which the battle raged, is dead and gone . . . . . The annexure, containing a summary of 'conclusions reached by the Round Table Conference on the Indian questions in South Africa', is a remarkable document betraying in every paragraph a heroic attempt to reconcile conflicting interests and sentiments. . . . . If this atmosphere of goodwill and sociability is kept up and encouraged, the settlement can be used as a solid foundation for erecting a beautiful temple of freedom for the Indian settlers in South Africa.

### Mr SASTRI AS FIRST AMBASSADOR

It was a great victory for Gandhi and the South African cause when the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri accepted the Government's offer to be the first Agent-General in South Africa. Mr. Sastri, it would appear, had with characteristic modesty declined the offer at first, but Mr. Gandhi's persuasive appeal to Mr. Sastri not to miss this great opportunity of service to the Indian cause in South Africa, had done its work. On the publication of the announcement, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* of April 28, 1927:

Very considerable relief will be felt by the Indian settlers in South Africa over the announcement that the Rt Hon V. S. Srinivasa Sastri has consented to become India's First Agent-General in that sub-continent, if the post is finally offered to him by the Government of India. It is a great sacrifice that Sastri and the Servants of India Society have made It is an open secret that left to himself he was not inclined to undertake the responsibility and to leave his work in India But he has yielded to the pressure of friends, especially when it was urged upon him that he alone could successfully inaugurate the working of the Agreement in bringing about which he played not an inconsiderable part We know from the cables that were sent from time to time from South Africa that the Europeans were anxious that he should accept the honour Sjt. Srinivasa Sastri had by his eloquence, transparent sincerity, sweet reasonableness, and extreme earnestness won the esteem and respect of the Union Government and the Europeans in South Africa during the short time that he was there as a member of the Habibullah Deputation. I know how nervously anxious our countrymen in South Africa were that he should become the first Agent. It was impossible for Sjt Srinivasa Sastri whom God has endowed with a generous nature not to respond to such a unanimous call from South Africa.

How well Mr. Sastri fulfilled his mission and how fully he justified Mahatmaji's (in fact, the whole country's) expectations are matters of history, of which it is needless to enter into any detail. Suffice it to say that Mr. Sastri fully justified his reputation for statesmanship and had indeed set a high ideal for his successor to follow. Need it be said that throughout the negotiations as after it Mr. Gandhi's wise counsel and his great knowledge of South African problems were ungrudgingly placed at the disposal of Mr. Sastri for the benefit of our colonial brethren.

## VAIKAM SATYAGRAHA

Soon after the Belgaum Congress, Mr. Gandhi made a tour all over the country calling upon the people to carry out the Congress mandate in

regard to Khaddar, and untouchability and other features of social and political reconstruction. Early in March he was in Vaikam exhorting the Satyagrahis to carry on their campaign until success was attained. It was at this time too that he was invited by the Maharanee of Travancore to be Her Highness's guest at Varkala. Gandhi's presence in Malabar eased the situation and a sort of reconciliation was effected between the orthodox Brahmins and the advocates of reform.

### A GREAT MODERATING INFLUENCE

During the next four years Gandhi confined himself primarily to his pet programme of Khaddar and untouchability and prohibition, and rarely if ever took part in aggressive politics. But all the same his influence in Congress circles was supreme. Whoever might be the president it was Gandhi's will that was the deciding factor. And that will was invariably exercised in moderating the temper of the ultra-extremists and independence-wallahs who had by this time increased in numbers and threatened to swamp the Congress. Time and again Mr. Gandhi was on the side of moderation. He would not jeopardise the efforts of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Pandit Motilal Nehru to bring about an All-Parties' Convention, and he fully shared the desire of these two Pandits for a united stand or even a minimum demand. But the forces of extremism had gained their ascendancy and under the influence of Messrs. Srinivasa Iyengar and Jawaharlal Nehru, the Madras Congress of 1927 declared "that the goal of the Indian people is

complete independence". Not all Mr. Gandhi's rebuke could wean the Congress from the extreme position (as it then appeared to him) it had taken up; and it is surprising at this time of day to read Mr. Gandhi's rebuke of the independence-wallahs, in the light of his later activities. Commenting on the Independence Resolution, Mr. Gandhi wrote in *Young India*.

> I could not fail to perceive that irresponsible talk and work were the order of the day, and that indiscipline was not a rare feature. Resolutions involving great consequences were sprung upon the Subjects Committee, and readily accepted by the august body, without much thought or discussion. The Independence Resolution that was rejected last year, was passed almost without opposition. I know that its wording was harmless but in my opinion it was hastily conceived, and thoughtlessly passed. The resolution, regarding the boycott of British goods, was passed with an equally light heart. The Congress stultifies itself by repeating year after year resolutions of this character when it knows that it is not capable of carrying them into effect By passing such resolutions, we make an exhibition of our impotence, become a laughing stock of critics, and invite the contempt of the adversary.

And this from Mr. Gandhi who but a couple of years hence was leading an army of Salt Satyagrahis with a view to wrest independence from the British Government! The fact is Mr. Gandhi would not embark upon a venture without sufficient sanction behind him. With him, it could be no paper resolution. If a thing is once resolved upon, it must be carried out at any cost.

But the spirit of extremism once let loose was not to be curbed by the reasoning even of a man of Mahatmaji's influence and persuasiveness. The ranks of independence-wallahs swelled in the Congress and by the time the Congress met in

Calcutta in December 1928, had become well-nigh irresistible. As part author of the All-Parties' Report, Pandit Motilal Nehru, the President of the session, pleaded for Dominion Status. But his son Jawaharlal with the support of Messrs. Srinivasa Iyengar and Subash Chander Bose and others carried the day, and the stormy meeting of the session ended with an emphatic declaration in favour of independence. The resolution, in view of Mr. Gandhi's later ultimatum, should be quoted:

The Congress, having considered the constitution recommended by the *All-Parties' Committee Report*, welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the vital unanimity of its recommendations, and whilst adhering to the resolutions relating to complete independence passed at the Madras Congress, approves of the constitution drawn by the Committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among important parties in the country.

Subject to the exigencies of political situation, this Congress will adopt the constitution, if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before 31st December 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon.

Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with carrying on in the name of the Congress propaganda for complete independence.

This resolution was moved by Mahatma Gandhi himself as a sort of compromise and that explains Mahatmaji's later activities to fulfil the Calcutta programme.

## A BONFIRE DEMONSTRATION

It was not long before Mahatmaji began as usual a whirlwind tour of the country in favour of the Calcutta resolution. For it is a rule

with him, whatever he undertakes to do he must do thoroughly. No half-hearted acquiescence with him! Early in March 1929, we find him presiding over a bonfire demonstration at Calcutta where he declared at the outset that Khadi was the only effective weapon if they were to wake up on January 1st as Independence-wallahs, if need be. But he said:

I do not want to precipitate that time and I do not also want to anticipate it and if Government will play the game, if the police will play the game, if the public will play the game, I promise that we shall be able to settle our business with the Government without the public having to resort to civil disobedience or having even to resort to no-tax campaign which is also a part of civil disobedience. Believe me I shall strain every nerve to avoid and precipitate that issue.

Speaking with a full sense of responsibility on my shoulders, I know the tremendous consquences of civil disobedience and no-tax campaign in a vast country like India, but a man who is mad after freedom has got to take tremendous risk and stake everything that he has in order to gain that precious freedom.

There was trouble with the police, and Mr. Gandhi was hauled up before the Magistrate when he made the following statement:

I venture to submit, that by taking the law into their hands the police put themselves in the wrong and should change places with me They should be the accused and I should be the complainant.

. . . . I affirm that the crowd was absolutely peaceful and extremely well behaved.

. . . . The site chosen for burning was well protected and isolated. It was therefore the duty of the police to refrain from interference, with the peaceful and orderly demonstration. Their interference, in my opinion, was rudely premature, extremely high-handed and uncalled for.

Concluding his long statement, Mahatmaji declared:

If you believe the statement of facts given by me, I ask that I and my colleagues be discharged and

you may take such notice of the conduct of the police as may be open to you This is irrespective of the interpretation that the Court may put on Section 96 of the Police Act.

Nominal fines were imposed on the accused which, it was said, was immediately paid by some one without Gandhi's knowledge. Gandhi declared that he could not believe that the fine was paid by some one on behalf of the Bengal Congress Committee. He could call nothing his own in this world from which he could pay the fine, and this apart from his views on the payment of the fine. He said, "Mr. Sen Gupta knew this thing and therefore, whoever had paid the fine could not be a friend."

## BRITISH GENERAL ELECTIONS

While the agitation was going on in India, the General Elections in England in May 1929 resulted in the overthrow of Mr. Baldwin's Ministry, and Labour came into power with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald as Premier. The general feeling in India was one of thankfulness and relief as people were getting tired of, and irritated by, the Birkenhead tone. The avowed sympathy of Labour with nationalist aspirations in India and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's friendship with leading Indian politicians and his well-known sympathy with their aspirations and his many declarations seemed for a time to evoke a generous response. Mr. Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, and Dr. Drummond Shields, the then Under-Secretary, were politicians with Liberal proclivities; and it was not

long before they were able to count on the enthusiastic support of the Indian public. Not even the most recalcitrant non-co-operator could have objected to a Cabinet of acknowledged socialists anxious to pacify an Empire seething with sullen resentment against the arrogant imperialism of the "Little Englanders" whose tone had provoked the ire of ardent nationalists in India. Indian Liberals expected much from the Labour Government, while Congressmen were content that the worst was over with the fall of the Unionists, and things could never be so bad under an avowedly Socialist Cabinet.

LABOUR'S ACHIEVEMENTS

The new Labour Government entered on its task with great zest and independence of judgment. It soon won notable successes in international policy which enhanced its prestige, strengthened its hold upon the electorate and created a widespread impression that the affairs of Great Britain were in the hands of men who brought a new and broad spirit to their management. Its courageous and statesmanlike policy, particularly with regard to Egypt, which resulted in the making of a new Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in consonance with Egyptian public opinion, won almost universal appreciation, and the feeling began gradually to dawn upon the Indian mind, that if the same new spirit could be shown in dealing with India, the settlement of her constitutional problem would not be attended with much difficulty. Mr. Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, evidently brought a

new and open mind to bear upon the considera tion of the Indian political situation, and took particular care to avoid saying anything which might offend Indian sentiment and widen 'the gulf of misunderstanding, ill-feeling and discontent that yawned between Great Britain and India.

Lord Irwin who was then in England had tried his level best to reconcile Indian opinion to the Simon Commission. Finding it absolutely impossible, His Excellency was in consultation with the Cabinet and had hit upon a Round Table Conference as the only acceptable solution to the puzzling Indian problem. Now the Round Table Conference was one of the demands of the Congress for some years past and it was thought to be a happy solution of a very knotty problem.

## THE VICEROY'S ANNOUNCEMENT

His Excellency Lord Irwin returned to India on 25th October 1929, and on Dewali day, that is, on 31st October, issued with the approval of His Majesty's Government an important statement which was a declaration of the goal of British policy in India. His Excellency declared:

> The goal of British policy was stated in the Declaration of August 1917 to be that of providing for "the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". As I recently pointed out, my own instrument of instruction from the King-Emperor expressly states that it is His Majesty's will and pleasure that the plans laid by Parliament in 1919 should be the means by which British India may attain its due place among the Dominions. Ministers of the Crown, moreover, have more than once, publicly declared that it is the desire of the British Government that India should, in the fulness of time, take her place in the Empire in equal

partnership with the Dominions. But in view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government, in enacting the Statute of 1919, I am authorised, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to state clearly that, in their judgment, it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917, that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status.

His Excellency concluded as follows:

It is not necessary for me to say how greatly I trust that the action of His Majesty's Government may evoke response from, and enlist the concurrence of all sections of opinion in India, and I believe that all who wish India well, wherever and whoever they are, desire to break through the cobwebs of mistrust that have lately clogged the relations between India and Great Britain.

I am firmly assured that the course of action now proposed is at once the outcome of a real desire to bring to the body politic of India the touch that carries with it healing and health, and is the method by which we may best hope to handle those high matters in the way of constructive statesmanship.

THE LEADERS' STATEMENT

The immediate effect of this statement was almost electric. Except a handful of "Complete Independents" who considered that it was a move designed to undermine the growing movement of independence, all other sections of Indian opinion generally welcomed and appreciated the statement. A Conference of leaders of all parties met at Delhi to confer on the announcement and Mr. Gandhi himself drafted the resolution which was discussed and adopted with Dr. Sapru's amendments at the Conference. The Leaders' statement was as follows:—

We appreciate the sincerity underlying the declarations as also the desire of British Government to placate Indian opinion. We hope to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a

scheme of Dominion constitution suitable for India's needs, but we deem it, necessary that certain acts should be done and certain points should be declared so as to inspire trust and ensure the co-operation of principal political organisations in the country.

We consider it vital for the success of the proposed Conference that (*a*) a policy of general conciliation should be definitely adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere; (*b*) political prisoners should be granted a general amnesty; (*c*) the representation of progressive political organisations should be effectively secured and that the Indian National Congress, as the largest among them, should have predominant representation.

Some doubt has been expressed about the interpretation of the paragraph in the statement made by the Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty's Government regarding Dominion Status. We understand, however, that the Conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion constitution for India. We hope that we are not mistaken in thus interpreting the import and implications of the weighty pronouncement of H. E. the Viceroy.

Until the new constitution comes into existence, we think it necessary that a more liberal spirit should be infused in the Government of the country, that relations of the executive and legislature should be brought more in harmony with the object of the proposed Conference, and that greater regard should be paid to constitutional methods and practices.

We hold it to be absolutely essential that the public should be made to feel that a new era has commenced from to-day and that the new constitution is to be but a register to that fact Lastly, we deem it as an essential factor for the success of the Conference that it should be convened as expeditiously as possible.

It was thus thought that there would be an end of all trouble and a right solution of the vexed Indian question was near at hand. At any rate, it was thought that the Round Table Conference was a move in the right direction and a move the genuineness of which was beyond question. And both the Secretary of State and the Viceroy made it plain that they

meant to handle the situation in no petti-fogging spirit. And the Viceroy straightaway invited the leaders to confer with him on the personnel and other matters connected with the forthcoming Conference. At such a time when the whole country was astir with a new enthusiasm what was its susprise to learn that the Viceroy's Conference with the leaders had failed! His Excellency met the leaders on the 23rd December 1929 at the Viceregal House, Delhi. But the Conference broke down after three hours' discussion. The official *communique* stated :—

The Viceroy met Gandhiji, Pandit Motilal, Mr. Patel, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. A. Jinnah at the Viceroy's House, New Delhi, this afternoon. Discussion was limited to the function of the proposed Conference in London. It was pointed out that any member of the Conference would be free to advocate any proposals and that any measure of unanimity at the Conference would necessarily carry weight with British opinion. On behalf of the Congress Party the view was expressed that unless previous assurances were given by His Majesty's Government that the purpose of the Conference was to draft a scheme for Dominion Status which His Majesty's Government would undertake to support, there would be grave difficulty about Congress participation. His Excellency made it plain that the Conference was designed to elicit the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals, which it would be the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament and that it was impossible for him or for His Majesty's Government in any way to prejudge the action of the Conference or to restrict the liberty of Parliament.

This is but a diplomatic way of saying that Gandhi and the Viceroy could not agree and the Conference broke off!

LAHORE CONGRESS: INDEPENDENCE MOVE

No wonder when the Congress met at Lahore in December 1929, the atmosphere was charged

with excitement. Pandit Jawaharlal's presidential address was, if anything, more decided in its demand for independence. Gandhi, as usual, had no light task in moderating the extreme wing of the Congress, and it was left to him to move the following resolution in the open session after a strenuous fight in the Subjects Committee. One can imagine what the unadulterated text would be like!

The Congress, whilst endorsing the action of the Working Committee in connection with the manifesto signed by the party leaders, including Congressmen, in connection with the Viceregal Pronouncement of the 31st October relating to Dominion Status, and appreciating the efforts of H. E. the Viceroy towards a peaceful settlement of the national movement for Swaraj, and having considered the result of the meeting between the Viceroy and Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leaders, is of opinion that nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference;

And in pursuance of the resolution passed at the Calcutta Congress last year, this Congress now declares that Swaraj in the Congress creed shall mean complete independence, and therefore further declares the Nehru scheme of Dominion Status to have lapsed, and hopes all parties in the Congress will devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete independence, and hopes also that those whom the tentative solution of the communal problem suggested in the Nehru constitution has prevented from joining the Congress or actuated them to abstain from it, will now join or rejoin the Congress and zealously prosecute the common goal;

And as a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for independence and in order to make the Congress policy consistent with the change of creed, this Congress declares a boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and calls upon Congressmen to abstain from participating, directly or indirectly, in the Legislatures to tender their resignation;

And the Congress calls upon the nation to concentrate its attention upon the constructive programme of the Congress and authorises the All-India Congress Committee,

whenever it deems fit, to launch a programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary.

Introducing the independence resolution as adopted by the Subjects Committee, Gandhi characterised it as the *root of the future Congress work*. Thus the resolution declared complete independence as the meaning of Swaraj for the purposes of the Congress creed and resolved on the complete boycott of the legislatures as a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for independence.

Since the passing of the independence resolution, the cleavage between the Congress and the Government on the one hand and the Congress and Moderate opinion on the other became more and more pronounced. Liberals throughout the country regretted that, owing to Mr. Gandhi's recalcitrant attitude, the possibility of the Round Table Conference was being jeopardised and a solution of the vexed problem still further deferred. And the Viceroy's speech in opening the Assembly on January 25 was not calculated to restore the fading faith in Congress circles. Liberals felt that the good offices of the Viceroy and the well-intentioned Cabinet were being nullified by the impossible attitude that Gandhi had taken. But Gandhi, commenting on the Viceroy's speech in the Assembly, wrote in *Young India*.

His Excellency the Viceroy deserves thanks from every Congressman for having cleared the atmosphere and let us know exactly where he and we stand.

The Viceroy would not mind waiting for the grant of Dominion Status till every millionaire was reduced to the level of a wage-earner getting seven pice per day. The Congress will to-day, if it had power, raise every starving peasant to the state in which he at least will get a living, even equal to the millionaires, and when the peasant is fully awakened to a sense of his plight and knows that it is not the *kismet* that has brought him to the helpless state but the existing rule. Unaided, he will in his impatience abolish all distinctions between the constitutional and unconstitutional, even the violent and non-violent means The Congress expects to guide the peasants in the right direction.

Proceeding, Gandhi made the following offer to Lord Irwin:

(1) Total prohibition.

(2) Reduction of rates to 1*s*. 4*d*.

(3) Reduction of land revenue at least by 50 per cent. and making it subject to legislative control.

(4) Abolition of the salt tax.

(5) Reduction of military expenditure at least by 50 per cent. to begin with.

(6) Reduction of salaries of the highest grade services by half or less, so as to suit the reduced revenues.

(7) Protective tariff on foreign cloth.

(8) Passage of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill.

(9) Discharge of all political prisoners, save those condemned for murder or attempt to murder, or trial by ordinary judicial tribunals, withdrawal of all political prosecutions, abrogation of Section 124-A and Regulation III of 1818, and giving permission to all Indian exiles to return.

(10) Abolition of the C.I.D. or its popular control.

(11) To issue licences to use firearms for self-defence, subject to popular control.

In fact these were the terms which Mr. Gandhi communicated to Mr. Bomanji who undertook to negotiate with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, as early as January 1930.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the pressing needs, wrote Mahatma Gandhi, "but let the Viceroy satisfy us with regard to these very simple but vital needs of India. He will then hear no talk of civil disobedience; and the Congress will heartily participate in any conference when there is a perfect freedom of expression and demand". That is to say, non-compliance with these simple and vital demands would mean civil disobedience.

*That was the beginning of another struggle*, perhaps the most momentous in recent history. For we find soon after Mr. Gandhi addressing the Vidyapith words which in the light of his great march to the saltpans of the Arabian Sea, show that already he was on the war-path (of course the non-violent war-path) of the Satyagrahi.

> . . . . Other nations, said Mr. Gandhi, might have different and other means for getting their country's freedom, but for India there is no way but non-violent Non-Co-operation. May you be the exponents of this *mantra* of Swaraj and may God give you strength and courage enough to give all that you have in India's fight for independence, a fight which is drawing very near.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

And so Gandhi and his co-workers set to work for independence, and a vigorous propaganda was abroad under the auspices of the Congress. The Working Committee met at Allahabad on the 15th February and after considerable deliberation decided on prosecuting Gandhi's scheme of civil disobedience. It accordingly invested Mahatmaji with dictatorial powers giving him

full authority to prosecute his programme and prepare the country for civil disobedience. The resolution declared:

In the opinion of the Working Committee, Civil Disobedience should be initiated by those who believe in non-violence for the purpose of achieving Purna Swarajya as an article of faith, and as the Congress contains in its organisations not merely such men and women, but also those who accept non-violence as a policy essential in the existing circumstances in the country, the Working Committee welcomes the proposal of Mahatma Gandhi and authorises him and those working with him, who believe in non-violence as an article of faith to the extent above indicated, to start civil disobedience as and when they desire and in the manner and to the extent they decide.

The Working Committee trusts that in the event of leaders being arrested and imprisoned, those who are left behind and have the spirit of sacrifice and service in them will carry on Congress organisation and guide the movement to the best of their ability.

## GANDHI'S LETTER TO LORD IRWIN

The next step was the famous letter addressed by Gandhi to H. E. Lord Irwin. Whatever might be said of Mr. Gandhi's programme, there is a certain consistency in his method. Just as he began Non-Co-operation after giving due warning to Lord Reading, so now, before embarking on his campaign of civil disobedience, Gandhi wrote what was described as his "ultimatum" to the Viceroy. The letter, as we read it, was in no sense an ultimatum. It was a declaration of facts as Gandhi conceived them and he boldly and frankly enunciated his immediate programme in case the Viceroy should not heed his warnings. The letter was personally delivered to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy by one Reginald Reynold, an English youth, who was an inmate of the

Ashram for months past. Mr. Gandhi chose an Englishman for this task probably as an indication of the fact that he still held Englishmen in respect and had no prejudice against them personally. The letter, which reached the Viceroy on the 4th March, was a strongly worded indictment of British rule :

> And why do I regard the British rule as a curse ?
>
> It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford
>
> It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture And, by the policy of disarmament, it has degraded us spiritually Lacking inward strength, we have been reduced, by all but universal disarmament, to a state bordering on cowardly helplessness.

And then he passed on to say that in common with many of his countrymen, he had hugged the fond hope that the proposed Round Table Conference might furnish a solution. But the Delhi interview having miscarried, there was no option for Pandit Motilal Nehru and him "but to take steps to carry out the solemn resolution of the Congress arrived at in Calcutta at its session of 1928".

> If India is to live as a nation, if the slow death by starvation of her people is to stop, some remedy must be found for immediate relief. The proposed Conference is certainly not the remedy. It is not a matter of carrying conviction by argument. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces. Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interests, by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death.

That force is not in violence. Gandhi knew there was in the country a party of violence

slowly gaining ground. But he was convinced that it could not bring the desired relief to the dumb millions.

And the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government. Many think that non-violence is not an active force. My experience, limited though it undoubtedly is, shows that non-violence can be an intensely active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force as well against the organised violent force of the British rule as the unorganised violent force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned. Having unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to await any longer. This non-violence will be expressed through civil disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha Ashram, but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement with its obvious limitations.

Nor was he unconscious of the risks he was running. He was certainly aware of the consequences of embarking on a campaign of civil disobedience. It was a mad risk to be sure, as he confessed.

But the victories of truth have never been won without risks often of the gravest character. Conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another, far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself is worth any amount of risk.

Gandhi declared that his idea was never to injure a single Englishman. If anything, he explained, his plan, if successful, would lead to natural friendship with Englishmen by doing away with the evils that now beset the British connection with India. And he went on to declare definitely:

But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils, and my letter makes no appeal to your heart on

the 11th day of this month (March 1930), I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take to disregard the provisions of Salt laws I regard this tax to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint. As the independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil. The wonder is that we have submitted to the cruel monopoly for so long It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me I hope there will be tens of thousands ready in a disciplined manner to take up the work after me, and in the act of disobeying the Salt Act lay themselves open to the penalties of a law that should never have disfigured the Statute book.

The Viceroy's reply, as might be expected, was curt and brief expressing His Excellency's regret that Mr. Gandhi should have contemplated "a course of action which is clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace".

Commenting on this, Gandhi wrote in *Young India*.—

On bended knees I asked for bread and received stone instead. The English nation responds only to force and I am not surprised by the Viceregal reply. The only public peace the nation knows is the peace of the public prison. India is a vast prison house I repudiate this (British) law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the nation for want of free vent.

And so Gandhi prepared himself for immediate Satyagraha. To begin with there were the inmates of the Ashram, including the students of the Vidyapith, who offered themselves to be enrolled as volunteers. Gandhi held out no alluring prospects before them. They were to be fully alive to the difficulties of the task that lay ahead.

## HIS "LAST MESSAGE AND TESTAMENT"

Our case is strong, our means purest, and God is with us. There is no defeat for the Satyagrahis till they give up the truth. I pray for the success of the battle which begins to-morrow.

In these words, Mahatma Gandhi concluded what he termed his last message and testament on the banks of the Sabarmati where thousands had collected to hear him on the 11th March 1930 (the day previous to the great march). He exhorted the people of Gujarat to continue the plan of marching to Jalalpur in order to offer Civil Disobedience through the manufacture of salt, even if he and his party were arrested before reaching the destination. From what he had heard in the last fifteen days, he was confident that there would be enough volunteers forthcoming in Gujarat. The people of India, he urged, should preserve peace and carry out the instructions of the Working Committee. He laid down only one condition for the people to join what he called the "War of Independence"—and that was "absolute non-violence as an article of faith". They could carry out his programme in more ways than one. He once again outlined his programme of triple boycott and urged that those who had courage could refuse to pay taxes. Alluding to Civil Disobedience through breaking of salt monopoly, Mahatma Gandhi suggested three means to achieve the end. First, by the manufacture of salt wherever it could be done. Secondly, to remove salt without paying duty thereupon and, thirdly, to distribute salt. Referring to the question of

leadership in the country, he asked people to follow Pandit Jawaharlal. But where no Congress organisation existed, he asked every one to be his own leader. "Where could be the question of leadership when the riddle of bravery could only be solved by freedom or death?"

## THE GREAT MARCH

True to his declaration, just a little while before daybreak on the morning of the 12th, Mahatma Gandhi with his 79 volunteers, all students of the Vidyapith, left the Ashram on a campaign of civil disobedience. Their destination was the village of Dandi on the sea-coast near Jalalpur where Gandhi was to break the law regarding the manufacture of salt.

Mahatmaji began at the head of the procession to march with quick steps and unfaltering.

"Like the historic march of Ramachandra to Lanka," said Pandit Motilal Nehru, "the march of Gandhi would be memorable and the places he passes through would be sacred."

And so for miles and miles the roads were watered and bestrewn with green leaves and the halting stations were decorated with flags and festoons, and all through, there was a general appearance of a festival.

Mahatmaji spoke at all the halting stations, urging the people to take to khaddar, to stop drinking, to give up co-operation with Government and join the ranks of the Satyagrahis. He exhorted villagers to take to the spinning wheel, to look to the sanitation of the village

and to treat the untouchables with brotherly love. He urged them to join his movement to break the salt monopoly of Government, as this would be a step forward on the way to Swaraj. Volunteers were enrolling themselves in their hundreds in the cause of civil disobedience and the headmen of several villages were resigning their jobs and joining the campaign. The arrest of Mr. Gandhi was supposed to be imminent and Mahatmaji, as might be expected, was well prepared for it and he gave instruction that his place should be taken up by Abbas Tyabjee, the aged friend, who had stood by Gandhi through all the years of Non-Co-operation. The fight threatened to be well-nigh grim: and as Sir P. C. Ray said, "Mahatma Gandhi's historic march was like the exodus of Israelites under Moses. Until the Seer seized the promised land, he won't turn his back."

The A.I.C.C. meeting, which met at Ahmedabad on Friday the 21st March (1930), decided to start Civil Disobedience on the arrest of Mahatmaji or if he so directed, before his arrest by April 6.

### GANDHI'S STATEMENT AT DANDI

Gandhi and his party reached Dandi on the morning of the 5th April. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu had also gone there to see the Mahatma. Interviewed by the Associated Press immediately after his arrival at Dandi, Gandhiji said:

> God be thanked for what may be termed the happy ending of the first stage in this, for me at least, the final struggle for freedom. I cannot withhold my compliments from the Government for the policy of complete non-interference adopted by them throughout the march. After

the graceless and childish performance in the matter of Mr. Vallabhai's arrest and imprisonment and equally unprovoked arrest and imprisonment of Mr Sen Gupta, I was wholly unprepared for this exemplary non-interference. I am not so foolish as to imagine that the Government has suddenly lost their proved capacity for provoking popular resentment and then punishing with frightfulness I wish I could believe this non-interference was due to any real change of heart or policy. The wanton disregard shown by them to popular feeling in the Legislative Assembly and their high-handed action leave no room for doubt that the policy of heartless exploitation of India is to be persisted in at any cost, and so the only interpretation I can put upon this non-interference is that the British Government, powerful though it is, is sensitive to world opinion which will not tolerate repression of extreme political agitation which civil disobedience undoubtedly is, so long as disobedience remains civil and therefore necessarily non-violent

It remains to be seen whether the Government will tolerate as they have tolerated the march, the actual breach of the salt laws by countless people from to-morrow. I expect extensive popular response to the resolution of the Working Committee. I have seen nothing to warrant the cancellation of the notice I have already issued that all committees and organisations throughout the length and breadth of the land are free, if they are prepared to commence from to-morrow civil disobedience in respect of the salt laws. God willing, I expect with my companions (volunteers) to commence actual civil disobedience at 6-30 to-morrow morning. 6th April had been to us since its culmination in Jalianwalla massacre day for penance and purification. We therefore commence it with prayer and fasting. I hope the whole of India will observe the National Week commencing from to-morrow in the spirit in which it was conceived. I am positive that the greater the dedication to the country's cause and the greater the purification, the speedier will be the glorious end for which the millions of India consciously or unconsciously are striving.

## THE "LAW-BREAKER"

Gandhi's prayer on the morning of the 6th was more than usually solemn. In the course of his speech he observed that if he was arrested, they should take orders from Mr. Abbas Tyabjee, and if he too was removed, from Mrs. Sarojini

Naidu. He paid a tribute to both these leaders and asked the volunteers implicitly to obey them.

Gandhiji concluded his address by asking the visitors not to offer Satyagraha that day, but to do so the next day. He considered his offer of civil disobedience as a great *Yagna* and he evidently did not want demonstrations, proceeding out of motives other than spiritual, to be associated with his great movement.

Soon after prayers, Mr. Gandhi with his 84 volunteers of the Gujarat Vidyapith and Saheth Punjabhai of Ahmedabad, proceeded exactly at 6 in the morning for a bath in the sea. A large crowd accompanied the party. Gandhi was walking at a slow pace in grave solemnity and entered the water of the sea amidst loud cries of "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai".

Gandhi was leaning on Miss Abbas Tyabji's shoulder, and was accompanied by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Then Gandhi and his volunteers proceeded to break the salt law by picking up the salt lying on the sea-shore. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu hailed the Mahatma by calling him 'law-breaker'.

No policemen appeared on the scene when Gandhi and his volunteers broke the salt law.

### GANDHI'S STATEMENT

Immediately after breaking the salt law, Mr. Gandhi issued the following press statement:—

> Now that the technical or ceremonial breach of the salt law has been committed, it is now open to any one who would take the risk of prosecution under the salt law to manufacture salt wherever he wishes and wherever it is convenient. My advice is that workers should everywhere manufacture salt, and where they know how to prepare clean salt, make use of it and instruct the villagers likewise.

telling the villagers at the same time that he runs the risk of being prosecuted. In other words, the villagers should be fully instructed as to the incidence of the salt tax, and the manner of breaking the laws and regulations connected with it so as to have the salt tax repealed.

It should be made absolutely clear to the villagers that the breach is open, and in no way stealthy. This condition being known, they may manufacture salt or help themselves to the salt manufactured by Nature in creeks and pits near the sea-shore, use it for themselves and their cattle, and sell it to those who will buy it, it being well understood that all such people are committing a breach of the salt law and running the risk of a prosecution, or even without a prosecution, are to be subjected by so-called salt officers to harassement.

This war against the salt tax should be continued during the National Week, that is, up to the 13th April. Those who are not engaged in this sacred work should themselves do vigorous propaganda for the boycott of foreign cloth and the use of khaddar They should also endeavour to manufacture as much khaddar as possible. As to this and the prohibition of liquor, I am preparing a message for the women of India who, I am becoming more and more convinced, can make a larger contribution than men towards the attainment of independence I feel that they will be worthier interpreters of non-violence than men, not because they are weak, as men, in their arrogance believe them to be, but because they have greater courage of the right type, and immeasurably greater spirit of self-sacrifice.

## THE ARRESTS

Gandhi's law-breaking was only a signal for a series of acts of civil disobedience in hundreds of places in different parts of the country. Groups of Satyagrahis at different points in Bombay and Calcutta were making striking demonstrations of civil disobedience. The sequel was the arrest of the Mahatma's lieutenants. First came the arrest of Sardar Vallabhai Patel; then Mr. Manilal Kothari who was leading a batch of salt Satyagrahis. He was followed by Messrs. Nariman and Jamnalal Bajaj; then

Ramdas Gandhi and Devadas (sons of the Mahatma). Messrs. Deshpande and Durbar Gopaldas came next. Mr. Sen Gupta, on his release from Burma, sought arrest again by defying the law of sedition in Calcutta. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Congress, was arrested on the 13th. The Maharashtra, which threw in its full weight with Gandhiji, put up a brave (non-violent) fight. By the third week of May all the leaders found themselves in prison. Mr. K. M. Munshi, the member for University, resigned his seat on the Bombay Legislative Council and proceeded to Dandi to take an active part in the campaign. He was arrested and sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200 on April 22. Then were arrested in turn Dr. Manubhai, Dr. Choit Ram, Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, Mr. Mahadev Desai, Messrs. Banker, Bhopatkar, D. V. Gokhale, Swami Anand, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya.

In Bengal, Dr. Ganesh Chandra Banerjee was sentenced to 2½ years' rigorous imprisonment and Dr. Prafulla Ghose and Mr. Premnath Banerjea to 2 years' rigorous imprisonment. Messrs. W. N. Neogy, P. N. Dhar and Prof. B. K. Bhattacharya were also arrested and convicted.

In Madras, Mr. K. Nageswara Rao, Editor of the *Andhra Patrika*, and Mr. T. Prakasam, Editor of the *Swarajya*, were both sentenced to varying terms and their place was taken up by Miss Dhurgabhai who was subsequently arrested at Vellore.

In the Tamil Nadu Mr. C. Rajagopalachari marched with a band of hundred volunteers to Vedaranyam where he was arrested and sentenced to six months. Mrs. Rukmani Lakshmipathy was also convicted a fortnight later.

The movement was as active as ever in Andhra Desa, particularly all along the coast line. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Konda Venkatappayya were arrested and sentenced soon after. In U. P. it was not long before the prison claimed Mr. Mohanlal Saksena, Babu Sri Prakasa, Moulvi Ahmed Zamankhan, Sardar Narbad Prasad Singh and others. These arrests led to the usual trials followed by varying sentences, and by the end of the "national week," some 200 had courted imprisonment. Gandhi felt gratified at the result:

From information available up to now, I gather that the striking manifestation of mass civil disobedience in Gujarat has had its effect on the Government, who have lost no time in arresting the chief men. But I know that similar attention must have been bestowed by the Government on the workers in the other Provinces. This is a matter for congratulation.

It would have been surprising if the Government had allowed civil resisters to have their own way. It would have been barbarous if they had violated the persons and property of civil resisters without judicial process.

No exception can be taken to orderly prosecutions and penalties thereunder. After all, this is the logical outcome of civil resistance. Imprisonment and the like is the test through which the civil resister has to pass. He gains his end when he himself is found not to flinch and those whom he represents do not betray any nervousness where the leader is put away. Now is the time for every one to be both chief and follower.

It would pain me if even after these imprisonments, students who are in Government or Government-controlled

schools and colleges do not respond by giving up their schools and colleges.

## PROGRESS OF THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN

Indeed after the arrest of the Congress President, the movement flourished with renewed vigour. It was naturally impossible for Government to ignore the growing tendency to disregard the law. So the executive began to disperse Satyagrahis. Early in the second week of April when the Satyagrahis at Aat attempted to carry contraband salt, the police tried to wrest it by force from their hands. Gandhi said, "they had no right to do that if they were representing a civilised government." When one of the volunteers was slightly injured on the wrist, Gandhi wrote:

> This laying hand on the people for the purpose of seizing the salt they were carrying was morally wrong, and even wrong, I fancy, according to the English common law. But I do not know what powers are given by the statute.

Concluding, Mahatmaji said.

> The legal procedure may be a cumbersome business for the Government, but since they have begun well, let them not end ill. If they resort to terrorism, they will find the people prepared. Let the people defend the salt in their possession till they break in the attempt, but they should do so without malice, without anger and without an angry word The police have the easiest way open to them for taking possession of the salt. Let them arrest the civil resisters and they can take possession of the salt, because they have possession of their persons; but it can become forfeit only after conviction, not before.

The result of the campaign and of the numerous arrests and imprisonments of prominent workers in the various provinces was to give an enormous stimulus to the movement.

## WOMEN IN THE MOVEMENT

One remarkable feature of the situation was that women more than ever participated in it. Groups of women were enlisted as volunteers for organizing the picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops in Bombay and Ahmedabad. In the latter city, Mrs. Ambalal Sarabhai wife of a leading mill-owner, organized a deputation to Gandhiji, her programme being the Swadeshi vow and organization of the country for the boycott of British goods.

Gandhiji himself, addressing a meeting of women in a village near Navsari, requested them not to take part in the violation of the Salt Law. He observed

> Women ought not to take part alongside of men in defence of salt pans. I still give credit to the Government that it will not make war upon our women It will be wrong on our part to provoke them into so doing. This is men's fight so long as the Government will confine their attention to men. There will be time enough for women to court assaults when the Government has crossed the limit. Let it not be said of us that men sought shelter behind women, well knowing they will be safe if they took women with them in what may be called, for want of a better name, aggressive non-violence Women have, in the programme I ventured to place before them, enough work and to spare and all adventure and risk they may be capable of undertaking

## VIOLENCE

Gandhi had always insisted on carrying on the "warfare" in quite a gentlemanly fashion. But all warfare is ugly. Mass civil disobedience went on for a time without a hitch. But law-breaking led to arrests, and arrests to demonstrations and hartals, to be followed in turn by further arrests and consequent

disturbances. The whole thing, as feared by many, worked in a vicious circle. The Satyagrahis were by all accounts non-violent and observed their great leader's commands with praiseworthy discipline. But a mass movement gathers all and sundry, who without imbibing the spirit of the movement and of its great leader are easily led astray by the excitement of conflict. And then the magnitude of the concourse and the general unrest are just the occasion for the eruption of sporadic outbursts of violence by the rowdies. It was just the atmosphere of confusion in which the vagabonds plied their trade with comparative ease. And these disturbances had to be quelled by the police or the military, and invariably the innocent suffered and the complaint became loud that the authorities had used more force than was necessary or justifiable. Whatever it was, the happenings at Karachi, Patna, Poona, Calcutta, Peshawar, Sholapur and Madras threw a lurid light on the situation. "By their indiscriminate beating and assaults," said Babu Rajendra Prasad, addressing a public meeting on the day following an incident in Patna, "the authorities had perhaps done more of propaganda and infused more spirit among the people than he could ever do by means of his speeches. Therefore, in this matter at least he admitted his defeat at the hands of the Government."

So much for Patna. Mr Gandhi referring to the Karachi tragedy wrote:

> Brave young Dattatreya who is said to have known nothing of Satyagraha and being an athlete had merely gone

to assist in keeping order, received a fatal bullet wound. Meghraj Revachand, 18 years old, has also succumbed to a bullet wound. Thus did seven men, including Jairamdas, receive bullet wounds.

It was a gruesome tragedy in Peshawar where many persons were killed as a result of military firing following a disturbance in which two armoured cars were set fire to.

In Madras, police assault on the peaceful Satyagrahis on the morning of the 25th April was an equally gruesome spectacle. Then began the dispersal of a public meeting by armed sowars and police firing.

Above all, there was a most unexpected outburst of violence at Chittagong, where a number of young men armed with revolvers made an attack upon the police, killing six and wounding a few more. It was evident that this had nothing to do with the Satyagraha movement, but it was most unfortunate it should have occurred at all.

## THE BENGAL ORDINANCE

The Government of India considered the situation at an emergency meeting of the Executive Council, and the Viceroy immediately issued an Ordinance renewing the Bengal Ordinance, which normally lapsed on April 23rd, in view of the grave happenings in Chittagong. Gandhiji, interviewed on the subject, said that the Chittagong news made sad reading, and "shows that there is a large or a small body of men in Bengal, who do not believe in non-violence as a policy or a creed". "If it is an indication, and not an isolated act," Gandhiji said, "it is a serious

affair. But however serious the situation becomes, there can be no suspension of the fight. There can be no retracing." Civil resisters, in his opinion, "must therefore fight an unequal struggle with the violence of the Government and the violence of those who have no faith in non-violence."

Mahatmaji himself writing under the caption *Black Regime* reviewed the outstanding events and observed that "if Government neither arrest nor declare salt free, they will find people marching to be shot rather than be tortured."

### THE PRESS ORDINANCE

While events were taking this untoward turn, H. E. the Viceroy promulgated on the 27th April another Ordinance reviving the powers of the Press Act of 1910, with certain amendments. His Excellency pointed out that many writings in the Press incited openly to violent and revolutionary action, others by consistent laudation of the civil disobedience movement, had encouraged a spirit of lawlessness throughout the country.

The ordinance was enforced with the utmost promptness in Delhi, the Government demanding securities from the principal papers. This was extended to papers in all the provinces with almost indecent haste. Some of these papers ceased publication, while others in deference to the decision of the Journalists' Conference paid the securities for the first time and continued. It was a difficult and almost impossible situation for nationalist papers and no wonder some

newspapers, including Mr. Gandhi's *Young India*, began to be issued in cyclostyle. Mr. Gandhi in a press statement declared :

Revival in the form of an Ordinance of the Press Act, that was supposed to be dead, was only to be expected and that, in its new form, the Act contains additional provisions making the whole piece deadlier than before.

Whether we realise it or not, for some days past, we have been living under a veiled form of martial law. After all, what is martial law, if it is not the will of the commanding officer? For the time being the Viceroy is that officer and wherever he considers it desirable, he supersedes the whole of the law, both common and statute, and imposes ordinances on a people too submissive to resent or resist them I hope, however, the time for tame submission to dictation from the British rulers is gone for ever.

I hope that the people will not be frightened by this ordinance. Pressmen, if they are worthy representatives of public opinion, will not be frightened by the ordinance. Let us realise the wise dictum of Thoreau that it is difficult, under tyrannical rule, for honest men to be wealthy, and if we have decided to hand over our bodies without murmur to the authorities, let us also be equally ready to hand over our property to them and not sell our souls

I would therefore urge Pressmen and publishers to refuse to furnish security, and if they are called upon to do so, either to cease publication or challenge the authorities to confiscate whatever they like. When freedom is actually knocking at our doors, and, when for the sake of wooing it, thousands have suffered tortures, let it not be said of Press representatives that they were weighed and found wanting. They may confiscate the type and machinery. They will not confiscate the pen and still less the speech, but I recognise, they can succeed in confiscating even these last two, but what they will never succeed in stifling what is after all the thing that matters, the thought of the nation.

He subsequently directed the manager of his *Navajivan* press to allow it to be forfeited rather than deposit security if security was demanded by the Government under the Press Ordinance

And, of course, in due course, *Navajivan* fell and with it the journals issued by that press.

### Mr. PATEL'S RESIGNATION

It was about this time too that President Patel resigned his office of speakership of the Assembly as well as his membership. In his letter to His Excellency Lord Irwin, he declared that he would serve the country better outside the Assembly by joining his countrymen in the "movement for freedom". He also outlined the difficulties and obstacles he had to contend with. 'The Chair," he declared, "had been a bed of thorns for me all throughout." His movements, he alleged, had been constantly watched and he had been shadowed. During the last five years his health had been seriously impaired by strenuous work. "A man with weaker nerves," he declared, "would have resigned long ago or become subservient to the bureaucracy." He found that he had laid down precedents and conventions which, in his opinion, "might be a credit to any Assembly in the world".

> I would ask you to lay aside in the larger interests of the respective countries all considerations of prestige and invite Mr. Gandhi for a settlement.

Thus wrote Mr. Patel in the course of his second letter to the Viceroy, tendering his resignation. Mr. Patel in this letter reviewed the political situation in the country and recounted the advice that he constantly gave to the Viceroy, dwelling on the importance of the Congress in Indian politics. In concluding, he paid a warm

tribute to Lord Irwin. "You sincerely wish to solve India's problem," he said,

> Your influence with all the parties in England is great. . . . If, therefore, you take courage and rise to the occasion, you will serve both India and England as no man has served in the past If you fail, it must be India's good-bye to England.

The Viceroy accepting the resignation refused to reply to all the allegations against the officers of his Government as "these charges bear on their face their own refutation". He referred to Mr. Patel's misunderstandings of events as evident in his letter of resignation and he hoped that Mr. Patel "and his friends would realize the great harm they were doing to India by refusing the way of peace" for the solution of the country's political problems.

### GANDHI'S ACTIVITIES

Meanwhile Mr. Gandhi's own activities continued unabated. He travelled through the villages preaching incessantly now against untouchability, now against drink, now urging the people to go on with khadi work and the manufacture of illicit salt, and calling upon the women to take the place of men in national service. At one place he asked the people to cut off all the palm trees in the village—himself inaugurating the ceremony of destruction by cutting at the root of one—and he called upon the village officers to resign and join the national work. Addressing a meeting of women in Surat on May 4, Gandhiji said that they should not attend his meetings in future without their *taklis*. They could spin the finest counts on the *taklis*. Women of Surat

had to atone for the admission of foreign cloth through the port of Surat. At the same place he called upon the caste panchayats to observe their pledge to abstain from drink. At Navsari, however, he warned the people against the social boycott of Government officials. "Kaira district appears to have become the theatre of war in Gujarat," wrote Gandhiji in an article in *Navajivan*.

> People have preserved peace but there are anger and malice and therefore violence in their intensive social boycott They censure and harass Government officers in small matters They will not succeed in this manner. We should expose the evils of the offices of Mamlatdars, Fozdars, etc, but we should not harbour anger towards Mamlatdars and Fozdars. There should be sweetness and respect in our intense boycott. Otherwise there will be riots some day. Mamlatdar and Fozdar, ect., will cross the limit. Fozdar is already said to have crossed the limit What wonder if the people crossed the limit? Similarly if some abuse, how can they blame those who resort to blows?
>
> People of Kaira district should take a warning and enforce boycott within limits. I have indicated for instance boycott of village officers should be with regard to their office only. Their order should not be obeyed but their food supplies should not be stopped. They should not be ejected from their houses. If we are not capable of doing this, we should give up the boycott

Gandhiji was then drafting his second letter to the Viceroy and had also announced his intention of raiding the salt works of Dharsana and Chharwada.

### THE ARREST

It was obvious that Gandhi's arrest was only a question of time. The Government of India had made up its mind to put a stop to his activities, a view in which the Home Government had no hesitation in concurring. But the whole affair was kept confidential and not until

Mr. Gandhi was actually removed to Yeravda. on the morning of the 5th, was it known that the arrest had taken place.

For at midnight on the 4th May, Gandhiji was arrested in his camp at Karadi. Describing the arrest, Mira Bai (Miss Slade) used the language of the Bible,

> At dead of night, like thieves they came to steal him away For, 'when they sought to lay hold on him, they feared the multitudes, because they took him [for a prophet.'

It would appear that the District Magistrate and District Superintendent of Police with the Deputy Superintendent of Police and about 20 armed policemen proceeded from Jalalpur to Karadi and reached there at 12-45. They proceeded straight with the help of a flashlight torch to the cot where Mr. Gandhi was fast asleep. They directed the flashlight on Mr. Gandhi, who woke up. Policemen surrounded Mr. Gandhi's cot. Mr. Gandhi asked if they wanted him. The District Magistrate replied in the affirmative and said: "We have orders to place you under arrest."

Mr. Gandhi inquired if they minded his cleaning his teeth. The District Police Superintendent replied that he had no objection. While Mr. Gandhi was thus engaged in applying salt to his teeth with a brush, his "volunteers" assembled. Mr. Gandhi asked the District Magistrate if he would let him know the charge under which he was arrested. The District Magistrate read out the warrant:

> As Government views with alarm the activities of Mr. M. K. Gandhi, they direct that he should be placed

under restraint under Regulation 25 of 1827 and suffer imprisonment during the pleasure of the Government and be immediately removed to Yeravda Central Jail.

Mr. Gandhi thanked the District Magistrate and went about his morning routine. It was by this time nearing 1 A.M. and the District Magistrate requested Mr. Gandhi to speed up. Mr. Gandhi was soon ready to go. He handed over a letter which he had written to H. E. the Viceroy and some other letters to one of his "volunteers" and he took his two bags, and a *takli*. Before Mr. Gandhi departed, his "volunteers" bade him farewell. By this time it was ten minutes past one and Mr. Gandhi was placed in a motor lorry, accompanied by policemen.

He was then taken to Borivli near Bombay by train and thence by motor car to Yeravda prison. By special favour of the authorities two newspaper correspondents, the late Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett, representing the London *Telegraph*, and Mr. Negley Farson, the correspondent of an American paper, were present at a level crossing when Mahatmaji was taken down from the train. Describing the scene with true historic perception, Ashmead-Bartlett wrote:

> There was something intensely dramatic in the atmosphere while we were waiting for the train, for we all felt we were sole eye-witnesses of a scene which may become historical—this arrest of a prophet, false or true. For, false or true, Gandhi is now regarded as a holy man and saint by millions of Indians. Who knows whether, one hundred years from now, he may be worshipped as a supreme being by 300,000,000 people. We could not shake off these thoughts and it seemed incongruous to be at a level crossing at dawn to take the prophet into custody.

## HIS MESSAGE

Before the arrest, however, Gandhiji had dictated at Dandi a message in which he expressed his satisfaction at the way Gujarat had responded to his call.

If such an auspicious beginning is carried to its full conclusion, complete Swaraj is a certainty and India will have set to the whole world an example worthy of her. Swaraj, obtained without sacrifice, never endures. People may have, therefore, to make endless sacrifices In real sacrifice there is only one-sided suffering, that is, without killing others one has to die. May India accomplish this ideal! At present, the self-respect and everything of India are concealed in a handful of salt. The fist may be broken, but it should never be opened.

After I am arrested, neither the people nor my colleagues should be daunted. The conductor of this fight is God and not I. He dwells in the heart of all. If we have faith in us, God will certainly lead us Our path is fixed. Whole villages should come forward to pick or manufacture salt. Women should picket liquor and opium shops and foreign cloth shops. In every house young and old should begin spinning on *takli* and heaps of yarn should be daily woven There should be bonfires of foreign cloth Hindus, Mohamedans, Parsis and Christians, all should heartily embrace one another The major communities should be satisfied with what remains after satisfaction of minor communities. Students should leave Government schools, and Government servants should resign and be employed in the service of the people like brave patels and talatis who have resigned. Thus shall we easily complete Swaraj.

## MRS. GANDHI ON THE ARREST

Interviewed by the Associated Press, Mrs. Gandhi said.

Bapu has been removed, but his removal will in no way hamper the great task of winning India's freedom undertaken by him If the nation sincerely followed Bapu, they should carry on the work with double vigour. Lawyers should now leave the courts, and women should justify the faith reposed in them by Bapuji, and should leave no stone unturned in the boycott of foreign cloth and abolition of the drink evil. I fervently hope that

India will show her mettle, and give a fitting reply to the Government's unwarranted action.

### MRS. NAIDU ON GANDHI'S ARREST

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, in a statement to the Press on Mahatma Gandhi's arrest, said :

A powerful Government could have paid no more splendid tribute to the far-reaching power of Mahatma Gandhi than by the manner of his arrest and incarceration without trial under the most arbitrary law on their statute book. It is really immaterial that the fragile and ailing body of the Mahatma is imprisoned behind stone walls and steel bars It is the least essential part of it. The man and his message are identical and his message is the living heritage of the nation to-day and will continue to influence the thought and action of the world unfettered and unchallenged by the mandate of the most autocratic Government of the earth.

### THE AFTERMATH OF THE ARREST

The arrest of Mahatma Gandhi naturally created considerable excitement, not only in India but all over the world. It was followed by spontaneous demonstrations of sympathy from one end of the country to the other. It was the signal for a voluntary and complete hartal in Bombay, Calcutta and several other places. The day after the arrest, the hartal was even more widespread. In Bombay, a huge procession was taken out, and a public meeting in the evening had to be addressed from seven different platforms. About 40 out of the 80 mills had to be inactive, because over 50,000 men had come out in protest. The workmen of the G.I.P. and the B.B. and C.I. Workshops also came out and joined the hartal. The cloth merchants decided on a six days' hartal to indicate their disapproval of the arrest. In Poona, where Gandhiji was interned, the hartal

was complete. Resignations from honorary offices and from the services were announced at frequent intervals. Troubles were brewing at one or two places, though on the whole the country had imbibed Mahatmaji's teachings rather astonishingly. The disturbances in Sholapur resulting in the burning of six police chaukies led to police firing in which 25 were killed and about a hundred wounded. In Calcutta, though the hartal was peaceful in the city, there were disturbances at Howrah where the police opened fire; at Panchannantala, a crowd which tried to hold up a train was fired upon by the police and fifteen were injured. Section 144 was at once promulgated at Howrah, and numerous arrests were made. There was firing also in Delhi, following the refusal of a crowd to disperse. Under Section 144, all assemblies of more than five were prohibited.

PROTESTS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

But Gandhiji's arrest had a world-wide interest. Indians engaged in business in Panama called a 24-hour sympathetic 'hartal'. A similar step was taken by Indians on the east coast of Sumatra, who wired to the Viceroy and the Congress regretting Mr. Gandhi's arrest. French papers were full of Gandhi and his doings. The boycott movement had a repercussion in Germany also where textile exporters were advised by their agents in India to suspend exports. Reuter reported that Saxon manufacturers of cheap printed cotton goods were particularly hard hit. The Indian community of Nairobi declared 'hartal' in consequence of the arrest.

## AMERICAN SYMPATHY

Meanwhile, an influentially signed message was cabled to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald by 102 American clergymen of various denominations urging him to seek an amicable settlement with Mr. Gandhi and the Indian people. Signatures were collected by Dr. John Haynes Holmes, New York, and the message appealed to the Prime Minister in the interests of Britain, India, and the world to avoid the tragedy of a conflict which would mean catastrophe for all mankind.

The signatories refused to believe that Mr. MacDonald, representing principles of freedom, democracy and brotherhood, could find it impossible to negotiate with Mr. Gandhi and make peace with the spiritual ideals he so sublimely embodies.

## THE LIBERAL MOVE

The Government of India was no doubt keenly alive to the seriousness of the situation. His Excellency the Viceroy interviewed the Liberal leaders, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Chimanlal Setalvad at great length. The Council of the Liberal Federation met at Bombay to consider the political situation and leading Liberals gave expression to the urgent need for another announcement from the Viceroy fixing the early date of the Round Table Conference. But the day before the meeting of the All-Parties' Conference and the Council of the Liberal Federation, His Excellency made another important announcement and released for publication his correspondence with the Prime Minister. The

Council of the Federation also issued a statement on the situation. The Council, while unequivocally condemning the civil disobedience movement, urged the Viceroy to speed up the preparations for the Round Table Conference for the discussion of Dominion Status. It stressed the importance of the Government

indicating the terms of reference and the scope of the Round Table Conference in order that even at this stage those who keep aloof may join hands with the Liberals and other Parties who are proceeding to the Conference.

It further laid stress

on the simultaneous cessation of civil disobedience and the initiation of active conciliation on the part of the Government to be manifested by the release of those whose freedom has been restrained for political reasons, and the taking of all political Parties into Government's full confidence.

LORD IRWIN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

In the course of a statement announcing the date of the Round Table Conference, His Excellency the Viceroy reviewed the course of political events since his announcement of November 1, reiterated his desire to continue his work for India despite the many lamentable happenings, and concluded :

Our purpose remains unchanged. Neither my Government nor His Majesty's Government will be deflected by these unhappy events from our firm determination to abide by the policy I was privileged to announce on November last.

After reviewing the developments in this country since October 1929 and pointing out how his warning to Mr. Gandhi against the consequences of a campaign of civil disobedience had been proved by recent riots, Lord Irwin declared that steps were being taken to arrange for

the assembling in London of the representatives at the Round Table Conference. His Excellency added, "I have learnt to love India too well to relax my efforts to assist what I hold to be the natural and true development of her political life," and emphasised that no settlement can be considered satisfactory which did not carry the consent of, and give a sense of security to, the important communities who will have to live under the new constitution.

THE WORKING COMMITTEE'S DECISION

But, in the meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee met at Allahabad and expressed its abiding faith in civil disobedience. It chalked out the lines to be followed in the coming weeks and recommended in its resolutions.

(1) Civil disobedience campaign to be continued;
(2) Complete boycott of foreign cloth;
(3) Inauguration of a no-tax campaign;
(4) Weekly breaches of the salt law,
(5) Boycott of British Banking, Insurance, Shipping and other institutions;
(6) Picketing of liquor shops;
(7) Delegation of full powers to Pandit Motilal Nehru.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Abbas Tyabji, who had taken up Mahatmaji's place as leader of the Salt Satyagrahis, was arrested on the 12th April.

Mrs. Naidu, who had proceeded to Allahabad to attend the Working Committee meeting, on hearing of Mr. Tyabji's arrest, hurried to Dharsana, in fulfilment of her promise to Mr. Gandhi and continued to direct the raid. She and her batch of volunteers, who had pursued a policy of

"wait and see" for over 24 hours, were formally arrested on 16th morning, taken out of the police cordon and then released.

After the first batch had left the prohibited area, a few volunteers, taking advantage of the fact that the majority of the police party had moved out to the lunch camp leaving only a handful to keep watch, rushed towards the salt mounds. They were chased out, and in the scuffle, a few volunteers were injured. The same evening over 220 volunteers were arrested by the police on a charge of being members of an unlawful assembly and were detained in the segregation camp at Dharsana.

According to the decision of the Bombay Congress Committee, a large number of volunteers converged on the Wadala salt works on the 18th morning. The 'raid' was frustrated by the prompt action of the police, who, armed with revolvers, arrested over 400 of the Satyagrahis. There was an exciting chase after a batch of the arrested persons, who had broken loose from the police cordon and dashed out for Wadala, but were also soon rounded up.

### THE EFFECT OF THE MOVEMENT

The repercussions of the movement in the country were plain enough. To take a single instance, largely owing to the civil disobedience campaign, the Bombay Government was faced with a budget deficit of Rs. 1½ crores, whereas they had estimated a surplus of Rs. 1 lakh.

There was also a fall in excise revenue of Rs. 60 lakhs and a decrease of Rs. 16 lakhs

from forests; Rs. 5½ lakhs of land revenue remained uncollected.

But its effect on the London market and in the manufacturing centres in England was even more pronounced. The Free Press Correspondent, writing of the effect of the boycott movement, observed:

> Since the attack seems to be concentrated on the textile goods, it is here that the effectiveness of the movement is most visibly felt But what worries manufacturers is not so much the feeling that they would ultimately lose the Indian market as the fear that the existing contracts would either not be fulfilled or would be cancelled. The tendency to cancel the present orders seems to be on the increase, and the Manchester Correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, says, "The latest news from India is likely to bring Lancashire's Indian trade to a complete standstill. Already spinning mills and weaving sheds are closing down indefinitely and thousands of operatives are joining the ranks of the unemployed."

Thus nobody, least of all the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India, could believe that the trouble was all over with the arrest. It would appear that they were forced to it rather painfully. It is easy enough for the ignorant or the reactionary Press in England, as in India, to goad the Government on to acts of repression. But they forgot that the Mahatma himself, when free, is a great force working for peace. Mr. Benn and Lord Irwin knew that there could be no peace in the country until the whole problem of the Indian constitution was discussed *de novo* and a settlement in conformity with the legitimate aspirations of the people arrived at. Hence it was that, in reply to questions in the House of Commons on the morrow of the arrest,

Mr. Wedgwood Benn emphasised "that the invitations to Indian leaders for the Round Table Conference still stood despite anything that has happened".

## THE SALT RAIDS

Meanwhile successive meetings of the Working Committee decided to continue the programme and the raid was to go on. A mass raid at Dharsana took place on the 21st of May, when 2,500 volunteers from all parts of Gujarat took part in it. They were led by Imam Saheb, the 62-years old colleague of Gandhiji in South Africa. The volunteers commenced the raid early in the morning, and as they attacked the salt heaps at different places, the police charged them with lathis (bamboo sticks) and beat them back. Thousands witnessed the spectacle. After this had gone on for two hours, the leaders, Messrs. Imam Saheb, Pyarilal and Manilal Gandhi, were arrested and later Mrs. Sarojini Naidu also. The total number of injured volunteers on that day was 290. One injured volunteer, Mr. Bhailalbhai Dajabhai, died from the effects of the injuries. The police, with the help of the military, then practically isolated Dharsana and Untadi by blocking the main road leading to these places and preventing any car or pedestrian from going along it. All the volunteers who were camping at Untadi were taken to some unknown destination and later released.

Two batches of volunteers numbering about 200 were led on the 3rd June from Untadi camp to raid the Dharsana salt depots. Both were held up by the police who, when the crowd

entered the prohibited area, charged them with lathis. The injured were taken to the camp hospital.

WADALA RAIDS

Raids in succession were also made on the Wadala salt depot. On the 22nd, 118 volunteers were arrested and taken to Worli. On the 25th, 100 volunteers were accompanied by a huge crowd of 2,000 spectators. The police charged them with lathis, injuring 17, and later arrested 115 of them. The raid lasted two hours. It was continued in the afternoon when 18 more were injured by police lathis. On the 25th, about a dozen were injured, and among them the airman Kabali. On the 26th, 65 volunteers were afield and 43 of them were arrested. The rest with the crowd got off with the salt. An official Press Note stated that the disturbances that had so far taken place, had been caused largely by the sight seers who were, unlike the volunteers, not disciplined. The Note warned the public to keep away from Wadala while the raids were in progress.

But the most demonstrative raid was to come off on the 1st June for which the War Council (a term that had since come into vogue) was diligently preparing. On the morning of the 1st, nearly 15,000 volunteers and non-volunteers participated in the great mass action at Wadala.

Successive batches marched up to the Port Trust level crossing and the swelled crowd were held up there by the police cordon. Soon the raiders among whom were women and children broke through the cordon, splashed through slime and mud, and ran over the pans. Congress

raiders numbering about 150 were slightly injured. The raiders were repulsed by the police who were acting under the immediate supervision of the Home Member.

Serious trouble ending in two police charges and the calling out of the military to cope with the situation occurred at the Worli Detention Camp on the 3rd June when, about a thousand under-trial Wadala "Raiders" were involved in a brush with the police resulting in about ninety casualties, twenty-five of them being serious.

ORDINANCES GALORE

Meanwhile the Viceroy issued two more Ordinances in order to check the inauguration of the no-tax campaign, the picketing of foreign cloths and liquor shops and the social boycott of Government servants. These were called the Unlawful Instigation Ordinance and the Prevention of Intimidation Ordinance. Each of them was accompanied by a personal statement by the Viceroy, who set out his reasons for such extraordinary legislation. The new Ordinances were at once applied, by notification, to the Provinces of Bombay, Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa and the North-west Frontier; the Instigation Ordinance alone was extended to the Punjab.

EYE-WITNESSES' STATEMENT

But the way in which the raiders were dealt with by the police caused considerable public indignation and protests. On-lookers were aghast at the gruesome spectacle. Mr. Hussain, ex-Judge, Small Causes Court, Bombay, Mr. K. Natarajan and Mr. G. K. Devadhar, President,

Servants of India Society, who personally watched the Dharsana raid, issued a statement in which they said:

They saw with their own eyes that after Satyagrahis were driven out of the salt boundary, mounted European Sowars rode at full gallop with lathis in their hands beating people between the spot where Satyagrahis had reached for raid and the village itself They actually galloped full speed through the streets of the village scattering men, women and children Villagers ran into bye-lanes and closed themselves in houses. But if, by accident, they were unable to escape, they were beaten with lathis.

Mr. Webb Miller, writing to the *New Freeman*, expressed abhorrence of the sights at Dharsana.

In eighteen years of reporting in twenty-two countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable civil disturbances, riots, street fights and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharsana. Sometimes the scenes were so painful that I had to turn away momentarily. One surprising feature was the discipline of the volunteers It seemed they were thoroughly imbued with Gandhi's non-violence creed.

### Mr. SLOCOMBE'S IMPRESSIONS

Mr. George Slocombe, representative of the *Daily Herald*, London, was also an eye-witness to some of the salt raids.

I watched the events from an observation-post on one of the rocky hills which ring in Wadala.

It was humiliating for an Englishman to stand among the ardent, friendly, but deeply moved crowd of volunteers and sympathizers and watch the representatives of the country's administration engaged in this ludicrous, embarrassing business.

The scenes that he witnessed burnt themselves into his mind, and like a true evangel he was groping for a way out of the impasse. It was now that he achieved a journalistic coup more impressive and certainly more fruitful than Mr. Bartlett's

interview at the Railway level crossing. On May 20, Mr. Slocombe saw Mr. Gandhi in Yeravda Jail and wrote a masterly despatch to his paper—a despatch which disturbed the slumbers of the House of the Commons and threw the Tory press into a paroxism of chagrin and fury. It was in that despatch that Mr. Slocombe announced that

even at this critical hour, a settlement is possible and Mr. Gandhi is prepared to recommend to the Congress a suspension of the civil disobedience movement and co-operation with the Round Table Conference on the following terms.

(1) The terms of reference of the Round Table Conference to include the framing of a constitution giving India the substance of independence.

(2) Satisfaction to be granted to Mr. Gandhi's demands for the repeal of the salt tax, prohibition of liquor and the ban on foreign cloth.

(3) An amnesty for prisoners convicted of political offences, to coincide with the end of the civil disobedience campaign

(4) The remaining seven points raised in Mr Gandhi's letter to the Viceroy to be left for future discussion.

And Mr. Slocombe pertinently asked:

"Is the Government prepared to make honourable peace with him? Negotiation is still possible and after my two meetings with Mr. Gandhi in prison, I am convinced that conciliation will be met with conciliation but that violence on either side will compel surrender of the other. Incalculable disaster may yet be avoided by the frank recognition that the imprisoned Mahatma now incarnates the very soul of India.

## THE SAPRU-JAYAKAR NEGOTIATIONS

It was at this time and under such circumstances that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M. R. Jayakar undertook the very delicate and difficult task of negotiating a settlement of outstanding differences between the Congress and

Government. Sir Tej Bahadur rightly thought that such a settlement would facilitate Congress representation at the ensuing Round Table Conference, and he set about the business (as he said subsequently) at the instance of some leading Congressmen. The documents and correspondence relating to the Peace Negotiations were released on the 5th September, and we must here be content with a brief precis of them.

The basis of the negotiations was two statements by Pandit Motilal Nehru.

I. *The Pandit's interview with Mr. George* Slocombe on June 20.

II. Mr. Slocombe's statement submitted to Pandit Motilal and approved by him.

On the basis of these documents, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jayakar requested the Viceroy in their letter of July 13 to afford them facilities to see Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Motilal and Pandit Jawaharlal in jail, without any jail officer being present. Lord Irwin's reply, giving them the desired permission, reiterated the statement that he had embodied in his speech to the Central Legislature, indicating his attitude to the constitutional issue.

### Mr GANDHI'S NOTES TO THE NEHRUS

The two peace intermediaries had long conversations with Mr. Gandhi in Yeravda jail on July 23 and 24. The outcome of the talks was that he gave a note and a letter to be

anded over to the Nehrus in Naini jail at llahabad. The Note, among other things, urged:

I. That the Conference be restricted to a discussion f the safeguards that may be necessary in connection with ull self-government during the period of transition.

II. Simultaneous calling off of civil disobedience and he withdrawal of the Ordinances and release of Satyagraha nd political prisoners.

Further, Mr. Gandhi stated that he would serve to himself

he liberty of testing every Swaraj scheme by its ability o satisfy the object underlying the 11 points mentioned n my letter to the Viceroy.

The letter to Pandit Motilal stated that Pandit Jawaharlal's must be the final voice," nd that he (Mr. Gandhi) "should have no esitation in supporting any stronger position han that adopted in the note) up to the ter of the Lahore resolution."

But the Nehrus pitched their demands a fle too high and in their note to Gandhiji pressed their doubts as to the wisdom of owering their standard.

They also felt that "we are unlikely to chieve anything (at the R. T. C.) unless an greement on all vital matters is previously arrived at". And then Gandhi wrote his revised terms which he gave to Mr. Jayakar in the first week of August, declaring:

(1) No constitutional scheme would be acceptable to Mr Gandhi which did not contain a clause allowing India the right to secede from the Empire at her desire and another clause which gave the right and power to India to deal satisfactorily with his eleven points.

(2) The Viceroy should be made aware of this sition. Mr. Gandhi would also insist at the Conference

on a clause giving India the right to have examined by an independent tribunal all the British claims and concessions given to Britishers in the past.

CONGRESS LEADERS' NOTE

The next event was the joint interview in Yeravda jail on the 14th and 15th August, between Mr. Jayakar and Dr. Sapru on the one side, and Mr. Gandhi, Mrs. Naidu, Mr. Daulatram, the Nehrus and Dr. Syed Mahmud, on the other. The result was a letter signed by the Congress leaders in the course of which they said among other things:

The following is the utmost response it is possible for us to make to your friendly endeavour:

The language used by the Viceroy in the reply given to your letter about the Conference is too vague to enable us to assess its value nor are we in a position to say anything authoritative without reference to a properly constituted meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress and, if necessary, the A.I.C.C.; but for us individually no solution will be satisfactory unless (*a*) it recognizes, in *as many words, the right of India to secede at will from* the British Empire; (*b*) it gives to India complete National Government responsible to her people, including control of the Defence forces and economic control, and covers all the eleven points raised in Gandhiji's letter to the Viceroy; and (*c*) it gives to India the right to refer, if necessary, to an independent tribunal such British claims, concessions and the like, including the so-called public debt of India, as may seem to the National Government to be unjust or not in the interest of the people of India.

*Note.*—Such adjustments as may be necessitated in the interests of India during the transference of power to be determined by India's chosen representatives.

The negotiators then interviewed the Viceroy between the 25th and 27th August. His Excellency, while appreciating the spirit in which they had undertaken the work, declared:

I do not think any useful purpose would be served by my attempting to deal in detail with the suggestions they made, and I must frankly say I regard the discussion on

the basis of the proposals contained in the letter as impossible.

Thus ended the Sapru-Jayakar negotiations to which the country was looking forward with hopes for a settlement.

## THE FAILURE OF NEGOTIATIONS

The failure of the negotiations came as a rude shock and disappointment to the country at large. While Dr. Sapru and Mr. Jayakar, in conformity with the recognised etiquette on such occasions, kept a dignified silence, Liberal leaders felt sorely aggrieved by the prospect of the indefinite continuance of the impasse and the strain on the country consequent on the rigorous application of ordinances resulting in the meek and helpless sufferings of the people. It must be said, however, that even some of the advanced nationalists did not quite approve of the attitude taken by the Congress leaders.

Thus the *Mahratta*, the leading organ of the Tilak School of Nationalists, while holding that the major portion of the responsibility for the failure of the peace negotiations rested on the Government, severely criticised the Congress leaders for shifting the basis of negotiations. It pointed out that in the first letter Mahatma Gandhi did not refer to the right of secession or to the question of the public debt of India. "It was an afterthought and inserted in his second note." It wrote:

> In brief, the Congress leaders, by their unpractical extravagance, and probably by their lack of the exact perception of the political situation, have, to our mind, lost

a golden opportunity of compromise. We do not believe that the country would have suffered by the compromise. On the contrary, it is our conviction that the nation would have been better braced up for any other political movement, if necessity for the same arose later.

Undeterred by the failure of these efforts, Mr. Horace G. Alexander, Professor of International Relations at Selly Oak College, took upon himself the seemingly impossible task of bringing about a *rapprochement* by further efforts at negotiation and sought interviews with the Viceroy at Simla and Mr. Gandhi in jail. Recording his impressions of his interview with the august prisoner and the possibility of a common factor in the tangle of dissensions, he pointed out subsequently in an article in the *Spectator* that:

> Phrases like 'Dominion Status' and 'Federation' mean little to him. He wants to know what the functions and powers of a Dominion are to be, and who is to have effective control of the essential services in any federation. Unlike many of his fellow-countrymen, it is not the prestige of a higher status that he craves, but the power to wrestle with the problem of Indian poverty. There is surely nothing negative or destructive in such an aim, as so many of his British critics maintain, even though his method of securing it may seem strange

It was in fact clear that though he had to implement the existing laws with about a dozen ordinances, all obnoxious to the people, Lord Irwin was by no means oblivious to the spirit underlying the disobedience movement in the country. Addressing the Calcutta European Association at a dinner, Lord Irwin declared:

> However emphatically we may condemn the Civil Disobedience Movement, we should, I am satisfied, make a profound mistake if we underestimated the genuine and powerful meaning of nationalism that is to-day animating

much of Indian thought and for this no complete or permanent cure has ever been or ever will be found in strong action by Government.

But the Imperial Government had decided to go on with the Round Table Conference, regardless of Congress attitude, though they would welcome its participation at any stage. His Excellency Lord Irwin, speaking at a farewell Banquet at Simla on September 29th, made reference to the peace efforts and the Round Table Conference and observed:

> In little more than a month from now representatives from all parts of India will meet His Majesty's Government in a Conference, which, I trust, may long be remembered as one of the landmarks of progress in the history of this country
>
> That the Conference will include no representative of one important political party in India, and, I confess, that the refusal of that party to endeavour to make their contribution to discussions of such far-reaching consequence, seems to me to betray a tragic lack of foresight and a bankruptcy of statesmanship.
>
> But, while deploring that wiser counsels have not prevailed, I do not think there can be much doubt on whose shoulders must rest the blame for the present position of affairs.

Thus, arrangements were in rapid progress to make the London Conference a great and impressive success.

## THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

Accordingly the opening of the Round Table Conference in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords, on Wednesday the 12th November, 1930, was attended with stately splendour. For the first time in the history of British connection with India, the King of England presided over the Conference and gave his Royal blessings to a historic gathering called upon to deal with the

momentous problem of India's future constitution. There were 86 delegates in all: 16 from the Indian States, 57 representing British India, and 13 from the British political parties. The central figure in the scene was the King himself. The Premier, Princes and their Ministers sat to the right of the throne. Mr. Benn and other British delegates to the left, and the British Indian delegation to the front. Among the keenly interested visitors were the Prime Ministers of the Dominions. The speeches delivered on the occasion were altogether impressive.

The plenary session recommenced at St. James' Palace on the 17th and continued for five days till the 21st, during which time a number of speeches were made by representatives of the various delegations, and the consensus of opinion was a strong and irresistible plea for Dominion Status for India.

Opening the general discussion on the future form of Constitution for India, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru delivered a magnificent speech which made a great impression on the House.

> India is determined to achieve a status of equality with the other three members of the Commonwealth, which will give her a Government, not merely responsible, but responsive, to the popular voice,

said Dr. Sapru, and concluded amidst cheers:

> We are here to add, if we can, a bright chapter to the history of the relations of England and India.

A striking feature of these deliberations was the part taken by the Ruling Chiefs and Princes who participated in the discussion. The Maharajas of Patiala and Bikaner and Alwar, and the Nawab

of Bhopal and the representatives of the States, were unanimous in their plea for broadening the basis of the Indian Constitution and joining an Indian Federation. The Rt. Hon. Sastri made an impassioned appeal to the Premier pointing out the strength and unanimity that lay behind the movement for freedom in India. Mr. MacDonald replied with much force and earnestness.

Especially notable also was the declaration that the attitude of the Princes had revolutionised the situation, and he went on to say:

> Your problem and my problem is to sit down together and supply practical answers to those questions which can be embodied in an Act of Parliament. (*Applause.*) This Constitution, this Federation or whatever it may be, must meet two fundamental requirements:
>
> Firstly, it must work. There is no good producing a constitution which won't work. That won't get you out of your difficulties and won't get us out of ours. The other point is this The constitution must evolve. You are not in a position here to produce a static constitution that your grandsons, great-grandsons and great great-grandsons will worship as though it is one of your sacred inheritances.
>
> Therefore, the constitution must work. the constitution must evolve. It must be a continuing thing, and in the evolving, Indian opinion and Indian experience must be the more important initiating power.

Thus ended the plenary session which appointed various Committees to deliberate upon and advise the Conference on the outstanding issues before it.

### THE SUB-COMMITTEES AND THEIR REPORTS

For nearly ten weeks the Committees sat at frequent intervals and deliberated upon the various aspects of the problem, notably under the immediate guidance of the Prime Minister.

and the Lord Chancellor Lord Sankey. First, there was the Federal Structure Committee presided by Lord Sankey. There were then the Defence Committee under Mr. Thomas, the Frontier Committee under Mr. Henderson, and the Franchise Committee under Sir W. M. Jowitt. There were besides the Minorities Committee under the immediate guidance of the Prime Minister, the Burma Committee, the Provincial Committee, and the Committee on Public Services.

At the Meeting of the Federal Structure Committee on the 2nd January, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru outlined his proposals in a speech of remarkable force and lucidity which elicited approval from Lord Reading and admiration from all sides of the House. His proposals may be briefly put:

Powers of the Secretary of State to be restricted to Crown subjects and the Council of India to disappear.

The Governor-General, in future, to be the head of the Executive Government in the same way as the Governor-General in the Dominions, subject to certain changes necessitated by the period of transition.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru recalled that the object of the Conference was not to draft a Constitution which must be left to constitutional draftsmen later. He thought he was entitled to ask the Chairman to say that the real object had been attained and to hold that the maximum amount of agreement regarding responsibility at the centre and the status of India had been arrived at. Lord Sankey, after considering all the reports at a special meeting of the Committee at St. James', on January 12, read the Draft Report which suggested

that Executive power and authority should be vested in the Crown or the Governor General, and there should be a Council of Ministers appointed by the Governor-General to hold office at his pleasure to aid and advise him.

The Governor-General should invite a Minister to form Government, who will retain office only as long as they retain the confidence of the Legislature.

The Sub-Committee generally agreed that the assumption by India of all powers and responsibility which had hitherto rested with Parliament could not be made at one step, and

during the period of transition the Governor-General should be responsible for Defence and External Relations, including Relations with Indian States, outside the Federal sphere and in certain specified situations which may arise outside the sphere of those subjects.

The Governor-General must be free to act on his own responsibility and should be given the powers necessary to implement his decisions in the event of a breakdown of the Constitution. Adequate powers should be vested in the Governor-General for the purpose of enabling the King's Government to be carried on. . .

The Conference sitting on the 19th January at the Plenary Session adopted the following resolution :

These Reports, provisional though they are, together with the recorded notes attached to them, afford in the opinion of the Conference material of the highest value for use in the framing of a Constitution for India, embodying as they do a substantial measure of agreement on the main ground-plan and many helpful indications of the points of detail to be further pursued. And the Conference feels that arrangements should be made to pursue without interruption the work upon which it has been engaged, including the provision in the Constitution of adequate safeguards for the Mussalmans, Depressed Classes, Sikhs and all other important minorities.

The Conference concluded with the speech of the Prime Minister recounting the achievements of the Session.

The Prime Minister, in reviewing the work of the various Committees, observed:

His Majesty's Government has taken note of the fact that the deliberations of the Conference have proceeded on the basis accepted by all parties, that the Central Government should be a federation of All-India embracing both Indian States and British India in a bi-Cameral Legislature. The precise form and structure of the new Federal Government must be determined after further discussion with the Princes and representatives of British India. The range of subjects to be committed to it will also require further discussion, because the Federal Government will have authority only in such matters concerning the States as will be ceded by their Rulers in the agreement made by them on entering into Federation.

The connection of the States with the Federation will remain subject to the basic principle that with regard to all matters not ceded by them to the Federation, their relations will be with the Crown acting through the agency of the Viceroy.

With the Legislature constituted on Federal basis, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to recognise the principle of responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature.

Under the existing conditions, the subjects of Defence and External Affairs will be reserved to the Governor-General, and arrangements will be made to place in his hands the powers necessary for the administration of those subjects.

Moreover, as the Governor General must, as the last resort, be able in emergency to maintain the tranquillity of the State and must similarly be responsible for the observance of the constitutional rights of Minorities, he must be granted the necessary power for those purposes.

As regards Finance, the transfer of financial responsibility must necessarily be subject to such conditions as will ensure the fulfilment of the obligations incurred under the authority of the Secretary of State and the maintenance, unimpaired, of the financial stability and credit of India.

The Report of the Federal Structure Committee indicates some ways of dealing with this subject, including a Reserve Bank, the service of loans and exchange policy which, in the view of His Majesty's Government, will have to be provided for somehow in the new Constitution. It is of vital interest to all parties in India to accept these provisions to maintain financial confidence.

Subject to these provisions, the Indian Government would have full financial responsibility for methods of raising revenue and for control of expenditure on non-Reserved services. This will mean that, under the existing conditions the Central Legislature and Executive will have some features of Dualism which will have to be fitted into the constitutional structure.

Provision of Reserved powers is necessary in the circumstances, and some such reservation has indeed been incidental to the development of most free constitutions. But every care must be taken to prevent conditions arising which will necessitate their use. . .

THE PROVINCES

The Governors' Provinces will be constituted on the basis of full responsibility. Their Ministries will be taken from the Legislature, and will be jointly responsible to it. The range of Provincial subjects will be so defined as to give them the greatest possible measure of Self-Government. The authority of the Federal Government will be limited to the provisions required to secure its administration of the Federal subjects and to discharge its responsibility for the subjects defined in the Constitution as of All-India concern.

There will be reserved to the Governor only that minimum of special powers which is required in order to secure, in exceptional circumstances, the preservation of tranquillity and guarantee of maintenance of the rights provided by statute for the public services and minorities.

Finally, His Majesty's Government considers that the institution in the provinces of Responsible Government requires that both the Legislatures should be enlarged and that they should be based on a more liberal franchise. In framing the Constitution, His Majesty's Government considers that it will be its duty to insert the provisions guaranteeing to the various minorities, in addition to political representation, that the differences of religion, race, sect or caste shall not in themselves constitute civic disabilities

THE PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald then announced the policy and intentions of His Majesty's Government in regard to the future Constitution of India:

The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon

the Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provision as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances and also with such guarantees as are required by the minorities to protect their political liberties and rights.

In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be the primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new constitution to full responsibility for her own Government.

But the work of the Conference had by no means ended, and "His Majesty's Government, in view of the character of the Conference, and of the limited time at its disposal in London, has deemed it advisable to suspend its work at this point, so that Indian opinion may be consulted upon the work done and expedients considered for overcoming the difficulties which have been raised". Mr. MacDonald stated that the Government as well as representatives of other Parliamentary parties in England would soon confer with Lord Willingdon, the new Viceroy, as to the details of the plan by which this may be done, so that "the results of our completed work may be seen in a new Indian Constitution". "If in the meantime," added the Premier, "there is response to the Viceroy's appeal from those engaged at present in civil disobedience, and there is a wish to co-operate on the general lines of this declaration, steps will be taken to enlist their services."

At a Farewell Banquet in London in honour of the British Indian Delegation, Mr. MacDonald

summed up the achievements of the Conference in his postprandial oration:

I believe that we are going to hammer out a constitution under which India will not only be happy but will enjoy sense of self-respect. (*Cheers*) Then it may be that when our constitution breaks down, when we here in London are faced with great problems of a constitutional character, you having enjoyed the blessing of an Indian constitution, will offer your timely service (*laughter*) to come here and enable us to redraft our constitution (*laughter*) and enjoy the great felicities of peace which, I believe, you are going to enjoy when you make it possible for the constitution of India to be promulgated.

In a subsequent banquet given by the Maharaja of Alwar, the Prime Minister declared that the

British Government and I believe that the British Parliament is fully aware of what India wants, determined to give to India everything that India can use well, every power, every responsibility which will make the Indian feel that his destiny is in his own hands, which will enable India to look forward to the time when walking in its own light, enlightened and illuminated by its own inner personality, it will go on carving a name and reputation in future which will be as honourable to it as some of those glorious chapters that have already been written in Indian History. You can talk and write your formulas and you can make your demands, but unless the forms of government correspond to the genius and needs of the people, they will never sit comfortably on their shoulders.

R. T. C. DELEGATES' MANIFESTO

The Indian delegates returned to India on February 6 and twenty-six of them, including the Maharajas of Bikaner and Alwar, Mr. Sastri and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, issued a statement under their joint signatures that "the attainment by India of Dominion Status is no longer in dispute."

They emphasised that English opinion has undergone a remarkable change in India's favour.

"It has been explicitly recognised that the task of governing India should in future be entrusted to an Indian executive responsible to the Indian legislature."

On the question of safeguards, the manifesto said that they would not affect the substance of the scheme which sought to transfer political power into Indian hands. They were only intended for the period of transition and were subject to further examination.

As regards law and order, the manifesto declared that the Governor-General would not have power to interfere with day-to-day administration and would step in only to secure peace and security, when it is seriously imperilled or when the interests of the minorities are seriously endangered.

## THE RELEASE OF THE POLITICALS

In harmony with the Prime Minister's declaration at the concluding session of the Round Table Conference "that steps would be taken to enlist the services of Congressmen if they wished to co-operate on the lines of the declaration," His Excellency Lord Irwin issued a statement on January 25, 1931, releasing Mr. Gandhi and the members of the Working Committee unconditionally.

The legal bar against their meeting and the notifications declaring the Committee unlawful were all withdrawn at once, and His Excellency added:

My Government will impose no conditions on these releases, because we feel that the best hope of restoration

of peaceful conditions lies in discussions being conducted by those concerned under terms of unconditional liberty.

Our action has been taken in pursuance of a sincere desire to assist the creation of such peaceable conditions as would enable the Government to implement the undertaking given by the Prime Minister that if civil quiet were proclaimed and assured, the Government would not be backward in response.

I am content to trust those who will be affected by our decision to act in the same spirit as inspires it, and I am confident that they will recognise the importance of securing for those grave issues calm and dispassionate examination.

Much to his own surprise, Mr. Gandhi was released on the morrow of this declaration. Interviewed on his release, Mr. Gandhi gave the following message to the Indian people:

I have come out of jail with an absolutely open mind, unfettered by enmity, unbiassed in argument and prepared to study the whole situation from every point of view and discuss the Premier's statement with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other delegates on their return. I make this statement in deference to the urgent wish expressed in a cable sent to me from London by some of the delegates.

Speaking to a group of journalists at Bombay, Mr. Gandhi further defined his position with regard to the proposal that an amnesty should be announced. He reiterated his well-known eleven points which, he declared, must be met before a satisfactory settlement was possible. Referring to the amnesty proposal, he observed:

I personally feel that the mere release of members of the Congress Working Committee makes a difficult situation, infinitely more difficult, and makes any action on the part of the members almost, if not altogether, impossible. The authorities evidently have not perceived that the movement has so much affected the mass mind that leaders, however prominent, will be utterly unable to dictate to them a particular course of action.

He then went on to insist on the right of picketing and the manufacture of salt:

What I am anxious to clear is that even if after consultation with friends who are coming from the Round Table Conference, it is found that the Premier's statement affords sufficient ground for the Congress to tender co-operation, the right of picketing cannot be given up nor the right of the starving millions to manufacture salt.

If these elementary rights are recognised, most of the Ordinances will naturally have to be withdrawn. It is therefore highly necessary for the public, also the Government, to understand the fundamental Congress position. The manufacture of salt and the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor are not intended to register the resistance of the nation to the existing misrule, but intended to achieve these ends for all time.

No amount of goodwill, especially between Great Britain and India, so far as I can see, will reconcile the public to the drink evil, foreign cloth evil or prohibition of the manufacture of salt.

Speaking for myself, I am hankering after peace if it can be had with honour, but even if I stood alone I can be no party to any peace which does not satisfactorily solve the three questions I have mentioned. I should therefore judge the Round Table Conference tree by its fruit

I have given three tests that are in operation, but as the public know, there are eight more points I want. Substance of independence not shadow and even as the doctor names the disease after proper diagnosis, so also I will name the tree of the Round Table Conference after I have examined the fruit in the light of the eleven points which are conceived in the terms of the man in the street.

Mr. Gandhi then left for Allahabad where Pandit Motilal Nehru was lying ill. The Working Committee met soon after, and the decisions were suspended publication pending the arrival of Dr. Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, and the Rt. Hon. Sastri. Meanwhile the civil disobedience movement was to continue unless and until the Working Committee should decide otherwise.

## FACE TO FACE WITH REALITIES

Now by this time, Mr. Gandhi was thoroughly apprised of the situation in the country and the tragic sequel to the various phases of civil resistance. So in response to a request from the *News Chronicle* (London), Mr. Gandhi cabled back to say that he was unable to pronounce a final opinion on the Round Table Conference.

> But what worries me is the look of things here. If the Conference really offered freedom to India, the reaction should have been felt here. On the contrary, I find that black repression continues unabated. Unprovoked assaults on innocent citizens still continue Respectable people are being summarily and without apparent reason deprived of their immovable and movable property by mere executive action. A procession of women was forcibly dispersed. They were seized by the hair and kicked with boots. The continuance of such repressions would make the Congress co-operation impossible even if other difficulties were got over.

"I am a man of peace, but circumstances have made my life one of struggle. I shall, however, leave no stone unturned to attain peace. It is no joy to me to submit thousands who have a child-like faith in me to suffering," declared Gandhiji in the course of a conversation with the special representative of the *Pioneer*.

## THE PASSING OF PANDIT MOTILAL

It was at this time that Pandit Motilal Nehru passed away after a hard struggle. All his colleagues and members of the Congress were gathered at Ananda Bhavan, and Jawaharlal and Mahatmaji were at his side. "Decide India's fate in the Swaraj Bhavan," the good Pandit is said to have told Dr. Satyapal.

Decide it in my presence and let me be a party to the final honourable settlement of the fate of my motherland. Let me die, if die I must, in the lap of a Free India. Let me sleep my last sleep not in a subject country but in a free one.

Oh that he had lived to witness the Irwin-Gandhi settlement! The Pandit's death at such a time was a rude shock to the country but it was particularly poignant to Mr. Gandhi who said in a message to *Liberty*:

My position is worse than a widow's. By a faithful life she can appropriate the merits of her husband. I can appropriate nothing. What I have lost through Motilalji's death is a loss for ever. Rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

Pandit Jawaharlal gave fitting expression to the solace and inspiration of Mahatmaji's companionship at such a dark hour, when he exclaimed:

And to him, our beloved friend and leader, what words of mine can convey our feelings? Carrying the burden of a nation's suffering and longing for freedom, but still ever ready to share and lighten the burdens of others, he has been to us a solace and inspiration, and has given us strength and courage when the blow came and darkened our horizon.

## LETTER TO LORD IRWIN

It was at this time that some one suggested, possibly one of the Liberal leaders who met him at Allahabad on their return from the R.T.C. —that Gandhiji should write to the Viceroy and ask for an interview and have a frank talk with him. He agreed to do so, says Pandit Jawaharlal, in his *Autobiography*,

although I do not think that, he expected much in the way of result. But, on principle, he was always willing to go out of his way to meet and discuss anything with his opponents. Being absolutely convinced of the rightness

of his own position he hoped to convince the other party; but it was perhaps something more than intellectual conviction that he aimed at. He was always after a psychological change, a breaking of the barriers of anger and distrust, an approach to the other's goodwill and fine feelings. He knew that if this change took place, conviction became far easier, or even if there was no conviction, opposition became far easier, or even if there was no conviction, opposition was toned down and the sting was taken out of the conflict. In his personal dealings with individuals hostile to him he had gained many a victory; it was remarkable how, by sheer force of personality, he would win over an opponent. Many a critic and a scoffer had been overwhelmed by this personality and became an admirer, and even though the criticism continued, it could never again have a trace of mockery.

Mr. Gandhi thereupon sent a letter to the Viceroy through Moulvi Rafiuddin Ahmed Kidwai, ex-M.L.A., seeking an interview with His Excellency at Delhi to discuss the political situation. It would appear that Mr. Gandhi sought the interview with a view to have a peace talk with Lord Irwin the man, rather than His Excellency the Viceroy. Now Gandhiji's letter to the Viceroy was a fairly lengthy one. Addressing Lord Irwin as "My dear friend," Gandhiji urged His Excellency to appoint an enquiry committee to go into the alleged police excesses. In such instances, Gandhiji included the Borsad affair, the Calcutta incident on the Independence Day, the beating of Mr. Bhashyam and others in Madras while picketing foreign cloth shops, and the Bihar shooting incident. Gandhiji's object in writing to the Viceroy was to find out whether there was really a change of heart on the part of the Government.

Lord Irwin having agreed to the interview, Mr. Gandhi left for Delhi on the 16th February.

In the meanwhile the Viceroy was in frequent consultation with the Rt. Hon. Sastri, Dr. Sapru and Mr. Jayakar who were, as it were, the intermediaries who arranged for the interview.

While the Viceroy was in constant touch with his Council and the Governors of Bombay and Madras, Mr. Gandhi had also summoned all the members of the Working Committee and some of his friends to Dr. Ansari's place in Delhi where they were in constant session. The Working Committee had given Mr. Gandhi a clear mandate and invested him with full authority to negotiate in the name of the Congress.

Mr. Gandhi's six points, which were the absolute minimum for peace negotiations to begin, were: (1) general amnesty; (2) immediate cessation of repression; (3) restitution of all confiscated property; (4) reinstatement of all Government servants punished on political grounds; (5) liberty to manufacture salt and picket liquor and foreign cloth shops, and (6) enquiry into police excesses.

GANDHI-IRWIN TALKS

Mr. Gandhi motored to the Viceregal House on the afternoon of February 17, 1931. The talks began at 2-30 P.M. and continued till 6-10. They were resumed the next day and continued the day after.

The conversations were then suspended for a week. Apparently the Viceroy had cabled to Whitehall and was awaiting instructions from the authorities at Home. The following *communique*

was issued from the Viceroy's House on the subject on the 19th:

His Excellency the Viceroy granted a further interview to Mr. Gandhi to-day. It is understood that various matters emerging from the discussions are now under examination, and it is possible that some days may elapse before a further stage of discussions is reached.

SPEECH AT THE QUEEN'S GARDENS

While the Gandhi-Irwin talks were suspended for a few days pending instructions from Whitehall, Mr. Gandhi addressed a mammoth gathering of over a lakh of people in the Queen's Gardens on February 20. After referring to the death of Moulana Mahomed Ali and Pandit Motilal Nehru, he said:

I may say this much that these talks have been conducted in a most friendly manner and with much sweetness. What will be the result I cannot say. The result is in the hands of God. It is His Will that will prevail.

GANDHI AND THE LEAGUE COUNCIL

On the morning of the 22nd, Gandhiji addressed also the meeting of the Council of the All-India Muslim League. Sir Mohamed Shafi, on behalf of the League, thanked Gandhiji for accepting their invitation and invited him to address the House. Moulvi Mahomed Yakub said that the coming of Gandhiji meant the coming of 21 crores of Indians, and he held it a happy augury for India, because it might lead to the solution of the Hindu-Muslim tangle. Gandhiji said in the course of his reply:

Moulvi Mahomed Yakub had remarked that my coming meant the coming of 21 crores of Indians. Brethren, I am a Bania, and there is no limit to my greed. It has always been my dream and heart's desire to speak not

only for 21 crores but for the 30 crores of India. To day you may not accept that position of mine. But I may assure you that my early upbringing and training in my childhood and youth have been to strive for Hindu-Muslim Unity, and none to-day may dismiss it merely as a craze of my old age. My heart is, however, confident that God will grant me that position when I may speak for the whole of India, and if I may have to die striving for that ideal, I shall achieve the peace of my heart.

## GANDHI-IRWIN TALKS RESUMED

Mr. Gandhi was called again on the 27th and 28th and the talks at one time threatened to break up. The Congress Working Committee having rejected the Viceroy's counter-proposals, Congress circles were very pessimistic about the outcome. The country at this time was swayed alternately between hopes and fears when Gandhi saw the Viceroy again on the 1st March. The prolonged interview was due to the examination of a fresh alternative submitted by Mr. Gandhi on behalf of the Congress Working Committee in answer to the official note sent to Mr. Gandhi the previous day. Difficulties of negotiation were very obvious in spite of best intentions on the part of the leaders on either side. Apart from intransigents in the Departments and Services, irresponsible men like Mr. Churchill at Home added considerably to the complexity of the situation by their ignorance and bluster. It was left to Mr. Churchill, the sublime reactionary, to describe the historic meeting between the Viceroy and the Mahatma as

> the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceroy's Palace, there to negotiate and to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King Emperor.

It seemed audacious to Mr. Churchill that a mere Indian like Mr. Gandhi should be allowed to parley on equal terms with so august a representative of his race!

Lord Irwin, on the other hand, seems to have entertained the highest opinion of Gandhi. In a recent biography of Lord Halifax, we are told that when asked what he really thought of Gandhi, the ex-Viceroy said: "The first time I saw Mr. Gandhi, I was tremendously impressed by his holiness. The second time I was tremendously impressed by his legal astuteness. . . . sincerity."

And then Gandhiji typifies India as none else could do. As Pandit Jawaharlal has observed in his *Autobiography*:

> Whether Gandhiji is a democrat or not, he does represent the peasant masses of India, he is the quintessence of the conscious and sub-conscious will of those millions. It is perhaps something more than representation, for he is the idealised personification of those vast millions. Of course, he is not the average peasant. A man of the keenest intellect, of fine feeling and good taste, wide vision, very human, and yet essentially the ascetic who has suppressed his passions and emotions, sublimated them and directed them in spiritual channels; a tremendous personality, drawing people to himself like a magnet, and calling out fierce loyalties and attachments—all this so utterly unlike and beyond a peasant. And yet withal he is the great peasant, with a peasant's outlook on affairs, and with a peasant's blindness to some aspects of life But India is peasant India, and so he knows his India well and reacts to her lightest tremors, and gauges a situation accurately and almost instinctively, and has a knack of acting at the psychological moment.
>
> What a problem and a puzzle he has been not only to the British Government but to his own people and his closest associates! Perhaps in every other country he would be out of place to-day, but India still seems to understand, or at least appreciate, the prophetic-religious type of man, talking of sin and salvation and non-violence.

Indian mythology is full of stories of great ascetics, who, by the rigour of their sacrifices and self-imposed penance, built up a 'mountain of merit' which threatened the dominion of some of the lesser gods and upset the established order. These myths have often come to my mind when I have watched the amazing energy and inner power of Gandhiji, coming out of some inexhaustible spiritual reservoir. He was obviously not of the world's ordinary coinage; he was minted of a different and rare variety, and often the unknown stared at us through his eyes.

The Working Committee was strong and unanimous, and though listening with respect to the authority of Gandhi, was in no mood to water down the conditions of the truce. It was at this time that the services of Dr. Sapru and Mr. Sastri became invaluable. Sir T. B. Sapru and Mr. Jayakar had earlier impressed on Lord Irwin the imperative need of the Government agreeing to the principle of the Congress demand for an independent and impartial tribunal to go into police excesses. On the other side, Mr. Sastri had passionately pleaded before Gandhiji and other members of the Congress Working Committee not to be too exacting over the details if the principle of an impartial tribunal was conceded by the Government.

The sincerity of Mr. Sastri's pleas had its effect, so that the Congress Working Committee altered their draft formulæ in certain respects without affecting the principle of their terms for truce.

Mr. Gandhi saw the Viceroy again at midnight on the 22nd March for further exchange of notes on the points raised by the Working Committee. And the situation that appeared so gloomy had

slightly improved, and the conversations became more frequent. Mr. Gandhi also saw Sir George Schuster, the Finance Member, with whom a general agreement was arrived at by which people on the sea coast could pick, manufacture and sell salt thereby using nature's gift. The Gandhi-Schuster Agreement on the principle thus overcame another important obstacle and cleared the path for the settlement of Congress participation in the Round Table Conference.

### THE GANDHI-IRWIN AGREEMENT

Gandhiji and Lord Irwin worked together at a settlement practically the whole of the day and a truce was agreed on late in the night according to which

the people on the sea coast have been conceded the right of picking up, manufacturing and selling salt. The punitive police posted in Bihar and other places will be withdrawn, and punitive tax so far unpaid will be remitted. All political prisoners not guilty of violence will be released forthwith. Peaceful picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquor shops will be allowed, and lastly confiscated and auctioned property will be returned.

In view of the fact that charges and counter-charges in an open enquiry into police conduct will not be conducive to a dispassionate discussion on constitutional questions, Gandhiji has agreed not to press it further.

By far the most important part of the agreement was that which laid down that the scope of future discussions shall be further consideration of the Round Table Conference conclusions, namely, federation, central responsibility and safeguards.

The conversations were resumed in the night and ended at 1-30 on the morning of the 5th when complete agreement was reached. At 12 noon

the agreement was signed by Lord Irwin and Gandhiji at "Viceroy's House", similar to the Smuts-Gandhi agreement of sixteen years ago.

The agreement was the result of fifteen days' negotiations in which Gandhiji is said to have visited the "Viceroy's House" eight times, and spent altogether twenty-four hours, besides undergoing the strain of discussing the terms of the negotiations with the Congress Executive from time to time for longer hours than he spent with the Viceroy. A correspondent rightly pointed out that Gandhiji has, by general agreement, broken all the world's endurance records and that when his own health was none too good.

News of the agreement spread like wild fire in the city at dawn. Sir Tej Bahadur exclaimed: "I rejoice at it. I give my heartfelt congratulations to Lord Irwin, Gandhiji and country." The *Statesman* (New Delhi) gave a lead in a strikingly refreshing article welcoming the agreement as one of the greatest happenings in the second quarter of the 20th century, possibly as decisive for the world as November 11, 1918. The paper said:

> The debt is great both to the Viceroy and Gandhiji who, unperturbed by outside criticism, have conducted negotiations in a serene spirit which is beyond all praise.

It paid a tribute to Lord Irwin for having banked on a miracle and now given a lead to Europe and Asia. "As for Gandhiji," it said, "that he plays no double game."

> If he decides to come in, and he comes in, and he may be counted on to bring his great influence to bear on the activities of the Second Round Table Conference, which

would open another era of construction and lead to the gradual obliteration of the memories of the struggle.

Immediately on the publication of the Agreement, the Congress Working Committee passed the following resolution:

The Working Committee, having considered the terms of the provisional settlement arrived at between the Government of India and Mr. Gandhi on behalf of the Congress, endorses them and directs all Congress Committees to take immediate action in accordance with them

The Committee hopes that the country will carry out the terms agreed to in so far as they relate to various Congress activities and is of opinion that on a strict fulfilment of the obligations undertaken on behalf of the Congress, will depend the advance of India towards *Purna Swaraj*.

Telegrams were accordingly despatched to all Provincial Congress Committees, while Gandhi in a speech to the journalists appealed to the country to implement the provisional settlement and thereby give irresistible prestige to the Congress. He urged the anarchists to suspend their movement and give him a chance to attain the goal non-violently and promised thereafter the release of all politicals, including even those condemned to the gallows but warned them against false hopes.

This happy consummation was hailed all over the country with a sigh of relief, though the Churchills and Wintertons and Odwyers waxed eloquent against the "Irwin surrenders". Doubtless there were those who thought that Mr. Gandhi had scored while others held that it was the Viceroy who had won in essentials. But after the twelve months' protracted struggle and a fortnight's negotiations which threatened to break

up at any moment, peace was welcomed like the dawn. And it was peace with honour on either side—the triumph of goodwill and mutual understanding which must play a decisive part in any constructive programme. The Irwin-Gandhi pact was in a word the triumph of true statesmanship, or the triumph of truth and non-violence, as Mahatma Gandhi would have it, and was meant to mark a new era in the history of British relations with India.

In a masterly speech delivered soon after the signing of the Agreement, Mr. Gandhi himself paid a well-deserved tribute to the Viceroy when he said that:

> This settlement, such as it is, would have been impossible without the Viceroy's inexhaustible patience and equally inexhaustible industry and unfailing courtesy. I am aware that I must have, though quite unconsciously, given him cause for irritation. I must have also tried his patience, but I cannot recall any occasion when he allowed himself to be betrayed into irritation or impatience. I must add that he was frank throughout those very delicate negotiations, and I believe he was determined on it, if it was at all possible, to have a settlement.

As for himself

> I have pledged my word to Lord Irwin that in making good the terms of settlement, in so far as they bind Congress, I shall devote myself heart and soul to the task. I ask for a settlement not in order to break it to pieces at the very first opportunity, but in order to strain every nerve to make absolutely final what to-day is provisional, and to make it a precursor of the goal to attain which Congress exists.

Explaining the purport of the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement to a group of journalists, Gandhiji said:

> It is open to both parties to work along their own lines. The Congress seeks to make federation, responsibility, safeguards and reservations such as would promote the real growth of the country along political, social, economic

and moral lines If the Congress succeeds in making this position acceptable to the Conference, then I claim that the fruit of that effort will be complete independence The Congress can either use a new opportunity to make the scheme worth looking at or by lack of self-confidence and want of courage fritter away the opportunity But I know that Congressmen will require the aid of other parties, the great Princes and Englishmen *The Congress has now launched on a period of co operation*

It only remained for the Government on the one side, and for the Congress on the other, to see that the terms of the truce were duly implemented by the respective parties. How strenuously Mr. Gandhi endeavoured to fulfil his part of the truce is now matter of common knowledge.

IMPLEMENTING THE PACT

It is not to be supposed that a settlement, however perfect, could satisfy all interests and all parties equally. There were of course left-wingers in India, as in England, who felt bound to repudiate it. But they were in a minority and by no means represented the considered judgment of either people. But still they were vociferous as they always are. Mahatma Gandhi's reply to them was straight and unequivocal.

I will ask the Karachi Congress to ratify the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement, and if it was not acceptable to the country, they could move a vote of no confidence in the Working Committee and elect another Committee and carry on the work of the Congress,

said Mahatma Gandhi at a mass meeting in the Queen's Garden, Delhi, on the 7th March. The occasion was the distribution of a large number of Red leaflets in which *Young India* (their organ) had announced that the peace ushered in by the Agreement was no peace, as the Martial Law and

other prisoners convicted of violence were still in jails. Mr. Gandhi added that, if they faithfully carried out both in letter and spirit the terms of the compromise, not only prisoners convicted of violence but even Garwalis could be set free. Personally he was for the release of even dacoits and thieves, for he was against corporal punishment.

And then there was the communal trouble—nothing seemed to improve the Hindu-Muslim question. It always threatened to crop up and mar any settlement of outstanding national concern. The Mahatma's own solution was simplicity itself. He said he would give them the same advice to-day as he gave in 1921, that if only one of the two communities would be brave enough to tell the other, "Take whatever you want. We shall be content with the rest," the whole communal tangle would be solved. But the Hindus, being the majority community, should take the lead. It was only a question of being brave. He advised the Hindus to give up the spirit of bargaining and follow the course of bravery. The Mahatma continued that in the last twelve months they had disobeyed all laws and ordinances and still no power on earth could destroy their entity or snatch away their rights. He contended that even if the Mussalmans and all other minorities took away all seats in the Legislature, the Hindus would not lose much.

We want to be humble servants of India and to seek no office. Let us compete as much as we like in the sphere of national service. If this proposition was not acceptable to Hindus, let them have done with me, but if they want to

establish communal concord, they must say that they do not want anything If they do this, you will save India and establish *Purna Swaraj*.

Truly, magnanimity owes no account of its acts to prudence. What a contrast this to the pettifogging spirit displayed by the legal minds on either side!

That briefly put was the Mahatma's position. But difficulties were also brooding abroad. More than once during the months following the agreement, the House of Commons was the scene of angry debates in which the die-hards were bent on breaking the back of the supporters of the Indian cause. It was revealed that some Conservatives were even prepared to back out of their commitments at the Round Table Conference, and though Mr. Baldwin in his famous speech of March 12 completely dispelled any such fear, echoes of dissentient voices were heard now and again in the precincts of Westminster. At a later date one such Conservative even went the length of threatening the House with a censure motion on the new Viceroy, because Lord Willingdon expressed a wish that India might soon obtain a Dominion Constitution. But the official leader of the Conservatives, Mr. Baldwin, made it plain that further work of the Conference was the business of the party in power, and the Conservatives would join when the picture had been filled in. He paid a tribute to the Viceroy for bringing about the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement, and added

that he was in complete accord with the policy proposed in India. If he were in power he would carry it out in no niggardly spirit. If his policy was not acceptable

to a majority of his followers, he asked them to choose another leader.

Mr. Benn said that Mr. Baldwin's words would be read with relief and delight by all sections in India. None would be more encouraged than the Viceroy.

The Prime Minister, in winding up the debate, announced that he had already cabled to the Viceroy to invite Mr. Gandhi to participate in the discussions of the Federal Structure Committee to meet in London.

But Gandhi himself had made his position equally clear. Commenting on the alleged Conservative repudiation of the Round Table Conference decisions, Mr. Gandhi declared:

> The Congress is out to win *Purna Swaraj* at the earliest possible moment. It will therefore look with grave suspicion upon any dilatory tactics. The Conservative fears about the so-called safeguards are justified: the Congress would accept no safeguard which is not clearly proved to be in the interests of India, and those that were discussed in London were certainly not in India's interest

## RECEPTION AT AHMEDABAD

Meanwhile Mahatma Gandhi saw the Viceroy again and left for Ahmedabad where arrangements were made to accord him a magnificent reception, as it was the Mahatma's first entry into his city after the historic march to Dandi twelve months ago. A lakh and a half people waited for hours on the river sands in the scorching sun when the citizens' address and purse were presented to Gandhiji. When Mahatma Gandhi came, the rush of people was so great that several were trampled down by the on-rush of the surging crowd. With the greatest difficulty Gandhiji took his

seat on the raised and decorated rostrum. Lady Chinubhai read the welcome address which narrated the various phases of the struggle under his leadership. The address referred to the success of the non-violent struggle and the people's sacrifice. "May Gandhiji live long to lead the country to its goal!" concluded the address.

Replying to the address, Gandhiji justified the Agreement and asked the people to respect it in letter and spirit. Proceeding, Gandhiji said

> that the settlement that had been arrived at was so simple that even a child could understand it and even a child should try to understand it From the standpoint of the speaker and the Congress Working Committee, they had gone as far as they could in arriving at a settlement. Swaraj was not won thereby but the second door to Swaraj was opened. They were trying to win Swaraj by the willing weapon of Civil Disobedience. Meanwhile, they as Satyagrahis should try to open the door through negotiation and settlement and they should enter if the door was opened. They should fulfil the conditions of the Agreement. If they wanted to increase their power manifold, they should effect communal unity, eradicate the drink evil, banish foreign cloth and produce khaddar. Then they would secure *Purna Swaraj*.

A purse of Rs. 70,000 and a gold takli were presented to Gandhiji by Lady Chinubhai on behalf of the citizens.

Gandhiji then started on a tour of the Gujarat district, especially Bardoli and the taluks that had played a decisive part in the no-tax campaign. He was anxious personally to bring the balm of peace and healing to the areas most affected by the Civil Disobedience movement. Everywhere he went, he enjoined the people to pay up the taxes and respect the Pact.

In the course of a long statement to the people of Gujarat, he observed:

> It would be culpable of us to refuse to attend the Round Table Conference.

Referring at first to the need for suspending all fighting activities and undertaking constructive work seriously, Mr. Gandhi said that

> even as a farmer, after tilling the land, devotes his entire attention to the growing of crops, so should the Congress workers, after a year of destructive work in the form of civil disobedience, take seriously to the constructive side of the Congress programme.

## "YOUNG INDIA" AGAIN

This was also the burden of his writings in *Young India* and *Navjivan*. *Young India* which for some time past had been appearing in cyclostyled form following the confiscation of the *Navjivan* Press under the Ordinance, appeared again in printed form on the 12th March. In the course of his first signed article therein, under the title "How to do it", Mr. Gandhi explained the implications of the Delhi Agreement and the Congress obligations thereunder. He emphasised that, while the truce lasted, it was obligatory on them meticulously to respect laws and orders, even if these appeared capricious. He proceeded:

> We need not expect a change of heart in the official world all of a sudden.
>
> If we are conscious of our strength and our ability to resume civil disobedience whenever it becomes necessary, we should find no difficulty in obeying even irksome orders.

That was the spirit in which he worked to fulfil the conditions of the truce—a spirit which

was fully recognized by His Excellency Lord Irwin who, in a speech at the Jaipur Banquet, observed :

> Throughout my conversations with Mr Gandhi, I felt complete assurance that I could implicitly trust his word and I am confident that he will do everything in his power to give effect to those undertakings which are recorded in the published statement.

GANDHI AND THE RED-FLAGGERS

In the third week of March, *Gandhiji* was in Bombay conferring with his colleagues—and he was given a reception the like of which even Bombay had seldom witnessed. And yet there was a rumble of discontent among the more extreme wing who expressed themselves in continual interruptions. Even Gandhi was accused of betraying the labourers, while the demand for the release of Meerut prisoners and the Bengal detenues was voiced by Subash Chandra Bose and others. In the midst of interruptions by labour "Red-flaggers," Gandhi declared that he had never betrayed the workers in his life, and that the Congress would stand by the Independence Resolution passed at Lahore, which would be reiterated at Karachi, and a clear mandate given to the Congress delegates to the next Round Table Conference that they should not accept any scheme of *Swaraj* which did not satisfy the country in the light of his eleven points or did not contain the substance of Independence.

LORD IRWIN AND THE MAHATMA

Mr. Gandhi also employed his time in Bombay in calling a Conference of mill-owners and arranging for the relief of sufferers from the foreign cloth boycott. He then left for Delhi and

had a further interview with His Excellency Lord Irwin on the 19th when he discussed the question of the release of political prisoners in accordance with the Agreement. He had also a long interview with Mr. Emerson, the Home Secretary.

The rest of his stay in Delhi was occupied in conferring with the Princes and representatives of the Muslims and Sikhs. At the Princes' Banquet to the Viceroy on the 20th, His Excellency paid an eloquent tribute to the honesty, sincerity and patriotism of Gandhiji with whom "it had been a pleasure and a privilege to work". His Excellency said now that he would be relieved of his official duties, he would be in a position to go back to England and explain to his people and to his political friends the implications of the truce and the state of affairs in India.

Lord Irwin declared that Mahatma Gandhi on his side was doing everything possible to convince his fellow-countrymen and to bring about an atmosphere congenial for peace. Lord Irwin, on his part, hoped to do everything to make it possible for England and India to arrive at a peaceful settlement.

### THE EXECUTION OF BHAGAT SINGH

While Mr. Gandhi was doing everything to fulfil the terms of the truce both in letter and spirit, there was no end of obstacles. Foremost of these was the hanging of Bhagat Singh and his comrades of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, which, though it was no part of the settlement, was felt by Gandhi as an undue strain on the

patience of the public which could not countenance the execution under the orders of a tribunal created by the Ordinance which expired with the truce. The unwisdom of carrying out the execution in the teeth of universal outcry against normal procedure seemed to be in conflict with the heralding of the new era of friendliness and co-operation which was expected to take the place of suspicion and revenge. The Government lost an excellent opportunity for a gesture of magnanimity and goodwill which would have won over even the recalcitrants to the side of reason. Gandhi felt that the sudden execution under such circumstances was cutting the ground underneath the feet, however technically unconcerned it might be with the terms of the truce. The nation's duty, he said, was clear.

The Congress must not swerve from the path chalked for it. In my opinion notwithstanding the gravest provocation, the Congress should endorse the settlement and test its capacity to yield the result hoped for. We must not put ourselves in the wrong by being angry. Let us recognise that commutation of the sentences was no part of the truce. We may accuse the Government of goondaism but we may not accuse them of a breach of the settlement

In my deliberate opinion, the grave blunder committed by the Government has increased our power for winning the freedom for which Bhagat Singh and his comrades have died. Let us not fritter away the opportunity by being betrayed into any angry action Universal hartal is a foregone conclusion. No better mark of respect can be paid to the memory of the deceased patriots than by having absolutely silent and respectful processions. Let the event be one of self-purification and greater dedication to the service of the country.

## THE KARACHI CONGRESS

Gandhiji and Sjt. Vallabhai Patel, President-elect of the Congress, and other leaders arrived

in Karachi on the 25th March. A band of "red shirts" greeted them with black flags, and the leader of the Party went the length of presenting Mr. Gandhi with a black flower in token of their sorrow and disapproval of Mr. Gandhi's doings. There were throughout the day hostile demonstrations against the Congress, and it was even feared that they would make it impossible for the Congress to go on. They displayed throughout a menacing attitude to the Congress leaders and volunteers and practically held them up more than once. It was left for Mr. Gandhi to bring them over to the side of reason and non-violence (at any rate for the moment) by his wise counsel and courageous stand. Gandhiji later addressing a public meeting of about 50,000 referred to the Red Shirts' demonstration and said the action of the young men did not anger him, but on the other hand he was pleased with the dignified way they had behaved towards him. They might have done worse. They might have killed him for which none required a premeditated plan.

> But none can harm me as long as God wills that I should serve India. But the moment my day comes, none not even the cleverest doctors could save me.

Proceeding, Gandhiji said their struggle was based on truth and righteousness and they must advance on that basis alone. In short, this was Gandhism which the young men were shouting down. Gandhiji continued that the death of him or of all those who believed in Gandhism could not kill Gandhism which was the cult of

non-violence and love. On the other hand it was through non-violence that India could show the fight which attracted thousands of men, women and children to the fray.

This would be impossible under violence, and he appealed to young men to come out and embrace his creed. Proceeding, he observed:

> If the young men try to make the work at the Congress session impossible, they could not bring back Bhagat Singh. On the other hand, they would retard the progress of the country. I aspire for *Swaraj—Ramraj* or Government of peace and love—which alone could be achieved through non-violence This is my only dream I live, I eat, I walk, I speak, and I move for that dream alone, but the day my inner voice tells me that the country has no longer need for me and I am convinced that the people have refused to respond to my call, I will starve myself to death.

Prior to the actual meeting of the Congress, Gandhi had a talk with Mr. Subash Chandra Bose, the leader of the Naujawan Sabha, and was able to persuade him to fall in with the Congress view. Thereupon Mr. Subash made a statement declaring that the Red Shirts would do nothing to impair the authority of Gandhi and the Congress—a declaration which set at rest all fears regarding the peaceful conduct of the session. The Congress Subjects Committee met on the 28th and adopted by an overwhelming majority the resolution of the Working Committee, ratifying the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement and choosing Mahatma Gandhi as the leader of the Congress Delegation to the Round Table Conference with a mandate to demand *Purna Swaraj* with such adjustments as might be necessary in the interest of India.

Mahatmaji assured the Subjects Committee that the terms of the Truce did not in any way bring

down the prestige of the Congress. On the other hand, it had added considerable strength to the Congress. In the open session it was left to him to support the resolution which was moved by Pandit Jawaharlal. The Congress unanimously stood by him and gave him full authority to negotiate with the Government in the name of the people.

No promise has ever been made, and no promise is being made now, that if the Congress deputation goes to the Round Table Conference either here or in England and enters upon further negotiations, the deputation is going to bring *Purna Swaraj*. *Purna Swaraj* will come when the full authority of the Congress has been manifested and not a minute before. All that I promise faithfully on my own behalf and that of the deputation, which you may wish to send, is that we shall not be disloyal to the Congress in any shape or form.

With these striking words, Mahatma Gandhi wound up the debate on the resolution on Congress participating in the Round Table Conference.

The resolution was supported by many leaders of note. A few, including Mr. Jamnadas Mehta of Bombay, opposed it. Eventually the resolution was put to the House and carried practically unanimously amidst deafening shouts of "Vande-mataram" and "Gandi-ki-jai."

Another resolution to which some objection was taken by a few Congressmen was what is known as the Declaration of Fundamental Rights embodying Mr. Gandhi's famous eleven points and a few more which Mr. Jawaharlal had introduced into it. But Gandhi sponsored the resolution and, as might be expected, he had his way. There was no doubt that everyone was anxious that Mr. Gandhi should have a free hand and should be

unfettered in the exercise of his powers. Congress had gained greatly in prestige under his authority, and every section of the house was prepared in the interest of Congress discipline to abide by his counsels. Mr. Gandhi's hold on the Congress and the country was thus supreme at the time, and the Karachi Congress gave him an unrestricted mandate and invested him with full authority to speak and act in the name of the country.

THE MUSLIM CONFERENCE

Fresh from his triumphs at Karachi, Gandhiji turned his attention to the solution of the communal question. Accordingly he proceeded to Delhi, where the All-India Muslim Conference was sitting, and tried to get into touch with the leaders of the League with a view to reach a settlement. But in this he was disappointed. After an interview with the leaders, he issued a statement in which he pointed out that his view on the Hindu-Muslim question was that of full surrender to any unanimously expressed wish of the Mussalmans and Sikhs. Before he cultivated Hindu opinion, he wanted to have that formula but it had not been forthcoming. He added that he was unable to identify himself with any solution based on communalism.

OPENING THE FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS

On April 7, Mr. Gandhi opened the session of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce before a distinguished assemblage, including Sir George Schuster. He said that *Swaraj* meant the rule of justice, therefore the Englishman's rights must be protected. The

problem was like the one he faced in South Africa during his talks with General Smuts. Mr. Gandhi was told that the real problem was that the South African settlers wished to safeguard their civilisation against Eastern influences and domination. Mr. Gandhi conceded that the view-point of General Smuts could similarly be applied to India. She wished to preserve her civilisation against inroads by other civilisations. If Englishmen and foreigners respected the *Indian civilisation and lived as true servants of* India, they had a most honourable place in the country.

Urging the Federation leaders to capture the Congress, Mr. Gandhi said that the entire Congress strength was derived through adult franchise. Indian nationalism was such that they neither wished to exploit others nor allow others to exploit them. The Federation leaders could capture Congress not by means of the purse but by greater sacrifice for the masses.

Gandhiji then attended the Sikh League at Amritsar, and returning to Ahmedabad, presided over the convocation of the Gujarat Vidyapith where he exhorted the graduates in the following words:

> You must be experiencing the atmosphere is at present surcharged with violence. I do not want to go into the causes why it does not gather much force, but I remind the graduates that they are and ought to be the embodiment of non-violence and truth. If they have properly imbibed the spirit of truth and non-violence, then alone they will be able to dispel and clarify the clouded atmosphere of violence to a great extent.

## GANDHIJI IN BOMBAY

But Gandhi arranged to be in Bombay to bid farewell to Lord Irwin and had his last talk with His Excellency on the 18th April (1931). He also interviewed the Governor of Bombay in connection with the carrying out of the truce terms, particularly with reference to the restoration of confiscated lands in Guzarat. The conversations were, in the nature of the case, private, but it was understood that the retiring Viceroy earnestly pressed Mr. Gandhi to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London. On the same day, the Corporation of Bombay presented an address to Mr. Gandhi—an address which paid a glowing tribute to the services and achievements of the Mahatma to the country.

While Gandhiji was straining every nerve to implement the Pact and prove the nation's solidarity behind the Agreement, troubles were brewing out of the Government's attempts to collect the revenues in Guzarat. It was understood that no coercive measures would be adopted beyond the ordinary law in collecting the taxes and the Agreement definitely stipulated that only the ordinary processes of land revenue administration would be put in force against defaulters. Both the Viceroy and Mr. Emerson, the Home Secretary, had distinctly promised a considerate and even generous attitude to the peasants. And the Government of Bombay also would appear to have promised as much. But now and again serious allegations against local authorities came to the notice of the Working Committee, and

Mr. Gandhi was flooded with complaints against the alleged extortions of the tax-gatherers.

Lord Willingdon succeeded to the Viceroyalty on April 17, and Mr. Gandhi interviewed him in May. Gandhiji took the opportunity to acquaint the new Viceroy with the case of the Kisans and doubtless His Excellency promised that nothing would be wanting on his part to see justice done by them. Meanwhile, the Working Committee which met on June 10, decided that Gandhiji should attend the Second Round Table Conference, and he was appointed sole delegate of the Congress. Gandhiji himself announced that "if he should succeed in attending the Round Table Conference he would fully participate in the discussions". The "if" was ominous. In fact in every communication to the press on the subject of the Round Table Conference, Gandhiji took care to add the mystifying "if". Speculation was rife as to what he would ultimately do. Meanwhile the personnel of the Round Table Conference was announced which included Gandhiji's name. Still Gandhiji added "if" to every one of his statements. He had decided to stay in an East End home kept by Miss Muriel Lester *if* he decided to go at all. On July 11, Gandhiji wired to Lord Willingdon regarding the non-observance of the truce terms by local Governments and received His Excellency's assurances. On the 18th, Gandhiji interviewed the Viceroy and things seemed to move pretty satisfactorily. Later, however, he had to wire to His Excellency protesting against the action

of the Collector of Surat, and the Viceroy replied asking Gandhiji "not to precipitate a crisis."

## THE ATTEMPT ON SIR E. HOTSON

Meanwhile an unfortunate incident occurred in Poona where, while the Acting Governor Sir Ernest Hotson was visiting the Fergusson College, he was shot at by a student: not long after came the news of the shooting of Mr. Garlick in Dacca. Gandhiji was naturally horrified that such things should happen at a time when he was so untiringly busy peace-making. He immediately telegraphed to His Excellency congratulating him on his escape and condemning the outrage. He also took occasion to write and speak freely on the subject. The Working Committee which met at Bombay in the first week of August, lost no time in passing a strong resolution on the subject. It was endorsed by the A. I. C. C. in which Mr. Gandhi himself spoke on the resolution.

Though Mr. Gandhi was himself responsible for the drafting of the resolution, he gladly seized the opportunity for a speech that made his own standpoint abundantly clear.

> By this resolution we are informing the world that we do not wish to fool the British, that we wish to obtain freedom through peace and non-violence alone. We believe, and wish to make the world believe, that we want to follow the policy of peace in thought, word and deed.

It would not be honest, Mr. Gandhi continued, to take shelter under the plea that Congress had nothing to do with the acts of violence by other people. "Can Mr. Gandhi say more," asked

the *Times of India*. "It would be sheer obstinacy to pretend that this statement is not completely satisfactory." Mr. Gandhi further said that by non-violence we have gained and not lost anything. By this creed millions of our countrymen have become brave. We must therefore have the courage to speak out our minds and express a definite opinion on the creed of non-violence.

I praised the courage of Bhagat Singh and his comrades and I was a party to the Karachi resolution; but I confess that the resolution has been misunderstood and has been wrongly followed by youths. The youths have been misled. I admit the mistake if it was a mistake.

"To me non-violence is a *dharma*," he continued, "but to some of you it may be a policy."

## THE RUPTURE

While he expressed himself thus freely and firmly on the subject of violence, he was also confronted with the allegations against the extortions of the local officials in Gujarat. It would appear that Mr. Gandhi, on the occasion of his visit to the Acting Governor soon after the unfortunate incident, found His Excellency was very amiable and expressed his readiness to investigate every one of the specific cases of coercion and breach of the Pact cited by Mr. Gandhi and to remedy them. Further it was reported that Mr. Gandhi also obtained an assurance that coercive measures would not be resorted to if Mr. Gandhi would use his influence with the peasants who were able to pay revenue dues to do so without any equivocation, and in

accordance with this, it was claimed in Congress circles, that Mr. Gandhi was mainly instrumental in the Government realising nineteen lakhs of rupees in revenue in Gujarat. Despite this it was alleged that the Government, contrary to the undertaking, resorted to coercive measures which led Mr. Gandhi to visit Poona to interview Sir Ernest Hotson. Mr. Gandhi laid before the Governor a number of specific cases wherein he alleged that the terms of the Pact had been broken by revenue officials in Gujarat, not only in the matter of collection of revenue but also in the reinstatement of village officials who had resigned during the civil disobedience movement.

Some Sholapur prisoners and several other prisoners who, the Congress claimed, were covered by the Settlement still remained undischarged, (2) several such prosecutions still continued; (3) civil resisters coming under the Foreigners Act had not yet been removed from the ban; (4) Vatan and Inam cases against civil resisters were not yet withdrawn; (5) officials such as patels, who resigned during the civil disobedience movement still remained unreinstated; (6) confiscated movable and immovable properties had not yet, under some pretext or other, been returned; (7) liquor vendors still continued unlicensed business in spite of the knowledge of the authorities.

Mr. Gandhi referred also to two further heads in this connexion touching on forfeited lands and grants to the Ahmedabad Municipality.

Apart from these specific cases, Mr. Gandhi also held that to repudiate the Congress as an intermediary between the people and the Government meant the repudiation of the Settlement.

The Working Committee, at its meeting in Bombay asked the Governor's intervention in the matter is dispute.

The Governor's reply to Mr. Gandhi which caused considerable dissatisfaction among the members of the Working Committee, contended that the grievances put forward by Mr. Gandhi had been investigated by the local Government and it was found that there had been no coercion as such in the collection of land revenue from the peasants of Bardoli, Borsad, etc., nor any breaches of the terms of the Truce but that only the ordinary legal procedure was being followed.

On the information before him, he is satisfied that no breach of Settlement is involved in the steps taken to collect land revenue in Bardoli It was clearly contemplated by the Settlement that current demands and arrears would be paid promptly by all who could pay The Collector did, however, show special forbearance in regard to employment of coercive processes, and it was only after some months' delay and then only in carefully selected cases that he resorted to them. The prompt response of revenue-payers and the negligible extent to which attachment became necessary showed then, that there were many persons able to pay who had not done so and established the fact that action had become necessary only in consequence of their failure to observe the Settlement.

While reserving the right to decide each case on its merits, neither the Government nor the Collector has ever accepted the position that the collection of land revenue should be dependent on the advice of the Congress, and His Excellency has no doubt you will yourself realise that the decision as to whether a particular person can or cannot pay must rest with the Collector. Holding, therefore, as he does, that there has been neither a breach of faith nor a breach of Settlement in any action which has been taken, His Excellency the Governor in Council is unable to approve of refund of any sums already collected.

The Governor's curt reply which doubtless precipitated the crisis, was discussed by the Working Committee for over three hours and when the Committee adjourned at noon on the 11th August, Mr. Gandhi sent an express telegram to His

Excellency the Viceroy which was in the nature of an S. O. S.

Exceedingly regret to inform you that the letter from the Bombay Government just received renders impossible my departure for London. The letter raises issues of first magnitude, as well of facts as of law and contends that the Government must be the final judges on both. In naked terms this means that Government should be both the prosecutor and judge with reference to matters arising out of a contract to which they and the complainants are parties. This is an impossible position for the Congress to accept. When I read the Bombay Government's letter together with Sir Malcolm Hailey's telegram received in answer to my inquiry and reports of continuing harassment in the United Provinces, the Frontier Province and other Provinces, they seem to me a complete indication that I must not sail.

Lord Willingdon telegraphically replied to Gandhiji, explaining the Government's position in respect of land revenue collection in Gujarat. The Viceroy in a courteous but decisive note substantially supported Sir E. Hotson's reply to Gandhiji.

I should regret extremely, if for the reasons you have given, the Congress should be unwilling to carry out the arrangement which provided for their representation at the Conference I am unable to accept these reasons as valid and I cannot but feel that your misgivings arise from a misunderstanding of the policy of the Government and the grounds on which it rests . . . .

I would remind you of my personal letter to you of July 31st, in which I gave you the fullest assurances of my personal interest in everything to do with the settlement and could therefore have hoped that you would not allow disputes over the present details to prevent your serving India by participating in the momentous discussion of the future Constitution which may determine the destiny of the country beyond your time or mine. If, however, your telegram represents the final word, I will at once inform the Prime Minister of your inability to attend the Conference.

Gandhiji replied that he could only read His Excellency's assurances in the light of present happenings:

and if you can see in them nothing inconsistent with the settlement, it shows fundamental difference in our respective

outlooks upon settlement. In circumstances I regret to say there is no way left open to me but to confirm decision already conveyed. I can only add that I tried my utmost best to go to London but failed. Please inform the Prime Minister accordingly.

" It did not take long for the public to know the result of these anxious negotiations. And the Working Committee which met at once to consider the situation, issued the following statement:

The Committee carefully considered the correspondence exchanged between the Central and various Provincial Governments on the one hand, and Gandhiji on the other, upon matters arising out of the Delhi settlement and also considered the statement made by Gandhiji describing the events that led to the correspondence The Congress Working Committee notes with regret that there have been in its opinion repeated and in some cases serious breaches by Provincial Governments of conditions of the Delhi settlement and a stage was reached when failing satisfaction, Gandhiji had asked with the approval of the Working Committee for the appointment of an impartial tribunal to investigate the allegations of breaches and interpret the terms of the settlement. Such a request has now been refused even in matters affecting the vital interests of the peasantry. The Committee has therefore been obliged reluctantly to come to the conclusion that consistently with the terms of the settlement and national interests, the Congress cannot and should not be represented at the Round Table Conference.

Thus unfortunately, after about six months of anxious and vigilant nurturing from the first week of March to the third week of August, the tender plant of the Truce, on which such great hopes had been reared, snapped at a moment. It was deplorable that the long and patient endeavour of months of goodwill and co-operation on either side should have taken such a sudden and unexpected turn. The situation was grave enough in all conscience. The Rt. Hon. Sastri was plunged in gloom as he heard the news of the Congress decision and Mr. Gandhi's withdrawal

from the Round Table Conference. Dr. Sapru and Mr. Jayakar and other Round Tablers who were in Bombay to sail for England on the 15th by the *Mooltan*, saw Mr. Gandhi at "Mani Bhawan" and expressed their profound disappointment at the turn of events. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who had arranged to sail by the *Mooltan*, cancelled their passages. Gandhiji himself in an interview with press correspondents declared:

> I need hardly say that it has been a great blow to me that I am not to go to London. I know what it will mean to Lord Irwin and I know also what severe disappointment it will be to the numerous English friends I have in England But a decision not to go became inevitable I had hoped against hope that justice will be done even at the eleventh hour. My request was in my opinion incredibly simple. If there was a contract between the Government and the Congress, and if there was a dispute as to the interpretation of the contract, or if there was a breach on either side, surely the rules governing all contracts must be applicable to this contract, and this, in my opinion, was the more so, because it is a contract between a great Government and a great organisation claiming to represent the whole nation. That the contract is not legally enforceable imposes a double obligation upon the Government to submit to an impartial tribunal questions in dispute between the contracting parties if they cannot agree The Government in their wisdom have rejected a very simple and very natural suggestion of the Congress, that such matters in dispute should be referred to an impartial tribunal.
>
> In the circumstances, it would have been highly improper if the Congress had allowed itself to be represented at the Round Table Conference More than this, I must not say at the present moment.

By arrangement the entire correspondence and documents relating to the issue under controversy were published on the 15th. Nothing could be gained by blaming one side or the other, but there was general and widespread regret that

differences in trivial details should have obscured the larger end in view. It was yet hoped that something would be done to retrieve the situation —a hope inspired by Gandhiji's message to the *News Chronicle* in which he declared that the position was any day retrievable if the local authorities implement the settlement and that he "will dash to London the moment the way is clear".

For once let the British public believe that every effort humanly possible was made by me to proceed to London. But the belief is growing on me that the great Civilians here do not want me to attend the Conference, or if they do, they do so under circumstances which a National Organisation like the Congress can never tolerate. If there is to be lasting partnership between two Nations, these Civilians will probably remain as true servants of India.

I have therefore no desire to attend the Conference if I cannot do so with their whole-hearted goodwill and blessings. When the full facts are published, I will be able to produce a catalogue of breaches by Provincial Governments which will show how patient the Congress has been and hoping against hope.

DEMAND FOR TRIBUNAL

The demand for an impartial tribunal before whom the Congress can prove these breaches, I hold to be perfectly natural and simple I claim for the Delhi settlement at least as much sanctity and protection as is claimable for any ordinary contract But if for this solemn settlement one contracting party can be both prosecutor and judge, it is not worth the paper on which it is written; and if London cannot guarantee protection to that party to the contract which has no arms to back it, London is not likely to produce a scheme that will give India what she has long desired and to which she is entitled by right of sufferings, if nothing more.

The position is any day retrievable by local authorities, implementing terms of the Settlement. I claim for the Congress that it has done its part to the best of its ability. It has always been ready to set right everything brought against it, and it has been always ready to court public inquiry into every one of its doings.

MAHATMA'S CONCERN FOR IRWIN

Personally I would give my all for the sake of Lord Irwin who will feel deeply cut up to see the Settlement to which he gave many anxious days and nights failing at the last moment I claim to feel this no less keenly then he You may, therefore, depend upon it that I would make a dash for London the moment the way is cleared for me by those who are in a position to do so

"What is going to happen now will be known within a few days," declared Gandhiji, addressing a small crowd assembled at the time of prayer.

We believe the truce still continues, but if the Government declares the truce has come to an end, we are ready for it If, however, the Government declares the truce still continues, both we and the Government have to carry it out.

LETTER TO LORD WILLINGDON

Before his departure from Bombay for Ahmedabad, Mr. Gandhi addressed a personal letter to His Excellency Lord Willingdon, in which he affirmed that the Congress had no desire to embarrass the Government, that it was far from his intention to set up a parallel government, that he had never insisted upon a Board of Arbitration, though he claimed it as a matter of right and that all that he wanted was simple justice. He declared further that Congress was prepared to continue honourably to work the settlement provided there was reciprocal attitude on the part of the Provincial Governments. The letter reads:

Events have moved so fast that I have not had the time to acknowledge your very kind personal letter of July 31.

I recognise the sincerity running through the communication, but the latest developments have made that letter past history and, as I said in my wire of August 13, the sum-total of all circumstances betrays a fundamental difference of outlook between us.

I can only give you my assurance that it was not without the greatest and most anxious deliberation that I came to the conclusion that, in view of your decision, I could not consistently with my obligations here, attend the Round Table Conference.

I was grieved when I heard that your decision was affected by the opinion ascribed to you that I had insisted upon a Board of Arbitration and that I was trying to set myself up as the head of a parallel government.

As for a Board of Arbitration, it is true that I have claimed it as a matter of right, but if you recall our conversation, I never insisted upon it. On the contrary, I told you that so long as I got the justice to which I was entitled I would be quite satisfied. You will agree that this is wholly different from insisting on a Board of Arbitration.

VOLUNTARY PATELS

As to the alleged parallel government, I thought I had dispelled the illusion when, in reply to a jocular remark by you, I had told you that I did not claim to be a district officer, but that my co-workers and I had acted as voluntary patels or village headmen, and that, too, with the consent and knowledge of the district officers. I should therefore be sorry if these two opinions, which I submit were erroneous, had affected your decision.

THE PACT

The purpose, however, of writing this letter is to inquire whether you regard the Delhi Settlement as now at an end, or whether it is to be still continued in spite of the abstention of the Congress from participation in the Round Table Conference. The Congress Working Committee arrived at the following decision this morning:

"In view of the resolution relating to Congress non-participation in the Round Table Conference passed by the Working Committee on August 13, the Committee desires to make it clear that this resolution should not be construed as ending the Delhi Settlement. The Committee, therefore, advises the Congress organisations and all Congressmen to continue to comply, until further instructions, with the terms of the Delhi Settlement is so far as they are applicable to the Congress."

From this you will observe that the Working Committee has no desire to embarrass the Government at the present juncture, and that therefore it is prepared to continue honourably to work the Settlement; but such working must depend upon a reciprocal attitude on the part of the Provincial Governments.

As I have told you so often, through correspondence and our conversations, this reciprocity has been found to be progressively missing. Information continues to be received at the office of the Working Committee of Government activity which can only be interpreted to be a token of a design to crush the Congress workers and normal Congress activities.

If, therefore, the settlement is to abide, I venture to think that early relief in the matter of complaints already filed is necessary More complaints, as I have already said, are coming and co-workers are insistent that, if relief is not had in time, they should at least get permission to adopt defensive measures. May I request an early reply.

THE REAL ISSUE: THE ATTITUDE OF THE SERVICES

Gandhiji explained the purpose of his letter to the Viceroy, in an article in *Young India*. After referring to the fact how the Government had refused to accept the Congress as the intermediary between the people and the Government, and how he had not insisted on the point as he did not want to embarrass or humiliate the Government, Gandhiji pointed out that he could prove by documents that occasions were not wanting to warrant the Congress declaring the Truce at an end by reason of the Provincial Governments having failed to carry out the terms. Gandhiji then cited instances of alleged breaches and added that Congress had shown exemplary patience in not terminating the Truce in the face of the determined antagonism of the Civil Services. It was they that stood in the way of peace in the Bardoli dispute.

The inference to be drawn from the conduct of the Provincial Governments is that members of the Civil Service are unwilling that I should proceed to London. Had they desired otherwise it was open to them, as it is even now, to make my way clear for me by treating the Congress as worthy of their trust and respect, and therefore giving it satisfaction through an impartial enquiry.

Replying to the objection that Gandhiji, in concentrating upon matters of detail, had really missed the opportunity of helping decisions on matters of higher interest, he pointed out that he did not look at the two things separately:

Government of India is but a part of the whole Imperial scheme and if it is not ready to recognise the right of India to govern herself unfettered from any outside control, it is not likely to think or do otherwise. My closest association with that Government for the last four months has left the impression on me that the Civil Service is not ready to recognise the right of India to full freedom. I have too great a regard for their ability and powers of organisation and their influence on the British public opinion, to think, that without their whole-hearted co-operation and blessing, a humble person like me could possibly get anything from London. Therefore, till the members of that Service are converted, there is no scope for the Congress to enter upon negotiations for full freedom. It must go through further suffering, however costly the process may be. Bardoli, therefore, was for me an acid test. It was designed to gauge the Civilian temper. Looked at in that light, it was not a small thing.

## FURTHER PEACE EFFORTS

While he gave out his mind freely on the attitude of the Services, he was unremitting in his endeavours to continue negotiations for peace. He caused the Working Committee to issue instructions to the Provinces that by Congressmen at any rate the Truce should be observed both in the letter and spirit. He repudiated the press report that he had issued a challenge to the Government, and when it was brought to his notice that the publication of his charge-sheet had affected the negotiations adversely, he pointed out:

I have issued no challenge. Whatever I have said has been published in the correspondence. If my letter to the Collector of Surat be regarded as a challenge, then that letter undoubtedly stands. The material result has been

already achieved—that is to say I could not go to London. The honour of the Congress pledge to the Bardoli peasants was thereby half vindicated. The rest is in the lap of the Government. Whatever the final decision of the Government may be, I decline to believe that it can possibly be affected by the publication of the charge-sheet which was part of the relevant correspondence. This publication was authorised by the telegram, dated 14th instant from Simla.

So far as the counter-charges were concerned, he said he would welcome them as also an impartial tribunal to investigate them.

I will be prepared to advise the Working Committee to accept even an one-sided tribunal—that is a tribunal that may confine its attention only to investigate the counter-charges. The Congress has nothing to lose by a public enquiry into the allegations made against it.

Meanwhile His Excellency the Viceroy who was in Calcutta, hastened to his headquarters in Simla, held a meeting of his Council and sent a reply to Mr. Gandhi's letter of August 14, in which he had alleged breaches of the Settlement on the part of the local Governments. The Viceroy replied:

The activities of the Congress during the past five months have, in many directions, been contrary both to the letter and the spirit of the Delhi Settlement, and have involved a constant menace, not only to the continuance of the Settlement, but to the maintenance of peace, particularly in the United Provinces and the North-West Frontier Province.

Lord Willingdon further observed that the refusal of the Congress to be represented at the Round Table Conference involves the failure of one of the main objects of the Settlement. Declaring that the Government would continue to avoid resort to special measures so far as that was possible, the Viceroy added.

It is the intention of the Government of India to pursue the policy they have hitherto followed to restrict action to the requirements of the specific situation, and, in particular, to avoid resort to special measures so far as this is possible.

But so far as this action may relate to the activities of the Congress, *its nature and extent must depend primarily* on the nature of those activities, and the Government of India are unable to fetter their discretion or that of local Governments in this respect.

Commenting on the Viceroy's reply, Mahatmaji told a representative of the A. P. I.:

I do not consider the Viceroy's reply to be at all bad or disappointing. In fact I was prepared for some such reply

Mr. Gandhi added:

I am glad too that, so far as I can understand the letter, the Government do not intend to terminate the Settlement and as the public is well aware, the Working Committee of the Congress has already passed a resolution to that effect. I am therefore hoping that all Congressmen will meticulously observe the Settlement.

Gandhiji had, in the meanwhile, received a radio message from Sir T. B. Sapru and Mr. Jayakar from S. S. *Mooltan*, protesting against the release of the charge-sheet which had placed them in an awkward position as they had been in communication with Whitehall on the one hand, and the Viceroy on the other. While Gandhiji could not see how the publication was irrelevant, he showed a fine spirit of accommodation in wiring to the Viceroy at once to grant him an interview, so that he might personally explain to His Excellency and clear up the points on which there had evidently been some misunderstanding.

## THE GANDHI-WILLINGDON TALKS

His Excellency having agreed, Gandhiji accompanied by Mr. Vallabhai Patel, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru and Sir Prabhashankar Pattani reached Simla on the 25th August and at once started negotiations. Gandhiji's evident moderation and

reasonableness naturally disarmed all opposition and the discussions with Mr. Emerson proved most satisfactory. The discussion covered a wide area, particularly breaches relating to Gujarat, the United Provinces and the North-West Frontier, but finally centred round Gujarat.

The Viceroy held a two hours' meeting of the Executive Council when Mr. Emerson explained the purport of his conversation with Mr. Gandhi.

It all seemed quite plain sailing and Gandhiji was to have left for Bombay *en route* to England but a eleventh-hour hitch arising, fears were aroused lest he should miss the boat on Saturday the 29th. Meanwhile Sir Prabhashankar and Sir Cowasji Jehangir (Jr.) were assiduous in their peace efforts with Government, and a settlement was reached to the satisfaction of both parties. And the following *communique* was issued on the 27th embodying the results of the Gandhi-Willingdon talks:

THE AGREEMENT

As a result of the conversations between His Excellency the Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi, the Congress will now be represented by Mr Gandhi at the Round Table Conference.

The Settlement of March 5, 1931, remains operative. The Government of India and the local Governments will secure the observance of the specific provisions of the Settlement in those cases, if any, in which a breach is established and will give their careful consideration to any representation that may be made in this respect The Congress will fulfil their obligations under the Settlement.

In regard to collections of land revenue in the Surat District, the point in issue is whether in those villages of Bardoli Taluk and Valod Mahal, which were visited by revenue officials accompanied by a party of police during the month of July, 1931, more severe demands, having regard to their material circumstances, were made from revenue payer and enforced by coercion exercised through

the police than were made from and met by revenue payers of other villages of the Bardoli Taluka. The Government of India, in consultation and full agreement with the Government of Bombay, have decided that an inquiry shall be held into this issue in accordance with the following terms of reference. To inquire into the allegations that khatedars in the villages in question were compelled by means of coercion exercised through the police to pay revenue, in excess of what would have been demanded if the standard had been applied which was adopted in other villages of the Bardoli Taluka, where collections were effected after March 5, 1931, without the assistance of the police and to ascertain what sum, if any, was so paid.

Within the terms of reference, evidence may be produced on any matter in dispute. The Government of Bombay have appointed Mr. R. G Gordon, I.C.S, Collector of Nasik, to hold the inquiry. In regard to other matters hitherto raised by the Congress, the Government of India and the local Governments concerned are not prepared to order any enquiry.

Thus Gandhiji's principal demand for an enquiry over the Bardoli dispute was conceded. The Delhi Settlement was to remain operative and Congress was to be represented at the Round Table Conference.

The news was hailed with rejoicing all over the country which for weeks together was distracted between hopes and fears. Gandhiji left Simla by special train on the 27th and reached Bombay in time to catch the P. & O. Boat S. S. *Rajaputana* on the 29th noon. With him sailed two veteran Congress leaders—Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, and the aged Sir Prabhashankar Pattani of Bhownagar—all Members of the Round Table Conference.

Mahatma Gandhi, just before sailing, gave the following message to the Associated Press

representative, who interviewed him in his cabin on board S. S. *Rajaputana*.

Though I see nothing on the horizon to warrant hope, being a born optimist, I am hoping against hope. My faith is in God and He seems to have made my way clear for me to go to London. Therefore I expect He will use me as His instrument for the service of humanity. For me service of India is identical with the service of humanity.

Though Congress may be repudiated by sections of the people of India, it aims at representing the whole of India and, therefore, to deserve the trust that had been reposed in me and imposed upon me, I shall endeavour to represent every interest that does not conflict with the interests of the dumb millions for whom the Congress predominantly exists

I hope that Provincial Governments, the Civil Service and English mercantile houses will help the Congress to realise the mission it has set before itself. Representing, as the Congress does, the message of non-violence and truth, it can only succeed by the goodwill of component parts of the nation, and I am therefore hoping that goodwill will be extended to the humble representative that is going upon his errand

## GANDHIJI AND THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

Gandhiji's party included his son Devadas, Mira Ben (Miss Slade), Mahadev Desai, his Secretary, and Mr. G. D. Birla. They received addresses of welcome at Aden, Suez and Port Said. Great preparations were made by various organizations in England, social, political and religious, to give the Mahatma a fitting reception. Kingsley Hall, the house presided over by Miss Muriel Lester, where Gandhiji had decided to stay in London, was made ready for his reception. Kingsley Hall is a centre of fellowship in the midst of a large industrial district of East London, and altogether a fitting place of residence for the Mahatma. For, explained

Miss Lester, "Our ideals and aspirations at Kingsley Hall have much in common with those of Mr. Gandhi's *Ashram*." On the 11th September (1931), the boat reached Marseilles where hundreds of eager visitors were waiting to have a sight of the Mahatma. At Paris he addressed the Indian students who made a great demonstration in his honour, before he left for Calais.

The party reached Folkestone in England on the 12th and were driven straight to the Friends' Meeting House on Euston Road, where a grand reception had been arranged.

Gandhiji, as the sole representative of the Congress, was the centre of interest when for the first time he attended the meeting of the Federal Structure Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference on Monday the 14th September, over which Lord Sankey presided. The next day it fell to Gandhiji to put the case for the Congress. At the very outset, he began by saying that he had "come to London in a spirit of co-operation and to strive his utmost to find points of agreement". Gandhiji then emphasised the representative character of the Congress and explained what the Congress stands for. It was indeed expected that Gandhiji would put the Congress demand unequivocally. He did not mince matters but said bluntly that "the goal of absolute independence remained intact", and that either party should have the right to sever connection and dissolve the partnership at will. But

if we are intent upon complete independence, it is not in any spirit of arrogance nor out of any desire to parade before the universe that we have severed the British connection. But, on the contrary, the Congress contemplates partnership but between two absolutely equal peoples. Time was when I prided myself as a British subject, but to-day I would rather be called a rebel than a subject. But still I aspire to citizenship, not of the Empire but of partnership, if God wills, an indissoluble partnership but not imposed by one nation on another. Hence our claim to dissolve the partnership at will.

But that was not the last word. "I am open to conviction," he continued, "but even so I have to ask my principals to consent to the revision before I can usefully act as an agent of the Congress." Gandhiji made an impassioned plea for co-operation both to Muslims and the British, and said:

If I want freedom for my country, I could not be deserving of freedom if I did not cherish the freedom of every other nation, weak or strong. So I said to myself, while approaching your shores, that perchance I might convince British Ministers that a free India might conceivably be of real assistance to Britain in balancing the budget not for one nation but for all nations. What cannot two nations do? One handful but brave, another a very ancient representative of Islamic and Hindu culture and also containing Zoroastrian and Christian people. It is with this dream that I have approached the British Isles. And I shall continue to cherish the dream.

Mahatma Gandhi did not minimise Britain's ability to hold India in subjection under the sword, but he wanted to convince British Ministers that India was a valuable partner to be held by the silken chord of love.

Gandhiji had placed his cards on the table but there was no knowing where the others stood. Other members of the delegation were not all of one mind, nor in complete agreement with Gandhiji. The Princes' problem, the problem of

the minorities, of finance, the army and external affairs, the question of safeguards and commercial interests and the very ideal of complete independence—all these bristled with difficulties and were keenly discussed. Some held that the demand for the control of external affairs and the army was not practical politics.

Sikh and Muslim speakers made it clear that they could not commit themselves to the Federal Scheme until the communal issue had been solved.

Mr. Gandhi in his speech made "a gentle and humble complaint" that His Majesty's Government had not given the Committee the lead which would help them to reach conclusions.

Thus the work of the Federal Structure Committee was carried on under conditions which made it impossible to come to grips with realities. In the absence of the communal settlement and in the atmosphere of uncertainty regarding the intentions of the Government as to the aim of these deliberations the members were naturally handicapped in tackling the work in the right spirit. The Sub-Committee's report over the details of the scheme had created a cleavage in the ranks of the delegation and deferred the prospect of any agreement. Already fissiparous tendencies were at work. First it was the Muslims who were clamorous with their demand out of all proportion to their population; then the depressed classes and the other minorities, one after the other; and then the States with their insistence on treaty rights; and the process

of disintegration among the Round Tablers was in full swing.

## THE MINORITIES QUESTION

It was a most painful and distressing episode that was revealed at the meeting of the Minorities Committee, when Mahatma Gandhi declared the failure of the conversations "with deep sorrow and deeper humiliation". The only hope lay in the fact that every member of the Round Table Conference was equally alive to the tragedy of the situation created by this eternal wrangle and the possible repercussions of the failure, not only on the further proceedings of the session but on the whole situation in this country.

The causes of the failure, said Mr. Gandhi, were inherent in the composition of the Indian delegation.

> We are, almost all, not the elected representatives of the parties or groups whom we are presumed to represent. We are here by nomination of the Government.

And he was not far wrong. For who did not realise that the Conference was overweighted with the extremists, and no attempt had been made to balance the excessive communalism of the committee by the inclusion of a decent number on the side of nationalist Muslims.

And then Mahatma Gandhi rightly put his finger on the one outstanding defect in the search for a settlement. That was the lack of a definite understanding as to the ultimate end of it all. We seemed to be still groping in a fog not knowing whither we were going. And the whole

thing, said Mr. Gandhi, lacked the sense of reality in that we did not know what we were going to get.

> If we know in a definite manner that we are going to get what we want, we should hesitate fifty times before we threw it away in a sinful wrangle. The solution can be the crown of the *Swaraj* Constitution and not its foundation—if only because our differences have hardened, if they have not arisen entirely by reason of a foreign domination.

Nor was the Premier's exhortation altogether helpful. For Mr. MacDonald, skilled in the art of putting the minimum of ideas in a maximum of grandiloquent phrases, could go no further than the vague promise of the British Government's pious determination

> to make such improvements in the Government of India as will make the Government of India consistent with our own ideas, as will make the Government of India capable of greater and greater expansion towards liberty

—a declaration curiously reminiscent of that other announcement of August 1920, regarding the "progressive realisation of responsible Government". Both seemed to be no nearer than Tennyson's "One far off divine event to which the whole creation moves" while the country was athirst for something immediate and tangible.

Meanwhile the position of the Minorities was defined in a memorandum presented to the Prime Minister by H. H. the Aga Khan. In essence it demanded, in addition to the maintenance of statutory rights, special representation through communal electorates and a declaration of Civil Rights on the lines of those submitted to the Round Table Conference in the last session by Dr. Ambedkar and Sir H. Gidney. The Muslims

in Bengal and the Punjab were to receive 51 per cent. representation.

Following a suggestion by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Mr. MacDonald made a striking offer to the delegates at the meeting of the Minorities Sub-Committee. He said:

> Will each of you, every member of this Committee, sign a request to me to settle the Communal question and pledge yourself to accept my decision? That, I think, is a very fair offer.

The Premier assured the delegates that though they might fail to solve the Communal problem—which he described as the most difficult he had had to deal with in his life—the Government would not simply sit back and say "We cannot do anything at all." He declared that the work of the Round Table Conference would go on to a successful conclusion. The Government would not allow Community differences to prevent it from carrying out its pledges and producing a Constitution.

In the course of what the Premier described as "impressive declarations", Mr. Gandhi and other delegates expressed their views on the memorandum submitted to Mr. MacDonald embodying the agreement reached between the Muslims and lesser Minorities. Mr. Gandhi informed the Premier that he would be agreeable to the Premier giving his decision on the question only so far as it related to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in which case he would request the Congress to accept Mr. MacDonald's award.

The Muslims, however, declared that they would be no party to any document unless it included the signatures of all the Minorities.

## GANDHI AND THE UNTOUCHABLES

Gandhiji's speech on this occasion was of a momentous and far-reaching character, as will be seen by the course of events following the R.T.C. He said:

I can understand the claims advanced by other minorities, but the claims advanced on behalf of the untouchables are to me the unkindest cut of all. It means a perpetual bar sinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning freedom for India. I claim that in my own person I represent the vast mass of untouchables. Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress but on my own behalf, and I claim that if there was a referendum of untouchables, I would get their vote and that I would top the poll. And I would work from one end of India to the other to tell the untouchables that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar sinister which is a shame not of them but of the orthodox Hindus. Let this Committee and the whole world know that to-day there is a body of Hindu reformers pledged to remove this blot of untouchability.

We do not want the untouchables to be classified as a separate class. The Sikhs may remain such in perpetuity. So may the Muslims and Europeans. Will the untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather that Hinduism died than untouchability lived. Therefore, with all my regard for Dr. Ambedkar and for his desire to see the untouchables uplifted, and for his ability, I must say in all humility that here is a great wrong under which he has laboured and, perhaps, the bitter experiences he has undergone have for a moment warped his judgment. It hurts me to have to say this, but I would be untrue to the cause of untouchables which is as dear to me as life itself if I did not say it. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world.

I am speaking with a due sense of responsibility. I say it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of

the untouchables in India. It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever I do not mind the untouchables being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in villages. Those who speak of the political rights of the untouchables do not know India and do not know how Indian society is to day constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command, that If I was the only person to resist this thing I will resist it with my life.

R.T.C. LEADERS' MEMORANDUM

Meanwhile the results of the General Elections made it clear that the Nationalists had swept the polls with a huge Tory majority. It was apprehended that the rout of Labour and the strengthening of the die-hard element in the new Government would make short work of the Labours of the R.T.C. Sir Tej Bahadur and others made a demand that the British Government should make immediately a full statement of its policy in regard to central responsibility in the future Government of India. In a statement signed by most members from India, they declared:

It is our considered opinion that no political party of any standing in India will in the slightest degree favour the introduction of Provincial Autonomy as the first instalment, with a mere promise of establishing responsibility on a Federal basis in future The Conference was not called for this purpose.

None of us would have taken the trouble to come to England to achieve merely Provincial Autonomy, which, indeed, was recommended by the Simon Commission's report. We think, in the first place, that no genuine Provincial Autonomy can be established without Responsibility at the Centre.

Even if it could be established, we are clearly of opinion that no party in India will be prepared to take it,

and if it is intended to rely on the support of any particular class or any minority among the people of India for the working of Provincial Autonomy, then we think that the position, instead of being improved, will become one of great complexity and instability and give rise to a situation which, in the best interests of both the countries, must be avoided.

If His Majesty's Government intend to take this step, it must be understood that it will not be with our consent, but that it is wholly contrary to our advice, and the Government must be prepared to take full and sole responsibility for their action.

The Plenary Session of the Conference met on the 27th November with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in the Chair. The Prime Minister repeated the salient sentences of the Declaration of the previous January that with regard to Central Government

His Majesty's late Government were prepared to recognise the principle of the responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature if both were constituted on an All-India Federal basis.

The principle of Responsibility was to be subject to the qualification, that, in the existing circumstances, Defence and External Affairs must be reserved to the Governor-General and that, in regard to Finance, such conditions must apply as would ensure the fulfilment of the obligations incurred under the authority of the Secretary of State and the maintenance, unimpaired, of the financial stability and credit of India

Finally, it was our view that the Governor-General must be granted the necessary powers to enable him to fulfil his responsibility for securing the observance of the constitutional rights of minorities and for ultimately maintaining the tranquillity of the State

GANDHI'S DISAPPOINTMENT WITH R T C.

Mr. Gandhi, in his speech, did not disguise his disappointment at the results of the Conference. He said :

Whilst there is yet a little sand left in the glass, I want you to understand what this Congress stands for. My life is at your disposal. The lives of all the members

of the Working Committee, the All-India Congress Committee, are at your disposal. But remember that you have at your disposal the lives of all these dumb millions I do not want to sacrifice those lives if I can possibly help it. Therefore please remember that I will count no sacrifice too great if by chance I can pull through an honourable settlement. You will find me always having the greatest spirit of compromise if I can but fire you with the spirit that is working in the Congress, namely, that India must have real liberty. Call it by any name you like: a rose will smell as sweet by any other name, but it must be the rose of liberty that I want and not the artificial product. If your mind and the Congress mind, the mind of this Conference and the mind of the British people, means the same thing by the same word, then you will find the amplest room for compromise, and you will find the Congress itself always in a compromising spirit. But so long as there is not that one mind, that one definition, not one implication for the same word that you and I and we may be using, so long there is no compromise possible How can there be any compromise so long as we each one of us has a different definition for the same words that we may be using. It is impossible, Prime Minister. I want to suggest to you in all humility that it is utterly impossible then to find a meeting ground, where you can apply the spirit of compromise. And I am very grieved to have to say that up to now I have not been able to discover a common definition for the terms that we have been exchanging during all these weary weeks.

Even in proposing the vote of thanks to the Chair, Gandhiji was very careful. Significantly enough he did not comment on the decisions of the Conference but was content to congratulate the Premier on his great industry and capacity to get through the labours of the Conference. He concluded ominously:

It is somewhat likely—I would say only somewhat likely because I would like to study your declaration once, twice, thrice and as often as may be necessary, scanning every word thereof and reading the hidden meaning in it, crossing all the T's and dotting all the I's—and if I then come to the conclusion, as just now seems likely—that, as far as I am concerned, we have come to the parting of the ways and that our ways take different directions, it

does not matter to us. Even so, you are entitled to my hearty and sincerest vote of thanks.

"WE MUST FACE THE STORMS OF LIFE"

It is not given to us always to expect a meticulous regard for each other's opinions and always be accommodating so that there is no principle left On the contrary, the dignity of human nature requires that we must face the storms of life Sometimes even blood brothers have to go each his own way, but if at the end of their quarrel, at the end of their differences, they can say that they bore no malice and that even so they acted as becomes a gentleman, a soldier, if it be possible at the end of the chapter for me to say that of myself and my countrymen and if it is possible for me to say that of you, Mr. Prime Minister, and of your countrymen, I will say that we parted also well.

I do not know in what directions my path will lie, but it does not matter to me. Even then, although I may have to go in an exactly opposite direction, you are still entitled to a vote of thanks from the bottom of my heart.

The warning was significant, though couched in courteous terms befitting the dignity and position of the august assembly and the parties concerned. Yet he would speak out his mind in his own emphatic and unambiguous way though never unmindful of the courtesies of a ceremonial occasion.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN LONDON AND ABROAD

Gandhiji's attendance at the R.T.C. was only a small part of his activities in England. He spent more time in visiting various places of interest and in interviewing members of Government and other leading personages. He was invited to the Buckingham Palace to a party given to the Round Tablers, which he attended in his usual loin cloth and had a few minutes' conversation with their Majesties the King and Queen. The strangest visitor he came across in England was Mr. Charlie Chaplin, the famous comedian of

the films, of whom, curiously enough Gandhiji had not heard. They talked on the use and misuse of machines. Chaplin stayed to pray with the Mahatma on the carpet and went away immensely pleased. Gandhi's visit to Manchester and the Lancashire Mills afforded him an opportunity to come into friendly contact with mill-owners and operatives. It was remarkable for the warmth and regard with which the most uncompromising advocate of boycott of foreign cloth received in that centre of British manufacture.

GANDHI IN LANCASHIRE

They had come with great expectations perhaps, but Gandhiji had, with great sorrow, to make it clear to them that he was called to undertake a task to which he and his country were unequal.

My nationalism is not so narrow that I should not feel for your distress or gloat over it. I do not want my country's happiness at the sacrifice of any other country's happiness But whilst I see that you are hard hit, I am afraid, your distress is not largely due to India Conditions have been bad for some years and the boycott came only as the last straw.

He said at Springvale Garden village:

There is not boycott of British cloth, as distinguished from other foreign cloth, since the 5th March when the truce was signed As a nation we are pledged, to boycott all foreign cloth, but in case of an honourable settlement between England and India, *i e*, in case of a permanent peace, I should not hesitate to give preference to Lancashire cloth to all other foreign cloth, to the extent that we may need to supplement our cloth and on agreed terms But how much relief that can give you, I do not know. You must recognise that all the markets of the world are now not open to you. What you have done, all other nations are doing today Even Indian mills would be producing more and more cloth every day. You, surely, will not want me to restrict Indian enterprise for the sake of Lancashire.

I am pained at the unemployment here. But there is no starvation or semi-starvation here. In India we have both. If you went to the villages of India you would find utter despair in the eyes of the villagers, you would find half-starved skeletons, living corpses. If India could revive them by putting life and food into them in the shape of work, India would help the world. Today India is a curse. There is a party in my country which would sooner see an end to the lives of these half-starved millions in order that the rest may live I thought of a humane method and that was to give them work with which they were familiar, which they could do in their cottages, which required no great investment in implements and of which the product could be easily sold. This is a task which is worthy of the attention even of Lancashire.

## GANDHI MEETS CELEBRITIES

Gandhiji visited the educational centres like Eton and Oxford and Cambridge where he was warmly welcomed by the Professors. Indian merchants and students in London gave separate receptions and presented purses. Among the celebrities whom Gandhiji visited were George Bernard Shaw, Mr. Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson. He met Col. Maddock, the famous British surgeon, who performed a difficult operation in 1924 in Yeravda jail. He also saw Lord Irwin, the ex-Viceroy, and had long talks on the political situation. But by far the most interesting account we have had from the pen of Mahadev Desai, his Secretary, is of Gandhiji's visit to Canterbury, and his talks with the Archbishop. He was the guest of Dr. Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury, and he attended service at the Cathedral.

Gandhiji addressed various meetings in England, chief of them being the Temperance Council, the Peace Workers' meeting, the Students' Union and the Postal Workers' Union. He gave an

*impressive rendering to the Columbia Gramophone* Company of his reflections on the existence of God. He also broadcasted a message to the American people which was given the widest publicity in the world's press.

During the twelve weeks of the Mahatma's stay in Kingsley Hall, Miss Muriel Lester, his hostess, had many opportunities of coming into close and intimate association with him. She writes :

> I had seen him day after day in the cold dark predawn hour of 5-30 A.M., at midnight on his return from those endless late conferences with Muslim delegates at midday, surrounded by throngs of children sitting for hours by an ex-Prime Minister's drawing room fire, at St. James' Palace surrounded by Lords and Ladies, Princes and Cabinet Ministers. And always he was exactly the same—serene, gay, humorous, appreciative, selfless, at one with God and man. , ,
>
> I welcomed him at Bow as a great man whom I admired. I bade him farewell as a dear, delightful, and wholly reliable friend.

Gandhiji left England on the 5th December. After spending a day in Paris, he left for Switzerland, visiting the great Romain Roland* at his beautiful country residence at Villeneuve, and passed through Italy *via* Rome to Brindisi to embark on board the S. S. *Pilsna* for India. At Rome Gandhiji visited Mussolini on the 12th, could not see the Pope but visited the Vatican Museum and the Library and inspected the Royal School of the Montessori method. An interesting meeting was that of Signora Albertrin,

*The great French academician has written a remarkable and penetrating study of Gandhi, as of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

daughter of Tolstoy, who recalled her father's appreciation of Gandhiji's work in South Africa. And then there was the pleasant surprise of visit of Princess Maria, daughter of the king of Italy, with a basket of "Indian figs", which "Her Majesty the Queen herself packed" for the Mahatma.

Gandhiji and his party then left Brindisi on the 14th, met a number of deputationists, including one of the "Wafd" party of Egypt at Portsaid, and landed at Bombay on the morning of the 28th December.

### THE RETURN AND THE ARRESTS

If Gandhiji was not happy over the results of the R.T.C. in England, the posture of affairs in India was even more depressing. Already on the eve of his departure he was apprised of the sorry turn of events in U.P., N.-W.F. and Bombay. Pandit Jawaharlal had sent him full accounts of the working of the ordinance regime in the Provinces. To add to his discomfiture, an Italian newspaper gave currency to a faked interview with him accusing him of his desire to restart civil disobedience on his return. Gandhi repudiated the false report from Egypt but the evil had had a good start and had done some harm by prejudicing the British public against Gandhi and the Congress.

Before Mr. Gandhi landed in Bombay, on December 28, the U.P. Congress had declared a No-Rent campaign and an emergency Ordinance was in full swing in the Frontier, the U.P. and Bengal. On December 25th, Abdul Gaffar Khan

and a few others were arrested under Regulation III of 1818, and in a week's time over a thousand Red Shirts were bound over in the Frontier. The next day Messrs. Jawaharlal Nehru and T. A. K. Sherwani, who entrained for Bombay to greet Mahatma Gandhi, and to attend the Working Committee meeting, were arrested on a wayside station on a technical offence of disobeying orders. They were tried soon after, convicted and sentenced to heavy terms of rigorous imprisonment. The Mahatma arrived at Bombay on the 28th.

BOMBAY'S WELCOME TO GANDHIJI

A great ovation awaited him on his return—an ovation which was somewhat marred by the dramatic arrests of leading Congressmen. In the evening, in reply to the demonstrations of welcome at the Azad Maidan, Mahatmaji referred to these arrests and said.

I take these as gifts from Lord Willingdon, our Christian Viceroy, for is it not a custom during X'mas to exchange greetings and gifts? Something had to be given me, and this is what I got.

Gandhiji further continued:

We should abide by the creed of *non-violence*. We should be true to the spirit of Satyagraha. We should not swerve an inch from our ideal of *Ahimsa*. People who did not believe in this creed of the Congress, should either leave the Congress, or get the creed changed. *Swaraj* for India means peace for the whole world. Our methods may take years to bring *Swaraj*, but it does not matter.

Concluding, Mr. Gandhi said:

I have much to say as regards my sojourn in England But if I am not arrested, I shall write about it. If it falls to our lot to fight again, I ask you to be prepared for it. But I will try my utmost to avoid it. Even if there is a single ray of hope, I will persevere.

and will not abandon negotiations. But if I don't succeed, I will invite you to join me in the struggle which will be a fight to a finish. May God grant you strength and courage.

## WILLINGDON-GANDHI CORRESPONDENCE

He then attended the Working Committee meetings and asked to see the Viceroy. On 29th December, Mr. Gandhi wired to His Excellency as follows.

> I was not prepared on landing yesterday to find the Frontier and U.P. Ordinances, the shooting in the Frontier and the arrests of valued comrades in both the provinces on the top of the Bengal Ordinance, waiting for me. I do not know whether I am to regard these as an indication that friendly relations between us are closed or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to the course I am to pursue in advising the Congress I would esteem a wire in reply.

The Viceroy's reply to Mr. Gandhi pointed out, that, whereas the Viceroy was willing to meet Mr. Gandhi and discuss constitutional matters arising out of the Round Table Conference and give all possible advice as to the best method of ensuring the successful co-operation of the Congress, His Excellency would in no circumstances permit the raising or discussion of the question of the recent Ordinances.

Mr. Gandhi, in a further communication to the Viceroy, observed that if His Excellency considered it worth while to see Mr. Gandhi, the Working Committee Resolution tentatively planning civil disobedience would be suspended in the hope that it might result in its being abandoned. The Congress plan included vigorous boycott of British goods and concerns, and also disobedience of "un-moral laws".

WORKING COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

The Working Committee is of opinion that these several acts and others of lesser gravity that have taken place in some other provinces, and the telegram from His Excellency, seem to make further co-operation with the Government on the part of the Congress utterly impossible, unless the Government's policy is radically changed. These acts and telegram betray no intention on the part of the bureaucracy to hand over power to the people and are calculated to demoralise the nation. They also betray want of faith in the Congress, from which co-operation is expected by the Government

Regarding the request to the Viceroy to reconsider his reply to Gandhiji, the Working Committee demanded a public and impartial inquiry into the Ordinance question. The Committee also passed a resolution that the Premier's Round Table Conference Declarations were wholly unsatisfactory and inadequate in terms of the Congress demands. In the event of a satisfactory response not coming from Government, the Working Committee called upon the nation to resume civil disobedience.

It is needless to dwell at length on the Willingdon-Gandhi correspondence which did not render the situation anyway easy. The negotiations came to an abrupt end. The peace-makers, among whom were some leading Liberals, and mill-owners, tried to intercede, but it was too late and the final plunge had been taken.

THE ARREST

The arrest of Mahatma Gandhi was only a question of time, and it would appear that Mr. Gandhi was prepared for it. Two police cars pulled up in front of Mani Bhuvan exactly at 3 A.M. on the 4th January, 1932, when

Mahatma Gandhi and his household were sleeping on the terrace where a tent had been pitched for him.

The police party headed by the Commissioner got down from the car and proceeded to the second floor asking for Mr. Devadas Gandhi.

The son woke up his father and broke the news to him. Gandhiji only smiled.

The following is the text of the warrant which was handed to Mr. Gandhi:

*Whereas the Governor in Council has for good and* sufficient reasons, under powers vested in him by Regulation XXV of 1827, resolved that Mr. M K. Gandhi shall be placed under restraint in Yeravda Central Jail during the pleasure of Government, you are hereby directed to secure the same to Mr. Gandhi and arrange to forward him to the superintendent of the jail as soon as possible.

OTHER ARRESTS

About the same time that Gandhiji was arrested, a similar warrant was issued on Vallabhai Patel, President of the Congress. Both were taken to Yeravda jail where Mahatmaji found himself in familiar surroundings. Mr. Subhash Chandra Bose was arrested at Kalyan on January 2 under Regulation III of 1818. Babu Rajendra Prasad of Patna, who was appointed Congress President in succession to Mr. Vallabhai Patel, was arrested on January 5, and Dr. Ansari, who succeeded him, was arrested on the 8th. Meanwhile, the Working Committee of the All-India Congress Committee was declared an unlawful association under the Unlawful Associations Ordinance, and by the 10th of the month leading Congressmen in the Provinces

were all arrested one after another. Mrs. Nehru and other ladies were arrested in U.P., while Mrs. Gandhi, Miss Manubai Patel (daughter of Sardar Patel) and Miss Mithubai Petit were soon after hauled up in a village near Bardoli.

THE EPIC FAST

Locked up in Yeravda jail, he began to combat the forces of reaction in the country in his own spiritual way. Like the saints of mediæval India, Gandhi gave pathetic expression to the deep-moving cry: "I do not desire to be born again, but if I am really born again, I desire to be born amidst the untouchables, so as to share their difficulties and to work for their liberation." That has always been the note of his utterances on countless occasions. In fact the ban against untouchability is one of the cardinal points of the *Satyagraha* pledge as of the conditions of *Swaraj*. But a leader of Gandhiji's type could not be content with mere declarations of faith or eloquent expositions of principles.

When at the Round Table Conference in London, he urged the Depressed Classes to cast in their lot with the rest of the Hindus and not to stand apart, isolated and segregated, he meant it all for their good in a sense which the leaders of that community did not understand. They only wondered why Mr. Gandhi, who was so keen on the uplift of the depressed classes, should deny them separate electorates. And so they joined the Muslims and Europeans and demanded separate representation which they embodied in what is

known as the Minorities Pact. But Gandhiji "would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning *Swaraj*". He would not, as he said, "bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world". He held that "he would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived." And in announcing the failure of his negotiations with the leaders of the communities for a settlement, he very mournfully expressed himself as follows at the Minorities Committee meeting on November 13, 1931: "I can understand the claims advanced by other communities but the claim advanced on behalf of the 'untouchables' is to me the unkindest cut of all. It means perpetual bar sinister". And he concluded with the fateful words that "if he was the only person to resist this thing, he would resist it with his life.

The words which looked quite harmless then and somewhat like a rhetorical peroration were charged with a solemn warning. And when the Premier's Award was published on August 17, 1932, giving separate electorates to the Depressed Classes as in the case of the Muslims and Europeans, Gandhiji made his fateful resolve that he would "fast unto death" if that decision was not abandoned. Mahatmaji's correspondence with the Premier and the Secretary of State conveying this grim resolve was published on the 13th September, 1932,* when Gandhiji himself was in

* For full text of correspondence with the Premier, see page 933, Mahatma Gandhi's Speeches and Writings—

prison. Government, however, gave full facilities to the leaders of communities to come in contact with Mahatmaji and find a way of settlement. Gandhiji's resolve had a dramatic effect on the whole country, and leaders of all parties, irrespective of political or communal differences, met with one accord to hammer out a solution so that the life of the Mahatma might be saved at any cost. For five days from the 19th to the 24th September, 1932, the leaders of communities were in consultation among themselves and also with Gandhiji in a spirit of reason and goodwill. The spectacle of Gandhiji fasting to death under the mango tree in Yeravda jail cast a spell over the whole congregation who were determined to find a formula which would at once satisfy the needs of all parties and save the life of the Mahatma. Thanks to the good offices of friends and the will to peace displayed by the leaders of the Depressed Classes such an agreement was possible.

## THE POONA PACT

The following is the text of the agreement which was arrived at between the leaders acting on behalf of the depressed classes and of the rest of the Hindu community, regarding the representation of the depressed classes in the Legislatures and certain other matters affecting their welfare.

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1. There shall be seats reserved for the depressed classes out of general electorates Seats in Provincial Legislatures shall be as follows.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Madras | .. .. | 30 |
| Bombay with Sind | .. .. | 15 |
| Punjab | .. .. | 8 |
| Behar and Orissa | .. .. | 18 |
| Central Provinces | .. .. | 20 |
| Assam | .. .. | 7 |
| Bengal | .. .. | 30 |
| United Provinces | .. .. | 20 |
| | Total .. | 148 |

These figures are based on the total strength of the Provincial Councils announced in the Prime Minister's decision.

2. Election to these seats shall be by joint electorates subject, however, to the following procedure.

All members of the depressed classes registered in the general electoral roll of a Constituency will form an electoral college, which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the depressed classes for each of such reserved seats by the method of single vote, and four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election shall be the candidates for election by the general electorate.

3. Representation of the depressed classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in clause 2 above for their representation in Provincial Legislatures.

4. In the Central Legislature, 18 per cent. of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said Legislature shall be reserved for the depressed classes.

5. The system of primary election to panel of candidates for election to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, as hereinbefore mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement under the provision of clause 6 below.

6. The system of representation of the depressed classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislatures as provided for in clauses 1 and 4 shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in this settlement.

Thus did the Yeravda Pact come into being.—a pact which was at once accepted by the Government displacing the Premier's Award as desired by the Mahatma. The Conference which met at Bombay under the presidentship of Pandit Malaviya was thus able to come to a unanimous agreement* which was approved by Mr. Gandhi and cabled to the Premier for acceptance on the 24th. On the conclusion of the agreement, hundreds of cables were despatched to the British Government urging them to accept the decision without delay and ratify the agreement. The agreement was at once accepted.

### A SERIES OF VERBAL MISSILES

It must be said to the credit of all concerned that the whole business of the agreement was

* The following is the text of the resolutions passed at the meeting of the Hindus' Conference in Bombay on the 25th September 1932.

1. This Conference confirms the Poona agreement arrived at between the leaders of the Caste Hindus and Depressed Classes on September 24, 1932, and trusts that the British Government will withdraw its decision creating separate electorates within the Hindu community and accept the agreement in full. The Conference urges that immediate action be taken by Government so as to enable Mahatma Gandhi to break his fast within the terms of his vow and before it becomes too late. The Conference appeals to the leaders of the communities concerned to realize the implications of the agreement and of this resolution and to make earnest endeavour to fulfil them.

2. This Conference resolves that henceforth no one shall be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same rights as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public roads and other public institutions. These rights shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the *Swaraj* Parliament if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.

transacted with the utmost promptness possible and the Government also acted with a due sense of the importance and urgency of the occasion. Government's acceptance of the Pact was also announced by Mr. Haig, the Home Member, in a statement in the Assembly on September 26, 1932. On the completion of the agreement the restrictions on Gandhiji were re-imposed on September 30. But from November 4 onwards, facilities for conducting 'untouchability' work from prison were restored to him and Gandhiji thereafter began to issue a series of statements in which he called upon the Caste Hindus to play their part in the matter of removing untouchability.

Thereafter the Mahatma organized from jail his campaign to remove untouchability. In May 1933, he went on a self-purificatory fast of twenty-one days. He had to be released in consequence, but, on his decision to resume individual civil disobedience, he was arrested again on the 1st of August and refused permission to carry on the Harijan campaign unrestricted in jail. He went on a fast again and was released. Pursuant to his vow, he then conducted a whirlwind campaign throughout the country for the removal of untouchability; and "within so short a time as one year defied time and space and the demands of health to carry to the most remote villages his message of hope to the socially submerged."

THE THIRD ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

It will be noticed that after the failure of the second R.T.C., Government took comprehensive

measures to suppress the Congress organisation. Once more Congressmen were in prison, and of course, Gandhi with them. For a time there was complete absence of Congress activity: and Government were bent on suppressing the movement with a stern hand. Meanwhile the third Round Table Conference met at the end of 1932 and it was by no means the same Conference as the two previous ones. Both in personnel and in procedure there was marked difference. Gandhi and the Congress were excluded on the score of civil disobedience. Even Liberals like the Rt. Hon. Sastri, Sir Pheroze Sethna and Mr. Chintamani, who had done good work in previous sessions, had no place in it. Mr. Jinnah himself was not among the invitees, while nationalist Muslims were studiously ignored. Committees and sub-committees were appointed to carry on with different subjects, and the old Conference method was not much in evidence. Apart from everything the exclusion of Gandhi was like playing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. Government chose to reject the advice of Liberals like Sir Chimanlal Setalvad who urged the importance of securing Congress co-operation "in order that the resulting" constitution may have fair chances of smooth working! "With all my differences from Congressmen," said Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru,

> I hold that as far as Mr. Gandhi is concerned, he sums up in his personality the highest degree of self-respect in India and the highest degree of patriotism

and he went on to add that he did not wish Congressmen to be treated as outlaws but to work the Constitution.

If we are to discuss these things, with whom are we to discuss them .. ? As far as Mr. Gandhi is concerned, he will simply refuse to discuss any political question inside the jail.

I am making an earnest appeal to you to consider the situation. I tell you that I have never known in my thirty years' experience as a public man so much of bitterness and so much of hostile feeling in Indian homes as I have witnessed during the last few months.

But all this complaining was unavailing and the third R.T.C. ended after five weeks' labours with nothing more to its credit than a series of reports of inconclusive discussions and contentious proceedings in sub-committees.

## GANDHIJI RETIRES FROM THE CONGRESS

In 1934 the civil disobedience movement was withdrawn; and on the 28th October Gandhiji retired from the Congress amidst the regret of the whole nation. Next year the Congress celebrated its golden jubilee.

From the latter half of 1934 Gandhi ceased to be even a four-anna member of the Congress, but his advice was invariably sought on all important decisions of the Congress. His personality and influence were fully exploited by Congressmen generally and by right wing Congressmen in particular. By "right wing Congressmen" is meant that group of Congressmen who were inclined to make use of the institutions established by the reformed constitution, although they joined the rest in condemning the reforms. These parliamentarians, as they were termed, were very much in evidence since 1934. Mr. Gandhi was never a believer in the efficacy of parliamentary institutions in bringing about India's political

salvation, but he appeared to support them as against the growing tide of socialism under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In a sense, he kept the balance between the two.

The fact is that Gandhiji suddenly realised what every other Congressman or for the matter of that, every one outside the Congress knew, that most of the Congressmen, even some of the topmost men in the Congress hierarchy, while paying lip homage to Gandhiji's principles were by no means convinced Gandhites. The khaddar formula and the spinning franchise were not exactly suited to the taste of the aspirants to the legislatures. Gandhi himself was adamantine. Nor could it be said that all Congressmen were one with Gandhi in his vow of non-violence. On all these matters Gandhiji gave his followers the option to observe the rules of Satyagraha at least as a policy, though not as a principle. Even this he found was not observed as meticulously as he could have worked. Besides, the disappointment caused by the failure of the R.T.C. was doubled by the publication of the White Paper, that "hideous grinning anthropoid" as Sastri said, and the J.P.C. report, while the Bill which followed and the actual Act of 1935 were even more disappointing. The country, he thought, must be prepared for energetic opposition, for which the constructive programme, he chalked out, must be duly implemented. Without such implementation he feared his plan of action could not succeed. Hence he relieved himself of Congress responsibility to devote himself more

exclusively to the work of the All-India Spinning Association and other constructive work as supplementary to Congress activity.

Gandhi has indeed a wonderful knack of assessing the popular mind and of acting at the psychological moment in a way that could carry the country with him. But the so-called intelligentsia, or even his own lieutenants were by no means converted to his sublime view of things. We have seen how acute have been his differences with Subhas Bose and other radicals. Even so ardent a disciple as Pandit Nehru could make nothing of Gandhiji's advice to Congressmen that

> they must learn the art and beauty of self-denial and voluntary poverty They must engage themselves in nation-building activities, the spread of khaddar through personal hand-spinning and hand-weaving, the spread of communal unity of hearts by irreproachable personal conduct towards one another in every walk of life, the banishing of untouchability in every shape or form in one's own person, the spread of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs by personal contact with individual addicts and generally by cultivating personal purity.

This was the political programme that was placed before his colleagues and countrymen. Pandit Nehru himself, by no means an indifferent follower of Gandhi, was perplexed and bewildered. Excellent as the counsel is, what has it all to do with the political emancipation of the people? The Pandit goes on to observe:

> A vast distance seemed to separate him from me. With a stab of pain I feel that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped. For long a mental tussle had been going on within me. I had not understood or appreciated much that Gandhiji had done. His fasts and his concentration on other issues

during the continuance of Civil Disobedience, when his comrades were in the grip of the struggle, his personal and self-created entanglements, which led him to the extraordinary position that, while out of prison, he was yet pledged to himself not to take part in the political movement, his new loyalties and pledges which put in the shade the old loyalty and pledge and job, undertaken together with many colleagues, while yet that job was unfinished, had all oppressed me. During my short period out of prison, I had felt these and other differences more than ever. Gandhiji had stated that there were temperamental differences between us. They were perhaps more than temperamental, and I realised that I held clear and definite views about many matters which were opposed to his. And yet in the past I had tried to subordinate them, as far as I could, to what I conceived to be the larger loyalty—the cause of national freedom for which the Congress seemed to be working I tried to be loyal and faithful to my leader and my colleagues, for in my spiritual make-up loyalty to a cause and one's colleagues holds a high place. I fought many a battle within myself when I felt that I was being dragged away from the anchor of my spiritual faith. Somehow I managed to compromise Perhaps I did wrong, for it can never be right for any one to let go of that anchor. But in the conflict of ideals I clung to my loyalty to my colleagues, and hoped that the rush of events and the development of our struggle might dissolve the difficulties that troubled me and bring my colleagues nearer to my view-point.

And then he thought again of him who was the cause of all this commotion within him; and he felt drawn to the Mahatma as so many others were drawn to him inexplicably, almost irresistibly:

What a wonderful man was Gandhiji after all, with his amazing and almost irresistible charm and subtle power over people. His writings and his sayings conveyed little enough impression of the man behind; his personality was far bigger than they would lead one to think. And his services to India, how vast they had been. He had instilled courage and manhood in her people, and discipline and endurance, and the power of joyful sacrifice for a cause, and, with all his humility, pride. Courage is the one sure foundation of character, he had said, without courage there is no morality, no religion, no love. "One

cannot follow truth or love so long as one is subject to fear." With all his horror of violence, he had told us that "cowardice is a thing even more hateful than violence". And "discipline is the pledge and guarantee that a man means business. There is no deliverence and no hope without sacrifice, discipline, and self-control. Mere sacrifice without discipline will be unavailing." Words only and pious phrases perhaps, rather platitudinous, but there was power behind the words, and India know that this little man meant business.

## CONGRESS GOVERNMENTS IN THE PROVINCES

Though Gandhi formally retired from the Congress, he has always continued to be the power behind the throne and the virtual dictator of its policy. Leaders of the Congress, especially members of the Working Committee, consulted him on all matters of importance and he readily gave advice, which was faithfully followed. On the withdrawal of civil disobedience, Congress became a constitutional organisation again. In spite of open hostility to the reforms embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935, the Congress decided to contest the elections under the much wider franchise conferred by it and secured signal success at the polls. A sharp difference of opinion arose on how to utilise these majorities—the right wing desiring to assume executive power and thereby bringing about a replacement of the "unwanted constitution" by one designed by Indians themselves and the left wing wishing to adopt obstructive tactics right from the start. As usual, Gandhiji's advice was sought and he evolved a clever formula*

* His language on important occasions, said a writer in the *London Spectator*—Mr. Richard Freud—"can be dreadfully involved, and if you do not work hard to unravel it, you

whereby he sought to prevent a schism in the Congress.

In a statement analysing the deadlock, Gandhiji confessed himself as the sole author of the office acceptance clause in the Congress resolution.

My desire was not to lay down any impossible condition. On the contrary, I wanted to devise a condition that could be easily accepted by the Governors. There was no intention whatsoever to lay down a condition whose acceptance would mean even the slightest abrogation of the Constitution.

Have I not heard Sir Samuel Hoare and other Ministers saying in so many words that ordinarily the Governors would *not* use their admittedly large powers of interference? I claim that the Congress formula asked for nothing more.

It does, therefore, appear to me that once more the British Government has broken to the heart what it has promised to the ear. I doubt not that they can and will impose their will on the people till the latter develop enough strength from within to resist it, but that cannot be called working Provincial Autonomy

By flouting the majority obtained through the machinery of their creation, they have, in plain language, ended the Autonomy, which they claim the Constitution has given to the Provinces.

The rule, therefore, will now be the rule of the sword, not of the pen, nor of the indisputable majority Anyway,

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may think he has said nothing much when he has really made a statement that will change history.

That happened in 1936, when he appeared to be splitting hairs over the special powers of the Governors in the new provincial administrations.

Even Sir Tej Sapru, who has the finest legal brain in India, thought Gandhi's objections were mere quibbles. But when the Government at last met them, it was seen that the re-statement of a few clauses had not only changed formal into real self-government, but had brought home to the Governors, who admitted it, the hitherto nebulous meaning of autonomous government Gandhi had felt a call, seen a blurr, and groped inaptly for expression, knowing all the time that he was right."

that is the only interpretation, which, with all the goodwill in the world, I can put upon Government action.

For, I believe, in the cent per cent. honesty of my formula the acceptance of which might have prevented a crisis and resulted in a natural, orderly and peaceful transference of power from the bureaucracy to the largest and fullest democracy known to the world.

Thus he advised Congress Majorities to form Cabinets provided the Governors of Provinces undertook in advance not to exercise their discretionary powers of interference with Ministers in respect of their "constitutional activities."

This the Governors refused to do as being contrary to the provisions of the Act and the Instrument of Instructions. The Congress refused to form Cabinets without the assurance demanded, and the Governors called upon leaders of minority groups to form Ministries. These Ministries were short-lived—they could not be otherwise. For one thing, they had hardly any support behind them and for another the majority party soon came to claim their rightful place. The controversy over the conditions on which the Congress agreed to take office was amicably settled, with the result that in six of the eleven provinces "the quondam outlaw assumed the reins of His Majesty's Government." Subsequently, thanks to coalition with other groups, two more provinces, the North-Western Frontier Province and Assam, came under the Congress influence.

Thus after prolonged controversy, Congress Governments were firmly established in eight out of the eleven provinces. As Government, Congress Ministries in various provinces displayed great initiative, sagacity, tact and firmness and earned

well-deserved encomiums from friend and foe alike. "My expectation," said Lord Erskine, Governor of Madras, in a tribute to the Madras Ministry, "has been amply justified under the new regime. It is a regime in which reforms are proceeding at a rapidly accelerating pace and I sincerely hope that nothing will arise to impede the constitutional and social progress of the Madras Presidency."

Thus during the first period of its life, provincial autonomy was a success. Prohibition was introduced. The Congress Ministers tried to reduce the burden of debt on the agricultural population and to reform education and local self-government, and to give aid to the common people in various ways. On the whole, the Congress and the British Indian officials worked together in a friendly spirit. But in 1938, there was a crisis in U.P. and in Bihar, where the Premiers insisted on their right to order the wholesale release of all political prisoners, the Governors (and the Governor-General) objected, and the two Ministries resigned. There was very acute tension, but Lord Linlithgow issued a conciliatory reply and the Premiers withdrew their resignations. Another crisis occurred in Orissa where Mr. (now Sir) J. R. Dain was appointed to act as Governor during the period of leave of the then Governor, Sir John Hubback; it was actually the appointment of a subordinate official to a position of superiority over the Ministry; here also the Congressmen protested very vigorously and Mahatma Gandhi supported the Ministers who had threatened to resign.

Sir John Hubback decided not to go on leave and the crisis passed off.

### Mr. Subhas Bose and the Forward Bloc

The year 1939 was not a favourable year for the Congress, for in that year Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose seceded from the Congress and started the *Forward Bloc* Movement side by side with Congress. The cause of this rift in the Congress was that Mr. Bose, who was re-elected in 1939 to be the Congress President, could not find a workable Cabinet for himself at the annual session of the Congress, at Tripuri. In March 1940, Mr. Bose held an anti-compromise conference at Ramgarh simultaneously with the annual session of the Indian National Congress.

The parliamentary phase, however, proved to be short-lived. Soon after the declaration of war, the Congress withdrew its Ministers in the majority of the provinces. Eventually it gave supreme command of the organisation and its members to Mr. Gandhi who launched another campaign of civil disobedience—this time on the issue that Congressmen should have the right non-violently to preach against India's war effort. Thousands of Congressmen answered the call, writes the Chronicler in the Indian Year Book, 1942-43, uttered anti-war slogans and courted jail. The latest civil disobedience movement is not of the mass type but restricted to individuals, carefully chosen by Mr. Gandhi himself. Even so close upon 25,000 representative Congress leaders took part in the campaign.

Late in the year 1941, the Satyagraha prisoners were released by Government whereupon the movement was suspended.

## FAST OVER THE RAJKOT AFFAIR

We must now go back to an important incident in Mr. Gandhi's life, touching his relation with an Indian State with which his family had been connected for many years past. Rajkot is a small State in Kathiawar in which his father was a Dewan for some time. The agitation among States people for responsible government which swept over so many other States was not slow to reach Rajkot. There was constant hitch in the relations between the young Maharaja and his people. Some said the cause of the trouble lay in the Maharaja's advisers among whom was Durbar' Viravala; others pointed to the British resident overruling the authority of the prince. In this court wrangle the people suffered most and a widespread agitation was afoot. Sardar Vallabhai Patel, on behalf of the Congress, intervened and was guiding the people in their agitation. There was civil disobedience which threatened to take a serious turn. Thereupon the Thakore Saheb of that State entered into an agreement with the Sardar undertaking to set up a reforms inquiry committee with the specific object of devising a scheme "conferring the widest possible powers upon the people consistent with the ruler's treaty rights, obligations to the Parmount Power and prerogatives as a ruling chief." This gave an extraordinary fillip to the people's movements elsewhere.

After the conclusion of this agreement and the withdrawal of the civil disobedience campaign in Rajkót, a hitch occurred in the implementing of the agreement. The story may be told in words of the "Indian Year Book."

Mr Patel contended that by virtue of a letter written to him by the Thakore Saheb on the day of the agreement he had the right to nominate seven members out of the ten to be appointed to the reforms committee. The Thakore Saheb, on the other hand, insisted that Mr. Patel could only recommend names and that it was open to the ruler to reject them, if he thought fit to do so. Mr. Gandhi regarded this as a breach of promise on the part of the Thakore Saheb and went to Rajkot in order to persuade the ruler to give effect to the agreement which, he pointed out, has been embodied in a Gazette notification of the State amounting to a promise from the ruler to his subjects. Negotiations having failed, Mr. Gandhi launched upon a fast unto death in the hope of thereby making the ruler see his error and redeem his promise. Past seventy, Mr. Gandhi, it was feared, might not emerge from the ordeal with his life intact. There was a chorus of demand from every nook and corner of the country that the Paramount Power should intervene and by forcing the Thakore Saheb to redeem his pledge enable Mr. Gandhi to break his fast. The suspicion was also widely held that agents of the Paramount Power stood in the way of the Thakore Saheb implementing his promise. The countrywide demand for immediate intervention by the Paramount Power was reinforced by a hint from the various Congress Provincial Governments that they would resign if the Rajkot tangle was not satisfactorily solved.

Under pressure of these circumstances the Viceroy curtailed his tour of Rajputana, returned to headquarters and after delicate negotiations succeeded in persuading Mr. Gandhi to give up his fast on condition that the point in dispute between him and the Thakore Saheb would be referred to the Chief Justice of India.

Thus to the relief of the whole country and of many friends abroad, Gandhiji broke his fast on

Tuesday, the 7th March, 1939—the fifth day of the fast. Immediately after breaking the fast, Gandhiji gave a message to the country in which he described the dramatic events that led to the termination of the fast and said "Englishmen have co-operated as well as Indians. Politically speaking, it is His Excellency the Viceroy who is responsible for the settlement."

### SUBHAS BOSE AND THE LEFTISTS

Side by side with the growth of Gandhi's influence under the parliamentary regime, there arose a new wave of opposition to his policy and method. The revolt came from a section of the Congressmen themselves who condemned the growing reformist mentality within the Congress and what was described as "attempts to compromise with British Imperialism." A section of Congressmen openly challenged the wisdom of Gandhi's policy and urged a return to the bad old ways of organised fight against the British power. Attempts to pull them up and restrain their questionable activities only resulted in confirming their hostility to Mr. Gandhi's leadership.

Then occurred an unprecedented event in the Congress history. Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose dared to defy Mr. Gandhi and stood for re-election to the presidentship of the Congress. He succeeded, partly through the vote of the leftists, partly through the suspicion (assiduously cultivated by Mr. Bose) that Mr. Gandhi and his colleagues were trying to compromise with the British Government on the issue of Federation, partly because of a growing resentment against the

firmness with which discipline in the ranks of the parliamentary parties in the various provinces was enforced by the Gandhian High Command, partly through the operation of inter-provincial jealousies and partly because of the personal popularity of Mr. Bose as against the fact that his rival for the presidentship—Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was comparatively unknown in Upper India. Mr. Bose's success was hailed as a defeat for Mr. Gandhi and admitted by the latter as such. Mr. Bose could not make good his success in the presidential election, for the same people who voted for him refused to endorse his programme—rather than the absence of it—and within three months dethroned him.*

Nevertheless, the revolt against Gandhi continued, until one fine morning in March, 1941, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose was found missing in his home. It was reported that he had escaped to Japan and was actually helping the Axis propaganda in the East. But to this day, i.e. his disappearance, in spite of police vigilance, continues to be a mystery.

CONGRESS-LEAGUE POWER PROBLEMS

During the years 1938-40, several attempts were made by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress leaders to bring about an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League. The failure of the negotiations embittered all the more the already strained relations between Congressmen and the Muslim Leaguers—we should not say

* The Indian Year Book, 1939-40.

between Hindus and Muhammadans. The Muslim League's charges against Congress Ministries were the subject of continual controversy and rebuttal, but they continued persistently till the Leaguers sprang the surprise demand of Pakistan—or completely autonomous Muslim States under separate sovereignty.

Soon after the Bose-Jinnah talks, in the summer of 1938, Mr. Jinnah spoke of the Congress as "a communal organisation, masquerading in the garb of a national institution" to which Mr. Bose thought fit to reply with some warmth at Chittagong. Every one knew at once that the talks had broken down and unity was as far away as ever. But the unauthorised publication of the correspondence between Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Nehru and the subsequent release of the Gandhi-Jinnah letters made plain how wide apart were the outlooks of the leaders of the Congress and the League. Gandhiji and the Pandit vainly repeated their requests for a precise formulation of the Muslim demands. But Mr. Jinnah did not want to be drawn into any kind of discussion of definite demands. It is obvious that Mr. Jinnah was more anxious to establish the status of the Muslim League *vis-a-vis* the Congress than to embark on a detailed examination of points of differences.

The final break was evident when Mr. Jinnah communicated to the Congress President the decision of the League Council that no further negotiations could be conducted unless the Congress recognised the right of the Muslim League to

speak on behalf of the entire Muslim community of India. To ask the Congress to disown its national character or to claim for the League the right to speak for all Muslims, when there are many Muslims in the Congress roll, is to invite failure. Indeed Gandhiji and Mr. Jinnah approach the problem from two characteristically different standpoints. In one of the letters Gandhiji said

> In your speeches I miss the old nationalist. When in 1915 I returned from my self-imposed exile in South Africa, everybody spoke of you as one of the staunchest of nationalists and the hope of both the Hindus and Muslims. Are you still the same Mr. Jinnah? If you say you are, in spite of your speeches, I shall accept your word.
>
> You want me to come forward with some proposal.
>
> What proposal can I make except to ask you on bended knees to be what I had thought you were?
>
> But the proposal to form a basis of unity between the two communities has surely got to come from you.

And what is Mr. Jinnah's answer?

> You recognise the All-India Muslim League as the one authoritative and representative organisation of Muslims in India, and, on the other hand, you represent the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country. It is only on that basis we can proceed further and devise machinery of approach.

Is it that the time is not ripe yet for a real union?

Undeterred by these failures, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru made yet another attempt in 1941 to make up with Mr. Jinnah, which proved as abortive as ever. Throughout the summer of 1941, Dr. Sapru carried on an incessant correspondence with Mr. Jinnah to arrive at a formula of reconciliation. But to no purpose.

Throughout the correspondence, Mr. Jinnah, lawyer-like, took meticulous care to refer to Gandhiji as a Hindu leader. In his letter, dated 10th February, he said with apparent suavity: "I have always been ready and willing to see *Mr. Gandhi or any other Hindu leader on behalf of the Hindu community.*" It was obvious that there could not be any meeting-ground between Mr. Jinnah who deems himself as an unchallenged head of the Muslims, and Gandhiji and the Congress whose right to represent any but Hindu interests Mr. Jinnah would not recognise. Gandhiji is, of course, too shrewd a politician to be caught in the trap and he warned Dr. Sapru against the obvious futility of the attempt. On February 16, he wrote to Dr. Sapru:

> Mr Jinnah's letter confirms my fear. He would see me if I go "on behalf of the Hindu community". This I cannot do. I do not represent the Hindu community. I am not even a member of the Hindu Mahasabha.
>
> But you may not now get out of the situation. You must not mind my warnings. I suggest your writing to Mr. Jinnah that his position is unsound, if you agree with me.

## CONGRESS AND THE WAR

Soon after the declaration of war on 3rd September 1939, Mr. Gandhi made a public statement in his individual capacity, after an interview with H. E. Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy. Therein he revealed that he had told His Excellency that his sympathies were with England and France from the purely humanitarian standpoint and that he could not contemplate the destruction of London and the Westminster Abbey. This first instinct of his was shared by all

his countrymen. "I am not just now thinking of India's deliverance", he said, "it will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall?" The statement created quite a favourable impression in England as in India but the Congress Working Committee, which met soon after, chose to make India's support to Britain in war conditional on a declaration by Britain that the latter's policy towards this country involved the recognition of Indian independence.

The Working Committee

has a deep-rooted quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression.

The Working Committee looked forward to a victory of real democracy for all the people of all countries and a world free from the nightmare of violence and Imperialist oppression. Mahatmaji later appealed

to English statesmen that they will forget the old language of Imperialists and open a new chapter for those who have been held under Imperial bondage.

The All-India Congress Committee (at Wardha) passed a resolution, which stated, *inter alia*:

The Congress has been guided throughout by its objective of achieving the independence of the Indian people and the establishment of a free democratic State in India in which the rights and interests of all minorities are preserved and safeguarded.

It was further added that the Congress had always looked upon war and violence with horror and as opposed to progress and civilization, and had declared itself opposed to all Imperialist wars and to the domination of one country over another. It was, therefore, according to the Committee,

regrettable that India had been declared a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people and

various far-reaching measures have been hurried through the legislatures.

The A.-I.C.C. again invited (as the Working Committee had already done in September, 1939), the British Government to state their war aims and peace aims and demanded that

India must be declared an independent nation and at present application must be given to this status to the largest possible extent. The Committee desires to be declared afresh, that Indian freedom must be based on democracy and unity and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities to which the Congress has always pledged itself.

The Viceroy, who had early in October held consultations with 52 persons (leaders of political opinion in British India and representatives of the Princely order), issued a lengthy statement in the course of which he repeated the words of the Prime Minister of England declaring the general aims of the British Government to be:

laying the foundation of a better international system which will mean that war is not to be the inevitable lot of each succeeding generation. . . . .

Lord Linlithgow further quoted the Secretary of State's statement made on the 6th February, 1935; the natural issue of India's progress. . . . .is the attainment of Dominion Status.

Mahatma Gandhi described this statement as profoundly disappointing, the Working Committee declared that it could not possibly give any support to Great Britain and called upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations. The Congress Ministers accordingly resigned in the first week of November and the Constitution was suspended in those provinces. The Governors concerned assumed the whole

Governmental power. The Viceroy made repeated attempts during 1940 to reach a political understanding, but the negotiations failed.

Mahatma Gandhi issued a statement in the course of which he again expressed the hope that the British should accept the position that the time had come when India must be allowed to determine her own constitution and status. With regard to the questions of defence, minorities, Princes, and European interests, he firmly maintained that if only India's claim was recognized those issues would be automatically solved.

Congress demand for *Poorna Swarajya* or complete independence naturally lent itself to a number of interpretations. Mr. Polak elicited from Mahatma Gandhi a definite and authoritative pronouncement on the subject. Asked to define in precise language what exactly he meant by the term—that is to say, also what the Congress meant by it, Gandhiji answered:

> So far as I am concerned, if Dominion Status were offered in terms of the Statute of Westminster, *i.e.*, the right to secede at will, I would unhesitatingly accept it.

At the annual session of the Congress at Ramgarh (April 1940), it was declared that

> nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. . . . . and that no permanent solution is possible except through a Constituent Assembly. India's constitution must be based on independence, democracy and national unity. . . The Congress seeks to represent and serve all classes and communities without distinction of race or religion, and the struggle for Indian independence is for the freedom of the whole nation. Hence the Congress cherishes the hope that all classes and communities will take part in it. The civil disobedience is to evoke the spirit of sacrifice in the whole nation.

The Ramgarh Congress resolution held the field for the moment; the various Congress organizations, now termed Satyagraha Committees, made all preparations for civil disobedience. Batches of *Satyagrahis* were daily sent out shouting anti-war slogans and courted arrest and imprisonment. Some of the most popular politicians in the country, *including Pandit Nehru, were now in jail.*

Throughout 1941, the Congress appears to have been inactive and passive rather than assertive. The Civil Disobedience launched in 1940 had died out. Some of the leaders had no doubt offered Satyagraha after their release from the jail, but the Government did not take any action against them. On 21st July, 1941, the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the formation of a National Defence Council for India were announced. The object of the move was ostensibly to secure wider participation by Indian leaders in the administration of the Central Government and in India's war efforts. Mahatma Gandhi or the Congress did not find anything hopeful in these measures as it is always possible to pack the Council with "yes" men. "The announcement", the Mahatma said, "does not affect the stand taken by the Congress, nor does it meet the Congress demands." The Congress Working Committee, which concluded its session at Bardoli on 30th December, 1941, passed a resolution relieving Mahatma Gandhi of his leadership of the Congress. The main reason why the Working Committee acceded to the Mahatma's desire for being relieved of Congress

leadership was a fundamental difference over the interpretation of non-violence, which, according to the Mahatma, was as much applicable to the struggle between the Indian people and the present Government of India as to wars between nations. Congress position and attitude towards the war was clarified in the following resolution passed at the Bardoli session:

Whereas there has been no change in the British policy towards India, the Working Committee must, nevertheless, take into consideration the new world situation that has arisen by the development of the war into a world conflict and its approaches to India.

The sympathies of India must inevitably lie with the peoples who are the subjects of aggression and who are fighting for their freedom, but only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in furtherance of the larger causes that are emerging from the storm of the war.

The whole background in India is one of hostility and distrust of the British Government, and not even the most far-reaching promises can alter this background, nor can a subject India offer voluntary or willing help to arrogant imperialism which is undistinguishable from Fascist authoritarianism. The Committee, therefore, is of the opinion that the resolution of the A.I.C.C. passed in Bombay on December 16, 1940, holds good today and defines the Congress policy still

## BIOGRAPHY MERGING IN HISTORY

This might appear to be digression: but Gandhi touches the life of the nation at so many points and so effectively too that it is difficult to draw the line precisely where biography ends and history begins. The fortunes of the country are so inextricably bound up with the exploits, thoughts and purposes of the leader, who has had so marked a share in them. For over quarter of a century Gandhi has been the Congress, if not the whole country, and the Congress Gandhi.

How then can one tell the story of his works and days without reference, and ample reference to the course of events over whose unrolling he presided and out of which he made history? These very words are reminiscent of Morley's Introduction to the Life of Gladstone—the myriad-minded English statesman who filled so large a space of the Victorian era. We are confronted with a similar and even more baffling personality in what may be fittingly called the Gandhian era. To adapt the words of Morley on Gladstone, "it is true that what interests the world in Gandhi is even more what he was, than what he did, his brilliancy, charm and power, the endless surprises, his dualism or more than dualism; his vicissitudes of opinion, his subtleties of mental progress; his strange union of qualities never elsewhere found together; his striking unlikeness to other men. . . ."

REACTION TO SOVIET AND JAP ENTRY INTO WAR

India's attitude to the war was profoundly influenced by two great events—Germany's declaration of war against Soviet Russia and Japan's declaration of war on Britain and the Empire. The first stimulated the anti-axis forces in the country to a great extent owing to Labour's natural sympathy with the Soviet and the latter brought the war nearer home as Japanese incursions in the Bay and their capture of Singapore and Burma imparted a sense of reality to Indian political thought.

In July, 1939, he had addressed an open letter to Hitler appealing to him to desist from

plunging Europe in a bath of blood. It was ignored. When the war broke out, Gandhiji printed that letter in his paper *Harijan* and added the following note:

> How I wished that even now he would listen to reason and the appeal from almost the whole thinking mankind, not excluding the German people themselves. I must refuse to believe that Germans contemplate with equanimity the evacuation of big cities like London for fear of destruction to be wrought by man's inhuman ingenuity. They cannot contemplate with equanimity such destruction of themselves and their own monuments. I am not therefore just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come but what will it be worth if England and France fail or if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?

The war could no more be treated as a theoretical problem in the ethics of violence or non-violence. Throughout the months following June, 1941, says a chronicler in the *Nalanda Year Book*, there were numerous and widespread demonstrations of sympathy for Russia and China; and the conviction among the rank and file of labour organisations and the communists had grown stronger that for the good of the world and of India, Hitler and the Axis powers must be defeated. Even important persons belonging to the Congress High Command seemed to favour Congress acceptance of office for furtherance of India's war efforts. With Japan's declaration of war on Britain and U.S.A. on 7th December 1941, the war came to the very door of India. By the middle of the month Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajaji expressed readiness to co-operate with the Government on the basis of the Poona offer, *viz.*, "that co-operation by a free India under a

responsible National Government" was now more urgent than ever. Their ardent sympathy with Russia and China and the nearness of war to Indian soil made co-operation with Britain more acceptable. The Congress President's qualified non-violence was well known and for the time, the Working Committee seemed to accept the view that the cult of non-violence as conceived by the Mahatma was not applicable when the mighty violence of the enemy was knocking at the door of India. At this stage, as has already been noted, the Mahatma was relieved of his leadership of the Congress and an inconvenient situation was avoided. For several weeks after Japan's declaration of war, India's leaders seemed to be in a state of contemplation and in a stock-taking mood when the announcement about the forthcoming visit of Sir Stafford Cripps to India gave a temporary relief to this sustained state of contemplation and questioning.

The Congress attitude towards the war appears to have been "elastic rather than consistent." In 1940 the Congress Working Committee meeting at Delhi and the A.I.C.C. meeting at Poona made the declaration of India's independence and the creation of a National Government as conditions which would enable the Congress to accept office and co-operate in War Efforts. The same year the A.I.C.C. meeting at Bombay declared the resolution on office acceptance as rescinded. When Sir Stafford came, the Congress showed preparedness to fight in self-defence but refused Cripps' offer on the question of ultimate control of Defence. But on May 1, 1942, the A.I.C.C. called on the people to have recourse to non-violent non-co-operation against the enemy.

Throughout these inconsistencies Gandhiji, it must be admitted, had persistently adhered to his creed of non-violence.

## A NEW PROGRAMME

The barren policy of the Congress, getting into jail and coming out, without achieving much, was disturbing the tranquillity of thoughtful Congressmen in prison. Some of them began to doubt the wisdom of such inaction, going by the name of Satyagraha, especially at a time of war, when the enemy was knocking at our very gates. The restlessness of the public coupled with the feeling that all was not done that could be done for war work, and the insistent demands of non-Congressmen led the Government to release the prisoners towards the end of 1941. Ever since then there had been a distinct cleavage in the Congress, some prominent members of the Working Committee pleading for a more practical political programme, while others, more faithful to Gandhi, swearing by his creed. The revolt, if it might be said so, was openly sponsored by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, Ex-Premier of Madras, whose authority in Congress circles was second only to that of Gandhi himself. Long before the meeting of the Working Committee Mr. Rajagopalachari, as the spearhead of this drive for a new orientation of Congress policy, had declared in unquivocal terms, a definite departure from orthodox Gandhism in Congress politics. The party led by him realised the danger of allowing the fissiparous tendencies to develop in the face of actual danger to the country. Negatively put, it did not rule out Congress help in the defence of India; nay it approached the question with a wholehearted

willingness to co-operate in war effort. It knew that there were divisions in the country, some communities, even as some individuals, trying to exploit the situation to their advantage. The efforts of Subhas Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Babu, the Congress President, and even Mr. Gandhi himself to come to terms with Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League had failed. They had had any number of interviews and conferences with the leader of the Muslim League, but all to no purpose as Mr. Jinnah was shifting his ground and only insisting on an undefined Pakistan. All this Mr. Rajagopalachari and his group knew. Still they held that the urgency for solving the deadlock was so great that anything could be sacrificed for common effort in the defence of the country. There were differences in fundamentals—even that did not matter, so long as a national government could be established during the period of the war. That was the main inspiration of the new move. This group of leaders, as a commentator observed,*

> were not obsessed by doctrinaire notions of non-violence, and they were determined to tackle current problems, both internal and international, in a realistic manner. On the moral plane, they were prepared to make inevitable, temporary compromises with violence in order ultimately to serve the interests of non-violence and establish a world peace order. From a political point of view, they were convinced that India and the Congress should not stand aloof from measures calculated to win the war, or to put it at its lowest, to save India from threats of aggression which were daily growing. If only as a matter of expediency, they were prepared to settle with the British Government on the basis of co-operation in the war effort. If the object of a political game were

* Indian Year Book 1942-43.

to secure political power, it was argued, then it must be apparent to any one that the only means of securing political power for Indians from the British was by negotiation, and agreement, an armed clash being ruled out both on grounds of non-violence and as being impracticable. When Great Britain was engaged in a life and death struggle, no move for a settlement, it was felt, was possible except on the basis of full co-operation in the war effort. Such co-operation, even if it was undertaken as an unavoidable compromise with violence, would, it was felt, lift the Congress to a high pedestal and facilitate a settlement on most of the difficult issues which challenged Indian leadership The Indian political situation was analysed as being nearly impossible, defying solution. Statesmanship demanded that a way must be found out of the surrounding gloom. The alternative to consultation and settlement was to continue in a helpless and uncertain state and to pursue a policy of waiting on events. Those who thought on these lines also seemed to fear that failure to take early steps towards an agreed settlement might have serious consequences, both then and at the end of war. It was feared that it might leave the country in a hopeless condition, stopped from claiming a share in the benefits of a post-war world by refusal to contribute to it, too disorganised to put up a solid front against anything, too weak to even pick up the threads of political agitation where it was snapped in 1939 In addition to the consideration that reassumption of political power would enable India to occupy a position of vantage in political and constitutional bargaining with Britain when the time came, it was felt by this school of thought that actual exercise of political power would lift the communal question to a practical level and enable fruitful discussions capable of yielding results more quickly than theoretical talk and long-range sniping.

Mr. Rajagopalachari actually spoke on one occasion of a parting of the ways between Mr. Gandhi and himself on the issue of applying non-violence to immediate affairs of administration and the conduct of the war. Although Mr. Rajagopalachari was one of the few who spoke out their minds, it was apparent that a number of Congressmen shared his views.

## MARSHAL CHIANG'S APPEAL

Meanwhile Japanese aggression in the East had taken a menacing turn. Her initial gains in Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies and Burma should have impelled the British authorities to consider if something more could not be done to promote co-ordinated endeavour to meet the enemy effectively and at the same time engendered a more realistic approach on the part of Indian leaders to the defence of their country. Congress leaders and others had more than once expressed their desire that at this critical juncture the allied powers—China, Russia and the United States of America—should bring their influence to bear on the British authorities to resolve the deadlock. As if in answer to this wish and probably with the idea of securing the Government of India's active co-operation with China's efforts against the common enemy, Marshal and Madame Chiang Kai Shek visited this country early in 1942. Unlike so many official visitors, the Generalissimo and his wife were not content with meeting the head of the State and the members of Government. They made it a point to come in close contact with the leaders of public opinion in India. Already they had known and valued the friendship and appreciation of Pandit Jawaharlal towards China and her efforts. They now had an opportunity to meet other Indian leaders—notably Mr. Gandhi, whose pronounced pacifism was no bar to his deep sympathy with the Chinese people in their efforts to defend their country against

Japanese aggression. The Chinese leader made a remarkable appeal to Britain and to India in this supreme crisis in their history:

Since my arrival in this country, I have found to my great satisfaction that there exists among the people of India unanimous determination to oppose aggression.

China and India comprise one-half of the world's population. Their common frontier extends to three thousand kilometres In the two thousand years' history of their intercourse, which has been a purely cultural and commercial character, there has never been an armed conflict. Indeed nowhere else can one find so long a period of uninterrupted peace between two neighbouring countries. This is irrefutable proof that our two peoples are peace-loving by nature Today they have not only identical interests but also the same destiny. For this reason they are in duty bound to side with the anti-aggression countries and fight shoulder to shoulder in order to secure real peace for the whole world.

I venture to suggest to my brothren, the people of India, that at this most critical moment in the history of civilization our two peoples should exert themselves to the utmost in the cause of freedom for all mankind, for only in a free world could the Chinese and the Indian peoples obtain their freedom. Furthermore, should freedom be denied to either China or India, there could be no real peace in the world.

I sincerely hope and I confidently believe that our Ally, Great Britain, without waiting for any demands on the part of the people of India will as speedily as possible give them real political power so that they may be in a position further to develop their spiritual and material strength and thus realise that their participation in the war is not merely an aid to the anti-aggression nations for securing victory, but also a turning point in their struggle for India's freedom. From an objective point of view, I am of the opinion that this would be the wisest policy which will rebound to the credit of the British Empire.

## THE CRIPPS MISSION

For almost as if in response to this appeal and within three weeks of Marshal Chiang's visit India, the Prime Minister, Mr. Winston

Churchill, made a statement in Parliament announcing that Sir Stafford Cripps, the Socialist leader, who had recently returned to England from his diplomatic successes in Moscow and was made Lord Privy Seal in the reconstituted War Cabinet, would go to India immediately on a special mission. Sir Stafford's credentials were on the whole satisfactory, from the standpoint of the Indian public. For apart from his success in Russia, his pronounced left wing leanings and his friendship with politicians of advanced views like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in India were altogether in his favour. Said Mr. Churchill:

The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance has made Britain wish to rally all the forces of India to guard their land from the menace of the invader In August 1940 a statement was made about the aims and policy which we are pursuing in India This amounted in short, to a promise, that as soon as possible after the war India should attain Dominion Status in full freedom and equality with this country and other Dominions, under a constitution to be framed by Indians, by agreement amongst themselves, and acceptable to the main elements in the Indian national life.

This was, of course, subject to the fulfilment of our obligations for the protection of minorities, including the depressed classes and our Treaty obligations to the Indian States and to a settlement of certain lesser matters arising out of our long association with the fortunes of Indian sub-continent

However, in order to clothe these general declarations with precision and to convince all classes, races and creeds in India of our sincere resolve, the War Cabinet have agreed unitedly upon conclusions for the present and future action which, if accepted by India as a whole, would avoid alternative dangers, either that the resistance of a powerful minority might impose an indefinite veto upon the wishes of the majority or that a majority decision might be taken which would be resisted to a point destructive of internal harmony and fatal to the setting up of a new constitution.

We had thought of setting forth immediately the terms of attempt by a constructive contribution to aid India in the realisation of full Self-Government. We are, however, apprehensive that to make a full public announcement at such a moment as this might do more harm than good. We must first assure ourselves that our scheme would win a reasonable and practical measure of acceptance and thus promote concentration of all thoughts and energies upon the defence of the native soil.

We should ill-serve the common cause if we made a declaration which would be rejected by the essential elements of the Indian world and which would provoke fierce constitutional communal disputes at a moment when the enemy is at the gate of India.

Accordingly we propose to send a member of the War Cabinet to India to satisfy himself on the spot by personal consultation upon which we are agreed and which we believe represent a just and final solution, will achieve their purpose.

The Lord Privy Seal and the Leader of the House, Sir Stafford Cripps, has volunteered to undertake this task. He carries with him the full confidence of His Majesty's Government and he will strive in their name to procure the necessary measure of assent, not only from the Hindu majority, but also from those great minorities amongst which the Muslims are most numerous and on many grounds prominent.

Sir Stafford Cripps accordingly arrived in New Delhi on March 23, 1942. He brought with him the conclusions of the Cabinet for discussion with Indian leaders. Addressing the Press Conference the same day, he said:

I have come to India to discuss with the leaders of Indian opinion the conclusions which the War Cabinet have unitedly reached in regard to India. I am here to ascertain whether these conclusions will, as we hope, be generally acceptable to Indian opinion. Their chief object is to set out finally and with precision the practical steps which His Majesty's Government propose as the method of fulfilling their past promises of Self-Government to the Indian peoples.

The draft proposals, which were released to the press on the 30th March, envisaged the

creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute "a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs."

THE DRAFT PROPOSALS

The text of the draft reads as follows:

His Majesty's Government having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfilment of promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs.

THE DECLARATION

His Majesty's Government, therefore, make the following declaration:

(*a*) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up, in India, in manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

(*b*) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for participation of Indian States in the constitution-making body.

(*c*) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to

(i) the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides;

with such non-acceding provinces, should they desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down;

(ii) the signing of a treaty, which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands, it will make provision, in accordance with undertakings given by His Majesty's government for the protection of racial and religious minorities, but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member states of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation.

CONSTITUTION-MAKING BODY

(*d*) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities;

Immediately upon the result being known of provincial elections, which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of Provincial Legislatures shall as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about 1-10th of the number of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British Indian members.

(*e*) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of *India must be the responsibility* of the Government of India with the co-operation of the people of India.

His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active

and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

In a statement accompanying the document, Sir Stafford called attention to the seriousness and importance of the proposals on the issue of which "the future, happiness and the freedom of 350 million people may well depend."

He then answered and elucidated a barrage of questions on the draft declaration. He made it clear that the status envisaged for the new Indian Union included the right of secession. This was explicitly laid down in the words that the treaty

"will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member States of the British Commonwealth."

He declared:

The Indian Union will be absolutely free to decide its future relations with other member States of the Commonwealth, one of which is Great Britain. It will be completely free either to remain within or go without the Commonwealth.

He explained the term "cessation of hostilities" as distinguished from "termination of the war". The idea was that the constitution-making body should be set up as early as practicable.

He declined to say anything specific about the last paragraph of the document dealing with immediate arrangements envisaged in the Government of India Executive, but said:

The intention of this paragraph is to indicate to the Governor-General, who is responsible for the formation of the Government of India, the broad lines upon which in accordance with the scheme that Government may be formed. All the details of the formation of the Government are for the Governor-General to decide and we have not

attempted and should not attempt to take that responsibility out of his hands.

Nothing was obligatory on the Governor-General but he could Indianise the Executive Council. The general direction was laid down in the paragraph. The object, he said, was to give the fullest measure of government to the Indian people at the present time consistent with the possibilities of the present constitution which could not be changed till the end of the war.

The intention of the document, as far as possible, subject to the reservation of defence, is to put power in the hands of Indian leaders.

Sir Stafford added:

So far as the Governor-General could, within the sections of the existing constitution, he would attempt to form his Executive Council with a body of Indian leaders who could give leadership to the country and could help to direct the counsels of the country in the Executive Council, of the Commonwealth in the War Cabinet and of the United Nations in the Pacific War Council.

Sir Stafford made it clear that "the scheme goes through as a whole or is rejected as a whole." It would not be possible to retain only the part relating to the immediate arrangements at the Centre and discard the rest of the draft scheme.

"The defence of India will not be in Indian hands, even if all the parties want it," he declared, in reply to a series of questions.

It would be the worst thing for the defence of India; it would disorganise the whole defence arrangements and such disorganisation would be fatal.

Steps would be taken, he said, immediately upon cessation of hostilities to set up in India an elected body for framing a new constitution.

The British Government undertook to implement the constitution so framed forthwith, subject only "to the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so desires."

Sir Stafford took the opportunity to have prolonged discussions with many leaders—particularly leaders of the Congress who, he thought, counted most. The Congress President and Pandit Jawaharlal were in constant touch with Sir Stafford, both personally and through correspondence, Mahatma Gandhi, whose views on non-violence were nothing new—was specially invited to Delhi, but his interview was brief. For in a sense he had left the decision with the Working Committee which was certainly competent to deal with the issue, irrespective of his own personal predilections in favour of non-violence. The immediate reactions were characteristic.

## REACTIONS TO THE CRIPPS PROPOSALS

Mr. Gandhi described the offer as "a post-dated cheque", the Hindu Mahasabha condemned it as contemplating the "balkanisation of India": the Liberal leaders protested against the proposed splitting up of the country as a "travesty of self-determination". Congress leaders themselves were critical of the provision regarding the right of provinces to secede but laid more emphasis on the provision for the immediate transfer of

power in Indian hands. Pandit Nehru said for example:

> This emotional conception of the unity of India is something which I am not going to give up it is something for which I am going to fight if the new idea means disruption of India I do not know what the future will bring, but in the present I will not, so far as I can, permit or encourage a wrong conception in the people's mind This country, with its mountain fastnesses and southern seas, is one country. It is going to be one in freedom, as it has been one in subjection and the Indian States' people must play a big part in that united India

CONGRESS W. C. RESOLUTION

After a week's discussion at Wardha, the Congress Working Committee released a 1,700-word resolution on the present political situation on July 14:

The resolution gave a brief *resume* of the stand the Congress had hitherto taken. It urged the withdrawal of the British power from India, pointing out that the Congress wished to take no hasty step and would like to avoid so far as possible any course of action that might embarrass the United Nations and pleading to the British Government to accept the Congress proposal. If the appeal failed, the Congress would then be reluctantly compelled to utilise all its non-violent strength for the vindication of the political rights and liberty of India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

On the withdrawal of British rule from India, responsible men and women of the country would come together to form a Provisional Government representative of all important sections of the people of India, which would

later evolve a scheme whereby a Constituent Assembly could be convened in order to prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people.

As the issues raised were most vital and of a far-reaching importance, the matter was referred to the All-India Congress Committee for final decision. The A.-I.C.C. was to meet in Bombay on August 7. The long-winded dissertation, though couched in courteous terms, could not hide the fact that it was a virtual ultimatum without a time-limit. In the event of non-compliance, there was definite threat of mass action. The logic of this demand for withdrawal at this grave crisis when the enemy was at our gates was certainly mystifying. No wonder that responsible bodies and individuals were alarmed at the dismal prospect that faced the country—threat of disorder within and aggression from without.

Congress spokesmen contended that only an independent India would give the necessary stimulus for patriotic action on a nation-wide scale. Gandhiji made it clear that what was wanted was immediate action, not promises. Pandit Nehru explained that it was the only way to inspire the people to confront the Japanese menace, while the Congress President said that it had become quite impossible for Congress to wait and watch passively. Indeed, without subscribing to the "quit India" programme, leaders of other parties equally realised the inadequacy of the

steps taken by Government to call forth the spirit of resistance in the fullest measure.

While it was deplorable to see that Government was still persisting in its old ways, learning nothing and forgetting nothing from the lessons of the war, Gandhiji's own contribution was by no means calculated to solve the deadlock. His "quit India" slogan at such a time preached week after week, through the columns of his widely circulated *Harijan* with a force and persistence all his own, was positively embarrassing and was bound to impede war efforts and to create further dissension in our ranks. It would only make confusion worse confounded. For the courteous appeal to Britain to withdraw was followed by a warning conveyed though in the mildest terms possible. "If the appeal fails," said the resolution,

> Congress will be reluctantly compelled to utilise all its non-violent strength for the vindication of the political rights and liberty of India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

That is to say, in simple words, Gandhiji would declare civil disobedience and the country would be plunged in an endless struggle. The consequences of such an action at a time like this were difficult to contemplate with equanimity. Leaders of other parties and public men were quick to warn the country of the consequences of Gandhi's fateful decision and were piously hoping that the deadlock would be resolved in ways more consonant to reason and with a sense of realism in assessing the situation that confronted the country. However, on the

immediate question of the Cripps proposals, Congress decision was echoed by other bodies like the Muslim League, the Mahasabha and the Liberal Federation, for varying reasons. Whatever the reasons, the scheme stood condemned by everybody who counted in the counsels of the country.

GANDHIJI'S WARNING TO JAPAN

In this connection we must in fairness to Gandhi draw attention to his public and unequivocal warning to Japan. The Congress, not to speak of other political organisations, had time and again reaffirmed its hostility to Axis ambitions. And yet it was common knowledge that Hitler and Mussolini and Tojo were carrying on a dishonest campaign making it appear that India would welcome their advent to this country. Mahatma Gandhi, therefore, did well to warn them against any such misleading ideas, and his clear rebuff was a timely warning. Our differences with Britain are a purely domestic affair, and it is fitting and proper that Mahatma Gandhi should make this clear in his letter "To Every Japanese":

> You have been gravely misinformed, as I know you are, that we have chosen this particular moment to embarrass the Allies when your attack against India is imminent. If we wanted to turn Britain's difficulty into our opportunity, we should have done it as soon as the war broke out nearly three years ago.
>
> Our movement demanding the withdrawal of the British power from India should in no way be misunderstood. In fact, if we are to believe your reported anxiety for the independence of India, a recognition of that independence by Britain should leave you no excuse for any attack on India. Moreover, your reported profession sorts ill with your ruthless aggression against China.

I would ask you to make no mistake about the fact that you will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that you will receive a willing welcome from India.

## THE FAILURE OF THE CRIPPS TALKS

Two important events followed the failure of the Cripps' talks, both of great weight and significance in subsequent history—one, the withdrawal of the offer by His Majesty's government and the other the resignation from Congress of Mr. Rajagopalachari and his henchmen. The withdrawal which was obviously done in a huff was soon modified on second thoughts. Mr. Rajagopalachari carried the campaign for resolving the deadlock against mighty forces ranged against him, with an energy and persistence that were the envy of many younger men. He carried on a campaign for making up with Jinnah and the League if only to present a united demand for a national government for the period of the war. But his efforts failed when the question came up before the A.-I.C.C. meeting which rejected his proposal and stood by Gandhi.

The sudden termination of the Cripps-Congress negotiations in resolving the deadlock and the British Government's withdrawal of the offer caused deep regret and disappointment, not only in India but in England, America and China as well. The reason for the breakdown was subsequently made clear in a series of public documents, including Sir Stafford Cripps' letters and broadcast, the Congress and League resolutions, Maulana Azad's letter and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's Press Conference.

The essential features of the offer were:

1. After the war, India to have full Dominion Status, with the right to secede,

2. Individual recognition of the right of self-determination for every province in British Indian and for every Indian State;

3. Provision for the formation of one or more Indian Unions;

4. Details of the constitution-making body for the proposed Union or Unions

(*Note.*—The foregoing pertain strictly to the post-war part of the offer),

5. For the duration of the war, the defence of India to remain as sole responsibility of His Majesty's Government;

6. Complete Indianisation of the Viceroy's Executive Council, excepting that the Defence Portfolio will continue to be held by the Commander-in-Chief

No Indian could contemplate with equanimity the vivisection of India into three or more Unions. And yet the negotiations did not break down on the post-war arrangement. The tragedy of it was that the talks broke down on the interim arrangement and the question of defence, on which India no less than England is keen. This was made clear by Mr. Louis Fischer, the well-known American correspondent (who was in India at the time of the negotiations) in a series of brilliant articles in the *Nation* of New York.

The essential background for this was to make it a people's defence by mobilising millions, trusting them, making them feel that India was free and that they were fighting for freedom. The British outlook was entirely different, deplored Pandit Nehru, who took a leading part in the Cripps-Congress negotiations.

It was distrustful and afraid of the Indian people and opposed to the growth of a citizen army and of handing over essential power to the people's representatives. The lessons of Malaya and Burma were entirely lost and some inefficient reactionary governmental machinery was functioning isolated from the people.

Efficient defence is only possible by the closest co-operation between the State apparatus and the masses, which can take place only if the State is under popular control. Hence our desire for a real National Popular Government controlling Defence but leaving full authority to the Commander-in-Chief for all war purposes.

## VICEROY'S COUNCIL EXPANSION

In August (1942) Government tried to meet the situation with a merely expanded Council, which could by no stretch of imagination be a substitute for a national government, which the country demanded. For the second time since the outbreak of the war, the Viceroy's Executive Council was expanded and reconstituted by the addition of six new members, *viz.*, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar (who resigned after a fortnight), Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Sir E. C. Benthall, Sir Jogendra Singh, Sir J. P. Srivastava and Khan Bahadur Sir Mohammad Usman. Though on personal grounds some of the appointments were undoubtedly commendable, there could be no pretence that the new Council could in any sense be called a National Government. That demand remained as far from fulfilment as ever. Political power remains where it has always been. The so-called Defence Portfolio is bereft of most of the functions that go with that office in other countries. No wonder there was little enthusiasm for the step taken by Government after all this delay, and no party worth the name was

satisfied with the way this important question had been handled. As pointed out by Sir Bijoy Prasad Singh Roy, President of the Liberal Federation, the repeated demands for complete Indianisation and for making the Executive Council a completely non-official body functioning on the basis of Cabinet responsibility was ignored. The present expanded Executive Council was, therefore, no substitute for a National Government without which a National War Front could hardly be effectively created. Apart from Indianisation or expansion, the only test of the adequacy of any new proposal is whether it would, in substance and effect, transfer the reality of power into Indian hands. No one could pretend that the new Council does this. In so far as it has failed to do so, it has failed in its immediate task of solving the deadlock and creating the atmosphere for a united and enthusiastic war front. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru made an unanswerable point when he said that the control of the Secretary of State over the Executive Council has in no way been relaxed and that "it is no use looking up to the Viceroy under the existing circumstances as even a benevolent dictator."

GANDHI AT THE A.-I.C.C. MEETING

It will be recalled that the resolution adopted by the Working Committee of the Congress, which met at Wardha on July 14, 1942, deferred decision on the action to be taken by the Congress, "should the appeal fail" to evoke adequate response from the

Government. The Wardha resolution concluded with the words:

As the issues raised are of the most vital and far-reaching importance to the people of India as well as to the peoples of the United Nations, the Working Committee refer them to the All-India Congress Committee for final decision. For this purpose, the A.-I.C.C. will meet in Bombay on the 7th of August, 1942.

The A.-I.C.C. meeting was, therefore, looked forward to with more than usual interest. Both the Government and the public alike were waiting to know the lead which the A.-I.C.C. would give on the issue.

The Working Committee met at Bombay in the first week of August, prior to the meeting of the A.-I.C.C. on the 7th. Gandhiji was there guiding the members in framing the fateful resolution to be placed before the full session of the A.-I.C.C. After prolonged discussions, day after day, the Working Committee adopted the following resolution, which was released to the Press on the eve of the A.-I.C.C. Meeting.

TEXT OF THE BOMBAY A.-I.C.C. RESOLUTION

The All-India Congress Committee has given the most careful consideration to the reference made to it by the Working Committee in their resolution, dated July 14, 1942, and to subsequent events, including the development of the war situation, the utterances of responsible spokesmen of the British Government, and the comments and criticisms made in India and abroad. The Committee approves of and endorses that resolution and is of opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification and have made it clear that the immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India, and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom.

The Committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration of the situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts and conveys to the Russian and Chinese people its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom

INDIAN FREEDOM A VITAL ISSUE

This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathise with the victims of aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failure It is not by adhering to such aims and policies and methods that failure can be converted into success, for past experience has shown that failure is inherent in them. These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and colonial countries, and the continuation of the imperialist tradition and method. The possession of empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power, has become a burden and a curse India, the classic land of modern imperialism, has become the crux of the question; for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm. The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A Free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources into the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not only affect materially the fortunes of the war, but will bring all subjects and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations and give these nations, whose ally India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of British imperialism and the taint of that imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations.

The peril of today, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination. No future promises of guarantees can affect the present situation or meet that peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses Only the glow of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the war.

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

The A.-I.C.C., therefore, repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India. On the declaration of India's independence, a

Provisional Government will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom. The Provisional Government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite Government, representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command together with its Allied powers, and to promote the well-being and progress of all the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially all power and authority must belong.

The Provisional Government will evolve a scheme for a Constituent Assembly, which will prepare a constitution for the government of India acceptable to all sections of the people. This constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a Federal one, with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in these units. The future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for the co operation in the common task of resisting aggression. Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it

The freedom of India must be the symbol of, and prelude to, this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch Indies, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any other colonial power.

### WORLD FEDERATION

While the A.-I.C.C. must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a World Federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a World Federation would ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all backward areas and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. On the establishment of such a

World Federation, disarmament would be practicable in all countries, national armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary, and a world federal defence force would keep the world peace and prevent aggression.

An independent India would gladly join such a World Federation and co-operate on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems.

Such a federation should be open to all nations who agree with its fundamental principles. In view of the war, however, the federation must inevitably, to begin with, be confined to the United Nations. Such a step taken now will have a most powerful effect on the war, on the peoples of the Axis countries, and on the peace to come.

### NO DESIRE TO EMBARRASS ALLIES

The Committee regretfully realises, however, that *despite the tragic and overwhelming lessons of the* war and the perils that overhang the world, the Governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step towards World Federation. The reactions of the British Government and the misguided criticisms of the foreign press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted, though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and to enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need. The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of China or Russia, whose freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the United Nations. But the peril grows both to India and these nations, and inaction and submission to a foreign administration at this stage is not only degrading India and reducing her capacity to defend herself and resist aggression, but is no answer to that growing peril and is no services to the peoples of the United Nations.

### APPEAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response, and the criticisms made in many foreign quarters have shown an ignorance of India's and the world's need, and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom, which is significant of a mentality of domination and racial superiority which cannot be tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause.

The A.-I.C.C. would yet again, at this last moment, in the interest of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations.

GANDHI TO LEAD THE STRUGGLE

But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian Government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity.

The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilise all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last 22 years of peaceful struggle Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji, and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji, and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committee can function. When this happens, every man and woman, who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India.

Lastly, whilst the A.-I.C.C. has stated its own view of the future governance under free India, the A.-I.C.C. wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that, by embarking on mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India.

THE WARDHA AND BOMBAY RESOLUTIONS

While the Wardha resolution concluded with an ultimatum that Congress would be forced "to utilise all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920", in case of failure of the present appeal to Government, the A.-I.C.C. resolution attempted to meet the criticisms

levelled against the Congress by Government and other public bodies. It laid down in clear terms that "on the declaration of India's independence, a Provisional Government will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations". This was in answer to the fear expressed by some that Indian freedom might mean access to Japanese aggression.

The resolution made it clear that the Provisional Government would be a composite one representing all important sections of India, charged with the definite duty of defending India against aggression. It also provided for the retention of foreign soldiers in India, armed defence by the people as well as resistance by non-violent methods.

Another improvement on the Wardha resolution was the attempt made to remove the misapprehensions of the Muslim League that once India is liberated, there would be rule by the majority community. The resolution suggested that India's future constitution should be a federal one with a large measure of autonomy for the federating units and with residuary powers vesting in these units.

The revised resolution, in short, told the world what exactly was the Congress demand. It retained the operative part of the Wardha resolution, appealing to the United Nations to liberate India from British domination for winning the war, failing which the country would vindicate its inalienable right to freedom and independence

by resorting to direct action. It vested the Congress leadership in Gandhiji.

Opening the A.-I.C.C. proceedings on the 7th, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, pointed out that on the failure of the Cripps mission, the only course open to them was to take the decision reached at Allahabad, *viz.*, that for the effective defence of the country against foreign aggression the only course was to have the reins of Government in Indian hands.

The menace of aggression to India was ever increasing and the danger which was only a distant one a few months ago, was fast approaching them. In the face of such danger, it would be a calamity to allow the people to become sullen and down-hearted. The Congress wanted to see that every Indian youth took part in resisting aggression. If the people of India were indifferent and sullen, the responsibility was not that of the Congress but that of the British Government.

The Congress President explained that the "quit India" demand did not mean the physical removal of all the Britishers from India.

It only meant the transfer of political power to Indian hands. After the demand had been originally made by Mahatma Gandhi, both Pandit Nehru and himself had gone to Wardha to discuss the matter with Gandhiji, who made it clear to them that it only meant the transfer of power.

## GANDHIJI'S EXHORTATION

After the Maulana, Mahatma Gandhi addressed the meeting, outlining his plan of action and appealing to the people to adopt non-violence as a policy. He maintained that Congress represents the whole country:

Another point I want to impress upon you is your great responsibility. Members of the A.-I.C.C. are like members of a Parliament. The Congress represents the whole of India. The Congress from its very inception has

not been of any particular groove or any particular colour or caste or of any particular province It has claimed, ever since its birth, to represent the whole nation and on your behalf I have made the claim that you represent not only the registered members of the Congress but the entire nation.

Discussing his attitude to the war and the British people for whom he said he had no hatred at all, he observed:

This is a crucial hour. If we keep quiet and don't play our part, it would not be right on our part. If it is only Britain and the United States who fight this war, and if our part is only to give monetary help, whether given willingly or taken from us unwillingly, it is not a very happy proposition. But we can show our real grit and valour only when it becomes our own fight Then even a child will be brave We shall get our freedom by fighting. It cannot fall from the skies. I know fully well that Britishers will have to give us freedom when we have made sufficient sacrifices and proved our strength. We must remove hatred for the British from our hearts At least in my heart there is no such hatred. As a matter of fact, I am a greater friend of the British now than ever was. The reason for this is that at this moment they are in distress My friendship demands that I must make them aware of their mistakes as I am not in the position in which they are, on the brink of a ditch, and are about to fall into it. Therefore, even if they want to cut off my hands, my friendship demands that I should try to pull them out of that ditch.

At a time when he was about to launch the biggest struggle in his life, he would harbour no ill-will towards any one, least of all the British.

It may be that in a moment of anger they might do things which might provoke you. Nevertheless, you should not resort to violence and put non-violence to shame. When such a thing happens you may take it that you will not find me alive, wherever I may be. Their blood will be on your head. If you don't understand this, it would be better if you reject this resolution.

Gandhi held that "the British are not going to fail. I don't consider them a nation of cowards. I know that before they accept defeat, every soul in Britain will be sacrificed."

Concluding, he asked them to fight for true democracy by non-violence. "Once you understand these things," he said, "you will forget differences between Hindus and Muslims."

The resolution that is placed before you says that we don't want to remain frogs in a well. We are aiming at world federation. It can come only through non-violence. Disarmament is only possible if you use the matchless weapon of non-violence. There are people who may call me a visionary but I tell you I am a real *bania*, and my business is to obtain Swaraj. If you don't accept this resolution, I won't be sorry for it. On the contrary, I would dance with joy because you would then relieve me of the tremendous responsibility which you are now going to place on me I want you to adopt non-violence as a matter of policy With me it is a creed, but so far as you are concerned I want you to accept it *in toto* and stick to it when you join the struggle.

PANDIT NEHRU'S SPEECH

Following Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, who moved the resolution, said that the conception of the resolution was not narrow nationalism but had an international background.

The resolution was in no sense a challenge to anyone. If the British Government accepted the proposal, it would change the position for the better, both internal and international, from every point of view. The position of China would be improved Whatever change might come about in India, it must be for the better. The A.-I.C.C. knew that Mahatma Gandhi had agreed that British and other foreign armed forces stationed in India might continue.

This, he maintained, was in order not to allow the Japanese to come in.

SARDAR PATEL'S SPEECH

Seconding the resolution, Sardar Patel declared that for three years Congress was scrupulously adhering to their policy of non-embarrassment, but this attitude was not appreciated by the British. Congress could wait no longer.

If America and England were still thinking that they could fight their enemies from India without the co operation of 40 millions of people, they were foolish. It must dawn on the people that this war was a people's war and they should fight for their country and their freedom. As long as this feeling was non-existent, no amount of propaganda through the newspapers and the radio could rouse the people to a supreme effort

Sardar Patel warned the people "that the fight that was before them was going to be a tough one."

AMENDMENTS AND DISCUSSION*

When the Committee re-assembled on the 8th, a number of amendments to the Working Committee resolution were moved. The President ruled out of order Mr. Balakrishna Sarma's amendment which sought a postponement of the present struggle. Mr. Saxena, Dr. Subbaroyan and a few communists brought in other amendments.

After all the amendments had been moved, the Committee proceeded to a general discussion on the resolution.

Pandit Nehru, replying to the opposition, reiterated the offer of co-operation outlined in the official resolution and said:

"This resolution is not a threat. It is an invitation It is an explanation; it is an offer of co-operation. It is all that. But still, behind it there is a clear indication that certain consequences will follow if certain events do not happen. It is an offer of co-operation of a free India. On any other terms there will be no co-operation. On any other terms, our resolution promises only conflict and struggle.

Putting the amendments and the main resolution to the vote, Maulana Azad explained

* We are indebted to the Associated Press of India for the precis of the proceedings.

the various efforts made by him to bring about a communal settlement. If the Muslim League was willing to negotiate, he would persuade the Congress within 24 hours to start negotiations.

The Congress President then put the various amendments to vote. Three amendments were withdrawn and the remaining were all rejected by overwhelming majority, only 12 members voting in their favour. The original resolution was then put to vote and was carried with overwhelming majority, only 13 members voting against. The Congress President then declared the resolution passed amidst loud and continued cheers.

GANDHIJI'S CONCLUDING SPEECH

Mahatma Gandhi then addressed the House for 120 minutes in English and Hindustani.

I take up my task of leading you in this struggle not as your commander, not as your controller, but as the humble servant of you all; and he who serves best becomes the chief among them. I am the chief servant of the nation, that is how I look at it,

declared the Mahatma addressing the audience in English towards the end of his speech. He added: "I want to share all the shocks that you have to face."

Mahatma Gandhi then called on all Indians to begin to feel as free men. He asked the princes to act as trustees of their people and called on newspapers to suspend their publication. He declared: "We shall make every effort to see the Viceroy before starting the struggle."

Our struggle is now to start. But before launching the movement, I will address a letter to the Viceroy and

wait for his reply. It may take a week or fortnight or three weeks.

Concluding, Gandhiji said: "I have pledged the Congress and the Congress will do or die."

Winding up the proceedings, the Congress President announced that he was sending copies of the resolution to President Roosevelt, to China and to the Russian Ambassador in London.

If all their efforts failed, then it was for Indians to take a determined step forward with the determination that in this struggle they would venture ahead, no matter what happened to them, whether they sink or swim, whether they win or lose.

### THE GOVERNMENT *COMMUNIQUE*

Immediately following the passing of the resolution by the A.-I.C.C., the Governor-General in Council published, on August 8, a resolution expressing regret at the Congress resolution and determination to meet the "challenge" contained in it.

The Governor-General in Council has been aware, too, for some days past of dangerous preparations by the Congress Party for unlawful and in some cases violent activities directed among other things to the interruption of communications and public utility services, the organisation of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of Government servants and interference with defence measures including recruitment.

The Government of India have waited patiently in the hope that wise counsels might prevail. They have been disappointed in that hope.

To a challenge such as the present, there can be only one answer. The Government of India would regard it as wholly incompatible with their responsibilities to the people of India and their obligations to the Allies, that a demand should be discussed, the acceptance of which would plunge India into confusion and anarchy internally and would paralyse her effort in the common cause of human freedom.

### THE ARRESTS AND ORDINANCES

On the morning of the 9th August (1942), Mahatma Gandhi (with Mahadev Desai), Maulana

Azad, the Congress President, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and other members of the Working Committee were arrested under the Defence of India Act. Then followed the arrest of Mrs. Gandhi, Mr. Pyarilal, the Mahatma's Secretary, and prominent leaders of the Congress throughout the country. Thus in the course of a week everybody who was anybody in the Congress was rounded up and put in jail.

The arrest of the leaders and imprisonment of many Congressmen led to local conflicts with the authorities and troubles began to manifest in different ways. The closing of shops and restaurants was forbidden by a New Defence of India Rule. By another addition to the Rules, the Government of India empowered the Provincial Governments to supersede the local authority in enforcing law and order and for the maintenance of supply and services essential to the life of the community. Yet another order of the Central Government prohibited the

printing or publishing, by any printer, publisher or editor, of any factual news (which expression shall include reports of speeches or statements by members of the public) relating to the mass movement sanctioned by the All-India Congress Committee or to the measures taken by Government against that movement, except news derived from official sources, or the Associated Press of India, the United Press of India, or a correspondent regularly employed by the newspaper concerned and whose name stands registered with the District Magistrate of the district in which he carries on his work. The source of the information shall also be stated in the newspaper publishing such news.

Explaining the limits within which reports of the civil disobedience movement might be published a Press Note, dated August 10, New Delhi, said:

The declaration of various Congress Committees to be unlawful associations renders liable to prosecution under the Criminal Law Amendment Act any one who assists their operations. It follows therefore—and this is a matter with regard to which in the circumstances no previous warning to the Press or consultation with Advisory Committees was possible—that the editor of any newspaper who supports or encourages the mass movement sponsored by the bodies referred to above, or who opposes the measures taken by the Government to avert or suppress that movement, will be guilty of an offence against the law. Moreover it is undeniable that the publication of factual news, both by the selection of events reported and by the manner in which they are displayed, can do even more to advertise, and thus support the movement than editorial comment thereon.

The severe restrictions on the publication of news led to the suspension of many papers in English and Vernacular throughout the country. Fourteen papers in Bengal and seven in Madras stopped their publication from the 20th. The *Hindustan Times* of Delhi and the *National Herald* of Lucknow followed suit. More than thirty newspapers ceased their publication from the 21st.

THE OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE

The situation was growing worse. There were frequent reports of mob frenzy and incendiarism, of *lathi* charges and police firing. Rioting and hooliganism occurred in many parts of India, with the result that in several towns the police had to open fire on mobs which were doing damage to property. In Bombay, the situation continued serious, and the Governor in a broadcast warned the people that the Government would take the sternest and strongest measures possible to meet the situation and to maintain order. The Government thereupon introduced whipping as a punishment for rioters.

Similar acts of arson and rioting took place in other parts of the country, followed by strikes and *hartals* and what is more, tampering with the means of communication and transport. Condemning these acts of violence Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar said: "Repression and mob frenzy, which Mahatmaji would not have approved, but which they think he approves, are moving in a vicious circle, and bitterness grows apace." And he added: "Those who do not want the Axis in India cannot be happy over the present situation, which is rapidly growing worse." This was true. These manifestations were deplored by all who value and desire freedom and security.

The venerable Pandit Malaviya truly voiced the feelings of the more responsible body of his countrymen when he said:

> Those people who are indulging in acts of violence and disorder are not only doing great disservice to the country, they are betraying the trust imposed on them by Mahatma Gandhi.

GANDHIJI'S BEREAVEMENT: DEATH OF DESAI

Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi and Mahadev Desai, his Secretary, were interned at the Aga Khan's Palace, Bombay. Soon after the internment, Gandhi suffered the greatest bereavement of his life—the sudden death of Mahadev Desai on August 15. A word must be said here of Mahadev, who for close upon quarter of a century, was on the most intimate terms with Gandhi and followed him like his very shadow.

After a brilliant academic career, Mahadev Desai was practising as a lawyer for a time. But when Gandhiji returned to India from South

Africa, he threw himself completely into his service, working with him as his political and private Secretary, and always in close attendance on him in the Ashram at Sabarmati and Sevagram, sharing the austere life of his master. A man of wide culture and keen intelligence, he relieved the Mahatma of much of the routine work of a public leader of Gandhi's eminence and popularity. Few secretaries could have so successfully discharged the arduous duties that devolved on them with such cheerfulness and competency. His writings first in *Young India* and then in the *Harijan* exercised a profound influence on thousands of readers as did the writings of Gandhi himself. Desai was an adept at interpreting the subtlest thoughts and movements of the Mahatma's mind. He shared the Mahatma's ideas and opinions on all things, lived the same simple and stoic life and had the scholar's instinct to seize his thoughts and weave them in words of perfect brilliance. For a quarter of a century, he identified himself so completely with the Mahatma's life that he could rarely be said to have had a separate existence or ambition. It was an adventure in self-abnegation, the like of which had never been known since Socrates and Crito. No wonder that Gandhiji's bereavement is irreparable, while the rest of the country mourned the loss of a fine character and noble patriot.

FIELD MARSHAL SMUTS' TRIBUTE TO GANDHI

While Gandhi was under detention, a fierce controversy was going on in the press as to the

part he took in the break up of the Cripps-Congress negotiations. Sir Stafford Cripps charged him with intervening with his cult of non-violence—a charge which was refuted effectively by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari and others who were parties to the negotiation. The American correspondent, Mr. Louis Fischer, by his very cogent and authoritative articles, showed how baseless were the charges. Still there were not detractors in England, who did not scruple to call Gandhi a fifth columnist. The "quit India" slogan had evidently unhinged them. Field Marshal Smuts, who had known Mr. Gandhi for years in South Africa and had fought many battles with him, could not allow this scurrilous indictment to pass unchallenged.

In a Press Conference in London, the South African statesman took upon himself to make it clear beyond doubt that

> it is sheer nonsense to talk of Gandhi as a 'Fifth Columnist' He is a great man He is one of the great men of the world and he is the last person to be placed in that category He is dominated by [illegible] spiritual ideals Whether those ideals are always practicable in our difficult world is another question

## GANDHIJI'S FAST

Gandhiji and the members of the Congress Working Committee and many other Congressmen, were arrested on August 9, following the meeting of the Working Committee at Bombay. Gandhiji and his party were detained at the Aga Khan Palace, Poona. Exactly six months and a day after the detention, on Wednesday, February 10 (1943), a Government of India *communiqué* announced

that Mr. Gandhi had gone on a fast of three weeks' duration, following a private correspondence with H. E. the Viceroy. The *communique* added that it was to be a fast according to capacity, and during it, Mr. Gandhi proposed to add juices of citrus fruit to water to make the water drinkable as his wish was not to fast to death but to survive the ordeal. In the correspondence that was published he made it clear that the fast would end only "on the morning of March 2," but that it "can be ended sooner by the Government giving the needed relief." Thus, this fast undertaken for a definite purpose and for a specific duration under conditions was essentially different from the other fasts previously undertaken by the Mahatma.

## PREVIOUS FASTS

This was the fifth of his fasts in India. The first was the Hindu-Muslim Unity fast of 21 days in 1924 undertaken in the late Maulana Mahomed Ali's house in Delhi. The second fast, also lasting 21 days, against the Communal Award, was started in Yeravda Prison in 1932 and finished at Lady Thakersey's residence in Poona. Gandhiji observed the third fast also in Yeravda Prison in 1933 as a protest against the Government's refusal to allow him to carry on anti-Untouchability work through his *Harijan*. On this, as on the previous occasion, he was released by the Government. The fourth fast was undertaken by Gandhiji in 1939 to focus attention on affairs in Rajkot State.

## GANDHI-LINLITHGOW CORRESPONDENCE

Gandhiji set the ball rolling by a personal letter addressed to Lord Linlithgow as long ago as August 14, 1942, *i.e.*, within five days of his detention in Poona. In that letter he complained that the Government were wrong in precipitating the crisis. The Government resolution justifying the arrests was "full of distortions and misrepresentations." That His Excellency had the approval of his "Indian colleagues", wrote Mr. Gandhi, "could have no significance, except this, that in India you can always command such services." That co-operation, he added, was "an additional justification for the demand for the withdrawal, irrespective of what people or parties may say."

The Government of India should have waited at least till the time I inaugurated mass action. I have publicly stated that I fully contemplated sending you a letter before taking concrete action. It was to be an appeal to you for an impartial examination of the Congress case. As you know, the Congress has readily filled in every omission that has been discovered in the conception of its demand. So could I have dealt with every difficulty, if you had given me the opportunity. The precipitate action of the Government leads one to think that they were afraid that the extreme caution and gradualness with which the Congress was moving towards direct action might make world opinion veer round to the Congress, as it had already begun doing and expose the hollowness of the grounds for the Government's rejection of the Congress demand. They should surely have waited for an authentic report of my speeches on Friday and on Saturday night, after the passing of the resolution by the All-India Congress Committee. You would have found in them that I would not hastily begin action. You should have taken advantage of the interval foreshadowed in them, and explored every possibility of satisfying the Congress demand.

It is a pity that this letter should have been withheld from the Indian public (though

the gist of it seems to have been within the knowledge of the British press), for it says categorically that Gandhi and the Congress were definitely looking for means of reconciliation and were in no hurry to act. Then Gandhiji answers seriatim the indictment against the Congress and asks, is the demand of the Congress for independence, legitimate at all times, "a challenge that could only be met by immediate repression instead of patient reasoning with the demanding party?"

I venture to suggest that it is a long draft upon the credulity of mankind to say that the acceptance of the demand "would plunge India into confusion". Anyway the summary rejection of the demand has plunged the nation and the Government into confusion. The Congress was making every effort to identify India with the allied cause.

Gandhiji then refutes the charge of "dangerous preparations on the part of the Congress for unlawful and in some cases violent activities." Then violence, says Mr. Gandhi,

was never contemplated at any stage. A definition of what could be included in non-violent action has been interpreted in a sinister and subtle manner, as if the Congress was preparing for violent action. Everything was openly discussed among Congress circles, for nothing was to be done secretly. And why is it tampering with your loyalty if I ask you to give up a job which is harming the British people?

Instead of publishing behind the backs of principal Congressmen the misleading paragraphs, the Government, immediately they came to know of the "preparations" should have brought to book the parties concerned with the preparations. That would have been the appropriate course. By their unsupported allegations in the resolution, they have laid themselves open to the charge of unfair dealing.

The Congress movement was intended to evoke in the people the measure of sacrifice sufficient to compel attention.

It was intended to demonstrate what measure of popular support it had. Was it wise at the time of the day to seek to suppress a popular movement avowedly non-violent?

The charge that the "Congress is not India's mouthpiece" and that "its leaders have constantly impeded the efforts to bring India to full nationhood" is answered thus:

It is a gross libel thus to accuse the oldest national organisation of India. This language lies ill in the mouth of a Government which has, as can be proved from published records, consistently thwarted every national effort for attaining freedom and sought to suppress the Congress by hook or by crook

The Government of India have not condescended to consider the Congress offer that if simultaneously with the declaration of the Independence of India, they could not trust the Congress to form a stable provisional government, they should ask the Muslim League to do so, and that any National Government formed by the League would be loyally accepted by the Congress. Such an offer is hardly consistent with the charge of totalitarianism against the Congress.

Examining the Government's offer that

"as soon as hostilities cease, India shall devise for herself with full freedom of decision and on a basis embracing all and not only a single party the form of government which she regards as most suited to her conditions,"

he asked if such an offer had any reality about it.

All parties have not agreed now. Will it be any more possible after the war? And if the parties have to act before independence is in their hands? Parties grow up like mushrooms for without proving their representative character, the Government will welcome them as they have done in the past and if the parties oppose the Congress and its activities, though they may do lip homage to independence. Frustration is inherent in the Government offer. Hence the logical cry of withdrawal first. Only after the end of British power and a fundamental change in the political status of India from bondage to freedom, will the formation of a truly representative government whether provisional or permanent, be possible. The living burial of the author of the demand has not resolved the deadlock. It has aggravated it.

Gandhiji went on to add that it was because Congress is anxious for Great Britain to avoid the fate that had overtaken other imperial powers that it asked her to shed imperialism voluntarily.

It is sad to find the Government of India claiming to hold the "balance" between the parties for which it is itself demonstrably responsible.

Gandhiji wound up by saying that Pandit Nehru and he, Pandit Nehru even more than himself, "dreaded the success of Fascism and Nazism and were devoted to the allied cause of democracy and freedom."

Surely you are wrong in having imprisoned such a powerful friend and ally. If, notwithstanding the common cause, the Government's answer to the Congress demand is hasty repression, they will not wonder if I draw the inference that it was not so much the allied cause that weighed with the British Government, as the unexpressed determination to cling to the possession of India as an indispensable part of the imperial policy. This determination led to the rejection of the Congress demand and precipitated repression.

Finally, striking a personal note, Gandhiji concluded the letter with a plea for reconsideration of Government policy:

I remain the same friend you have known me. I would still plead for reconsideration of the Government of India's whole policy. Do not disregard the pleading of one who claimed to be a sincere friend of the British people. Heaven guide you.

The Viceroy replied that it was not possible for the Government, either to accept his criticism of the Government resolution or act upon his suggestion to reconsider their policy.

Reverting to the same theme, Gandhiji wrote again to the Secretary to the Government of India on September 23 last, reaffirming his belief

that the reported deplorable destruction would most certainly have been avoided if only the Government had awaited his contemplated letter to the Viceroy. Once again he reiterated his faith in non-violence and urged the Government "to explore ways and means of reconciliation."

In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, I claim that the Congress policy still remains unequivocally non-violent. The wholesale arrest of the Congress leaders seems to have made the people wild with rage to the point of losing self-control. I feel that the Government, not the Congress, were responsible for the destruction that has taken place. The only right course for the Government seems to me to be to release the Congress leaders, withdraw all repressive measures and explore ways and means of conciliation. Surely the Government have ample resources to deal with any overt act of violence. Repression can only breed discontent and bitterness.

In the light of this emphatic avowal of non-violence and plea for negotiation, it is hard to understand the Government's charge against Gandhi's silence over mob violence. If only these letters had been published earlier, they could hardly have failed to have the desired effect on the mischief mongers.

## GROWL AND COUNTER-GROWL

Gandhiji waited for over three months to see if anything was done to resolve the deadlock. And then on Christmas eve 1942, he wrote again to the Viceroy, a letter which in his own words, was a growl against His Excellency.

I had thought, we were friends, and should still love to think so. However what has happened since the 9th August last makes me wonder whether you still regard me as a friend. Your arrest of me, the *communique* you issued thereafter, your reply to Rajaji and the reasons given therefor, Mr. Amery's attack on me and much

else I can catalogue, show that at some stage or other you must have suspected my *bona fides*. If I have not ceased to be your friend, why did you not before taking drastic action tell me of your suspicions and make yourself sure of your facts?

Apart from the personal issue, Gandhiji's complaint against the Government was that by arresting the Congress leaders, they had goaded the people into acts of violence and sabotage. The Viceroy's reply of January 13, was in effect a 'counter-growl' as 'Gandhi described it.

I have been profoundly depressed during recent months first by the policy that was adopted by the Congress in August, secondly, because while that policy gave rise, as it was obvious it must, throughout the country to violence and crime (I say nothing of the risks to the country from outside aggression), no word of condemnation for that violence and crime should have come from you or from the Working Committee. When you were first at Poona, I know that you were not receiving newspapers, and I accepted that as explaining your silence When arrangements were made that you and the Working Committee should have such newspapers as you desired, I felt certain that the details those newspapers contained of what was happening would shock and distress you as much as it has us all, and your condemnation of it would be categorical and widely known. But that was not the case, and it has been a real disappointment to me, all the more when I think of these murders, the burning alive of police officials, the wrecking of trains, the destruction of property, the misleading of these young students, which has done so much harm to India's good name and the Congress Party.

The Viceroy went on to add:

But if I am right in reading your letter to mean that in the light of what has happened you wish to retrace your steps and dissociate yourself from the policy of last summer you have only to let me know and I will at once consider the matter further. And if I have failed to understand your object, you must not hesitate to let me know without delay in what respect I have done so and tell me what positive suggestion you wish to put to me.

Gandhiji in his letter of 19th January did not accept His Excellency's inference. "If I could

be convicted of my error or worse," said Mr. Gandhi, *I should need to consult nobody* so far as my own action is concerned to make a full and open confession and make ample amends." Of course, he "deplored the happenings which have taken place since 9th August last," but he laid the whole blame for them at the door of the Government of India. For he is a confirmed believer in non-violence.

This, however, I can say from the house-top that I am as confirmed a believer in non-violence as I have ever been. You may not know that any violence on the part of Congress workers I have condemned openly and unequivocally. I have even done public penance more than once. I must not worry you with examples. The point I wish to make is that on every such occasion I was a free man.

Hence this time, said Gandhiji, the retracing lay with the Government and not with him.

You will forgive me for expressing an opinion challenging yours. I am certain that nothing but good would have resulted if you had stayed your hand and granted me the interview which I had announced on the night of the 8th August I was to seek. But that was not to be.

And then Gandhiji summed up:

1. If you want me to act singly convince me that I was wrong. I will make ample amends

2. If you want me to make any proposal on behalf of the Congress, you should put me among the Congress Working Committee members. I do plead with you to make up your mind to end the *impasse*.

If I am obscure or have not answered your letter fully, please point out the omissions and I shall make an attempt to give you satisfaction.

I have no mental reservation.

It will be noticed that so far the only charge against Gandhi and the Congress was that they had not condemned the acts of mob violence.

In his second letter, however, His Excellency said for the first time categorically, though 'reluctantly', that

> the course of events and his familiarity with what had been taking place had left him no choice but to regard the Congress movement and the Mahatma himself as its authorised and fully empowered spokesman at the time of the decision of last August as responsible for the sad campaign of violence and crime and revolutionary activity which has done so much harm and so much injury to India's credit.

In reply to this, Gandhiji asked for positive proof of Government's charges, "I see the fact of murders as clearly, I hope, as you do", said Gandhi.

> My answer is that the Government goaded the people to the point of madness. They started leonine violence in the shape of the arrests already referred to. That violence is not any the less so, because it is organised on a scale so gigantic that it displaces the Mosaic Law of 'tooth for tooth' by that of ten thousand for one—not to mention the corollary of the Mosaic Law, i.e., of non-resistance as enunciated by Jesus Christ. I cannot interpret in any other manner the repressive measures of the all-Powerful Government of India.

And then came the tragic announcement:

> If then I cannot get soothing balm for my pain, I must resort to the law prescribed for Satyagrahis, namely, a fast according to capacity.
>
> I must commence after the early morning breakfast of the 9th February (later changed to February 10), a fast for 21 days ending on the morning of the 2nd March.
>
> Usually, during my fasts, I take water with the addition of salts But nowadays my system refuses water. This time, therefore, I propose to add juices of citrus fruit to make water drinkable for my wish is not to fast unto death, but to survive the ordeal, if God so wills. This fast can be ended sooner by the Government giving the needed relief.

In a significant postscript to this letter, Mr. Gandhi made it clear that the Congress

demands were for all the people of India and not for any section thereof.

As you should be aware the Congress is willing and prepared for the Government inviting Mr. M A Jinnah to form a National Government, subject to such agreed adjustments as may be necessary for the duration of the war, such Government being responsible to a fully elected assembly.

This sentence can be interpreted to mean a substantial modification of the unbending 'Quit India'.

In his reply to this, the Viceroy said that his views remained unchanged as he "had ample information that the sabotage had been conducted under secret instructions circulated in the name of the All-India Congress Committee":

If we do not act on all this information and make it publicly known it is because the time is not yet ripe, but you may rest assured that the charges against the Congress will have to be met sooner or later and it will then be for you and your colleagues to clear yourselves before the world if you can. And if in the meanwhile you yourself, by any action such as you now appear to be contemplating, attempt to find an easy way out the judgment will go against you by default.

Gandhiji in his reply asked why the culprit in question should not be tried before the Court of law and punished, if found guilty.

You say that the time is not yet ripe to publish the charges against the Congress. Have you ever thought of the possibility of their being found baseless when they are put before an impartial tribunal? Or that some of the condemned persons might have died in the meanwhile, or that some of the evidence that the living can produce might become unavailable?

After attempting an exhaustive reply to the views and statements attributed to him, Gandhiji felt that the Viceroy "left him no loophole to escape the ordeal." Stung to the quick by the

description of the fast as "a form of political blackmail," Gandhiji wrote:

It is on my part meant to be an appeal to the highest tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you, if I do not survive the ordeal, I shall go to the judgment seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as representative of an all-Powerful Government and me as a humble man who has tried to serve his country and humanity through it.

In their *communique* announcing Mr. Gandhi's decision to fast from February 10, the Government of India declared that they had no intention on their part

of allowing the fast to deflect their policy. Nor will they be responsible for its consequences on Mr Gandhi's health.

They cannot prevent Mr. Gandhi from fasting. It was their wish, however, that if he decided to do so, he should do so as a free man and under his own arrangements, so as to bring out clearly that the responsibility for any fast and its consequences rested exclusively with him.

They accordingly informed Mr. Gandhi that he would be released for the purpose and for the duration of the fast of which he had notified them, and with him any members of the party living with him who may wish to accompany him.

If the temporary release is offered for my convenience, I do not need it. I shall be quite content to take my fast as a detenu or prisoner. If it is for the convenience of the Government, I am sorry I am unable to suit them, much as I should like to do so. I can say this much, that I, as a prisoner, shall avoid, as far as is humanly possible, every cause of inconvenience to the Government save what is inherent in the fast itself. The impending fast has not been conceived to be taken as a free man. Circumstances may arise, as they have done before now, when I may have to fast as a free man. If, therefore, I am released, there will be no fast in terms of my correspondence abovementioned. I shall have to survey the situation *de novo* and decide what I should do. I have no desire to be released under false pretences. In spite of all that has been said against me I hope not to belie the vow of truth and non-violence which alone makes life

livable for me. I say this, if it is only for my own satisfaction. It does me good to reiterate openly my faith, when outer darkness surrounds me, as it does just now.

Thus the fast which became inevitable commenced on the 10th February at the Aga Khan Palace, Government having allowed access to Gandhi, to near relatives and friends and a syndicate of Doctors, including Dr. B. C. Roy, Dr. Gilder, and Major Gen. Candy, Surgeon-General to the Government of Bombay, who were allowed to issue daily bulletins as to Gandhiji's condition.

## WORLD REACTIONS TO THE FAST

Commenting on the correspondence and Gandhi's irrevocable decision, the *Manchester Guardian* showed true insight into the Indian problem when it said that "Mr. Gandhi had embarked upon a fast, which, however much the Government might disclaim responsibility, might move India to its depths". And so it did. The news of Gandhi's fast spread like wild fire. Hundreds of telegrams were addressed to Government by public organisations representing every shade of political opinion in the country. The press, without a single exception, voicing the feelings of the people, urged the Mahatma's immediate and unconditional release. The Central Legislatures and the Bengal Provincial Legislative Assembly, then in Session, voiced the public demand in no uncertain terms. In the Central Assembly, Mr. N. M. Joshi vigorously combated the view that the Mahatma's declaration of his resolve to go on fast, failing the satisfaction of his demands, amounted to political blackmail.

"It was wrong and unworthy of the British people and the Government of India," he said, "to impute motives

to Mahatma Gandhi. Was it blackmail if one wanted to get released in order that the present situation might be reconsidered and the *impasse* ended?"

The Council of State staged a walk out, in protest against Government's intransigence. Practically the whole country joined in the universal demand for the unconditional release of the Mahatma.

May his life be spared to his country and to humanity and may Providence vouchsafe grace and wisdom to those from whom these virtues appear to have fled,

observed Mr. Justice C. C. Biswas, presiding over a meeting of the citizens of Calcutta, to offer prayers for Mahatma Gandhi's long life. Mr. Justice Biswas added.

We have met here to fulfil a most solemn duty, a public and national duty. The whole of India is now watching with the gravest concern the developments from Poona. Our hearts are too full to-day. All that is left to us now is to pray to the Giver of all good that He may yet spare the life of one whom we have loved and worshipped and would like to love and worship to the end of our days as the greatest mortal walking this earth.

People in South Africa, in America and in England sent frantic appeals to the Viceroy and the British Prime Minister. The London *Times* said:

No one can be satisfied with the state of Indian affairs. . . . Nor can the errors of British policy in the past be a stumbling block now. Even while the shadow of war is across India, the way of discussion is wide open.

Mr. Lionel Fieldon, formerly Controller of Broadcasting in India and now Editor of the *Sunday Observer*, urged a judicial enquiry into the civil disturbances "before Mr. Gandhi's fasting brings the pot of hatred once more to the boil."

"In our opinion", wrote the *Chicago Sun*, editorially:

> Mr. Gandhi should be released unconditionally. The fact remains that if he died a martyred prisoner, the bad situation becomes incalculably worse. There is little time to lose.

Lord Strabolgi, addressing a meeting in London, called by the India League, said

> that he dreaded the results of our future relations with Hindus if Mr. Gandhi's fast had fatal results. The Government here and in India should make a new approach without delay to seek a settlement.

Mr. Lloyd George, Father of the House of Commons and the Archbishop of Canterbury, expressed profound concern over a possible tragic denouement.

The newspapers, hard pressed as they were for space owing to shortage of paper, devoted whole pages for this matter of supreme concern. Statements and appeals flooded the columns with the same unvarying demand to save the life of the Mahatma at any cost. "The Mahatma's life must be saved. This is the only thing that matters", said Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, the convener of the Leaders' Conference in Delhi.

> All political considerations must be set aside and a united demand must be presented for the release of the man whose life is so precious for the country and the world.

"If my father were alive to-day", said Mr. Rathindranath Tagore, the Poet's only son, "his powerful voice would have reverberated all over the world in a mighty appeal to move the conscience of mankind." In the name of "United India and in the name of humanity", the Metropolitan of India, the Chief Minister of

Bengal and other prominent citizens issued an appeal "to all without any distinction of religion or creed or nationality to go on praying with humility to God for Mr. Gandhi." Three Members of the Viceroy's Council—Sir H. P. Mody, Mr. N. R. Sarker and Mr. M. S. Aney—tendered their resignations on February 18 (1943). In a joint statement, they said:

> Our resignations from His Excellency the Governor-General's Council have been announced, and all that we desire to do is to say by way of explanation that certain differences arose on what we regard as a fundamental issue (the issue of the action to be taken on Mahatma Gandhi's fast) and we felt we could no longer retain our offices

## THE LEADERS' CONFERENCE

About 300 leaders, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and British from all parts of the country, met at Delhi on February 19, to give expression, as Mr. C. Rajagopalachari said in his address of welcome, "to the feeling in this country that Mahatma Gandhi should be enabled to end his fast." Every heart would be gladdened, he said:

> if by any means Mahatmaji could be released, and his fast could terminate, I don't think there can be any difference of opinion on that point, though there may be differences of opinion as to the policies and programme from time to time pursued by Mahatmaji, and other people

A Committee was set up which adopted a resolution urging the release of Mr. Gandhi and in view of the urgency of the situation it was forwarded immediately to the Private Secretary to H. E the Viceroy.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who presided over the second day's proceedings, addressing the Conference, observed.

I think I can say I have joined you all on this occasion in demanding the unconditional release of Mahatma Gandhi with a clear conscience.

No one knows better than Mahatmaji himself that by conviction I have always opposed civil disobedience I have no hesitation in saying that I very much regretted the resolution passed at Bombay, and no one has followed the course of events since then with greater regret than I.

I have not hesitated to express my candid, frank and unambiguous opinion that it was to me a matter of the deepest regret that acts of sabotage should have taken place in this country

He had no doubt that while those gathered in the Conference dissociated themselves from acts of rebels, and while they made appeals to Mahatma, and his friends to do everything they could to restore an atmosphere of calm and peace, they also expected that

if Mahatma Gandhi was released unconditionally that would be the first preliminary step towards reconciliation which was the immediate need of the country

The Rt. Hon'ble Dr. M. R. Jayakar, moving the resolution, said that the release was essentially necessary in the interest of fairness and justice Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerji, associating himself with the mover, said that "the demand for the unconditional release of Gandhiji should be made from a non-controversial plank so that his life may be spared." He was supported by Sir Maharaj Singh, Dr. McKenzie, Principal, Wilson College, Bombay, Sir A. H. Gaznavi, Pandit Kunaru, Mr. N. M. Joshi, Mr. Allah Bux and several others.

The following is the full text of the resolution.

This Conference representing different creeds, communities and interests in India, gives expression to the universal desire of the people of this country that, in the interests of the future of India and of international goodwill, Mahatma Gandhi should be released immediately and unconditionally. This Conference views with the gravest concern the serious situation that will arise if the Government fail to take timely action and prevent a catastrophe This Conference, therefore, urges the Government to release Mahatma Gandhi forthwith

The resolution was cabled to Mr. Churchill and Mr. Amery and a copy handed to Mr. William Phillips, President Roosevelt's personal envoy in India.

The Private Secretary to H. E. the Viceroy sent the following reply.

His Excellency asks me to say that he has received and considered the resolution adopted by the Conference under your Chairmanship, of which you were good enough to send him a copy to-day. The attitude of the Government of India in the matter of Mr. Gandhi's fast is set out clearly and in details in the *communique* which they issued on 10th February, a copy of which I enclose for convenience of reference No new factor has emerged since that date, and, as the Government of India's *communique* brings out clearly, the responsibility in connection with his fast rests solely with Mr. Gandhi, with whom, and not with the Government, the decision to bring it to an end must rest.

"Whoever else may have been surprised by the Viceroy's reply, I was not", said Dr. Sapru, who urged that the question of the disturbances required to be investigated by an impartial tribunal.

CABLE TO THE PRIME MINISTER

The Standing Committee of the Conference thereupon held a four-hour discussion on the 21st, Sir Tej Bahadur presiding, and unanimously approved a cable to be sent to the Prime Minister and the Party leaders in the British

Parliament. The cable followed the lines of the resolution adopted by the Conference and also explained that the Conference was left with no alternative but to appeal to the highest tribunal of the Empire, namely, Parliament and Britain's national leaders.

The following is the text of the cable:

Three hundred public men of different parts of India representing various communities, creeds and interests met yesterday in New Delhi and unanimously passed a resolution, asking for immediate and unconditional release of Mahatma Gandhi, whose condition is fast approaching a crisis. We fear, unless immediately released, he will pass away. We wish to explain to British public opinion that the Mahatma is fasting only to be able to review the situation as a free man and advise the public accordingly and not on the issue of independence. We are convinced that the terms of his letter of September 23, recently published, amount to an unequivocal disapproval on behalf of himself and the Congress of all acts of violence

Sir T. B. Sapru submitted the resolution to the Viceroy and immediately afterwards received his reply declining to interfere as no new factor had arisen to alter the previous decision. We deeply deplore that the advice of so many representative and responsible men should have been summarily turned down by the Viceroy.

We firmly believe that if Mahatmaji's life is spared, way will be opened for the promotion of peace and goodwill as surely as his death as a British prisoner would intensify public embitterment. Charges brought by the Government against the Mahatma don't rest on examination by any impartial tribunal or independent body of men. We firmly believe that much of the trouble which has arisen was preventable by timely action on the part of the Government last summer and that the Mahatma should have been allowed to see the Viceroy to find a solution as he desired. Millions of our countrymen feel that the responsibility for saving his life now rests only with the Government. We, therefore, urge that he should be forthwith released.

As under the existing Constitution the ultimate responsibility is on the British Parliament for peace and tranquillity in India, we request this cable may be brought to its notice in order that it may do justice in the matter.

We are convinced that wise and liberal statesmanship will solve the Indo-British problem more speedily and effectively than stern repression.

In reply to this cable, Mr. Churchill, Prime Minister, said:

The Government of India decided last August that Mr. Gandhi and other leaders of Congress must be detained for reasons which have been fully explained and are well understood. The reasons for that decision have not ceased to exist and His Majesty's Government endorse the determination of the Government of India not to be deflected from their duty towards the peoples of India and of the United Nations by Mr Gandhi's attempt to secure his unconditional release by fasting.

The first duty of the Government of India and of His Majesty's Government is to defend the soil of India from invasion by which it is still menaced, and to enable India to play her part in the general cause of the United Nations There can be no justification for discriminating between Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders The responsibility, therefore, rests entirely with Mr. Gandhi himself.

The appeals, however, had fallen on deaf ears. "There can be no justification", said the Prime Minister, "for discriminating between Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders." But is there any other Indian leader, rightly asked the *Manchester Guardian*, "for whom representatives of almost all sections would unite and much the greatest part of India be powerfully moved? Mr. Gandhi is not like any other leader. For more than any other, he is India to most of his fellow countrymen and to much of the world outside."

## HOW THE FAST WAS BROKEN

To the profound relief of all, Gandhiji broke his fast on March 3 (1943), thus surviving the 21 days' ordeal.

It was a brief but impressive ceremony, performed with due solemnity and devotion, that proceeded Mahatma Gandhi's breaking of the fast on Wednesday the 3rd at 9-34 a.m. Mahatma Gandhi was in a meditative mood and was lying on the cot in the room where he fasted.

The inmates of the Palace sang Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn "Vaishnava Janatho" and two stanzas from Poet Tagore's "Gitanjali". "Lead Kindly Light" and portions from the Psalms, the Gita and the Quoran were also recited.

Hymns from Tulsidas' Ramayana were sung to the accompaniment of instrumental music by Kanu Gandhi. Mira Ben read out Psalms from the Bible.

After prayers, those present observed a five-minutes' silence. With folded hands, Mahatma Gandhi was seen to close his eyes and to be in meditation.

Prayers over, Kasturba, wife of Mahatma Gandhi, handed him a glass containing six ounces of orange juice. He is reported to have taken twenty minutes to sip the juice.

Before sipping it, the Mahatma, in a feeble voice, thanked the doctors for the great care and attention which they bestowed on him and said that more than anything else it was their love and affection for him that must have saved his life. Further, he told those present, there must be something higher than the doctor's power that had saved him.

## AFTER THE FAST

There could be no doubt that Government also shared the sense of relief and thankfulness with the public, for it is evident that an unhappy turn would have made the situation worse. In more than one statement, Dr. B. C. Roy, who was with Gandhiji during the period of the fast, gave moving accounts of how the Mahatma, by sheer force of will, tided over the crisis which, in the Doctor's opinion, threatened to take a tragical turn. It was a sheer miracle, he said, that he survived the ordeal at the great age of 75.

The failure to move the authorities to release Gandhiji during the fast did not deter the leaders from continuing their endeavours further with a view to end the deadlock. With Gandhi safe and sound, there was always hope for settlement, for none else could, in the jargon of the day, deliver the goods. And then Gandhi himself had, in his letters to the Viceroy, promised to review the situation *de novo*, in consultation with his friends of the Working Committee. Here was the starting point for another effort. And so at Bombay, the leaders met again at the residence of the Rt. Hon. Dr. Jayakar and issued the following statement on March 10:

> We are of opinion that the deplorable events of the last few months require a reconsideration of their policy, both by the Government and the Congress. The recent talks which some of us have had with Gandhiji lead us to believe that a move for reconciliation at the present juncture will bear fruit. It is our conviction that if Gandhiji is set at liberty he will do his best to give guidance and assistance in the solution of the internal deadlock and that there need be no fear that there would be any danger to the successful prosecution of the war.

The Viceroy may be approached on our behalf, to permit a few representatives to meet Gandhiji to authoritatively ascertain his reaction to the recent events and to explore with him avenues for reconciliation.

The statement was signed by 35 leaders, including Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. M. R. Jayakar, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari and Sir Jagdish Prasad.

GOVERNMENT'S CHARGE AGAINST CONGRESS

It was at this time that the Government of India thought fit to set out their case against Mr. Gandhi and the Congress party in a 50,000 word document published as a White Paper in London. Gandhi and the leaders of the Congress were in prison and were not in a position to answer the charges. What was the purpose of all this elaborate indictment, when it could lead to no definite plan for ending the deadlock? The White Paper, as the *Manchester Guardian* truly pointed out, was nothing more than a speech for the prosecution.

It does not touch the problem which, when all is said and done, confronts us in India We find a large part of the country in sympathy with this "Open Rebellion" campaign and we have thousands of malcontents in prison. We cannot satisfy the Nationalist demand by an indefinite repressive policy, however serious the offences that are punished Some day we have to talk, negotiate and construct a political settlement.

INDIA DEBATE IN THE COMMONS

Having sponsored a deliberate and one-sided indictment of Gandhi and the Congress, it was not to be supposed that the spokesmen of the Government—Mr. Amery and Mr. Attlee—would depart in any essentials from their stand, in the India debate in the House of Commons. The debate afforded another opportunity to them to

repeat their accusations against Gandhi and the Congress—and Mr. Amery minced no words in his condemnation of either. But as Mr. Ammon pointed out, no good purpose could be served by harping back to past mistakes—even granting that Congress was in the wrong, a fact which couldn't be proved when all who could speak for the Congress were in prison. What was of more account was the need for a new approach.

If other leaders thought that talks with Mr Gandhi would be useful, observed Mr Graham White (Liberal), it would be a heavy responsibility to refuse them The solution of the Indian problem may need new men, new ideas and a new approach

It now rests with us, not with the Indians, declared Mr. Sloan (Labour), to make a new approach.

Their leaders are in jail. They are not free men to discuss this matter. It rests with us to re-open negotiations so peremptorily closed when Sir Stafford Cripps so hurriedly left India

Mr. Amery's speech was not likely to facilitate the peace move of the Indian leaders!

THE LEADERS' MEMORANDUM

In fact it made the task of the deputationists well nigh impossible. And then the procedure suggested by the Viceroy precluded personal discussion on points which the deputationists wished to raise. That procedure was no less than this: on being conducted to the Viceregal presence, the deputation was to read out the memorandum (an advance copy of which had been submitted to the Viceroy already); whereupon the Viceroy was to read out the reply kept ready by him. This finished, the deputationists were to bow themselves out. Was ever

negotiation carried out under such humiliating conditions? The deputationists wisely contented themselves with merely forwarding the memorandum and getting it with the Viceregal reply published simultaneously in the papers.

Urging the immediate need of facilities to explore with Gandhiji 'avenues for reconciliation', the Leaders' deputation, in their memorandum to the Viceroy, observed:

We are convinced that Gandhiji's assistance is essential for the restoration of goodwill and for a solution of the problem even for the interim period, including an adjustment of Hindu-Muslim claims On the other hand, unpleasant as it is, we cannot help feeling that refusing to permit us to have any contact with Gandhiji now would be equivalent to a determination on the part of Great Britain that there should be no attempt at a settlement of the problem and no reconciliation between Nationalist India and Britain. Whatever may be the immediate administrative convenience thereof, we hope that His Excellency will not take up this attitude.

We feel that though there is no present danger of Axis aggression in India, the strained relation between Government and people is fraught with grave evil and all that is possible should be done to replace it by a better feeling

The situation is growing more and more serious every day and we feel that a government commanding the loyal and affectionate co-operation of all the people can be constituted for the period of the war only if we are permitted to talk with Gandhiji, consult him and obtain his support.

The Viceroy in a curt reply—arguing in a 'circle' as 'C.R.' stated at a Press Conference—turned down the leaders' request. "The matter can be considered further," he said stiffly, "only if certain assurances and guarantees are previously obtained from the Congress leaders in detention."

So long as the Congress policy remains what it is, there can be no question of any alteration in our attitude towards the Congress. As I have already pointed out that neither from Mr. Gandhi nor from the Congress is there, or has there been, any suggestion of a change of mind or heart. They

had the opportunity and have the opportunity still to abandon that policy

With every respect for your good intentions and your anxiety to see a happy solution, I cannot agree to give special facilities such as you ask for contact with Mr. Gandhi and the Congress leaders while conditions remain as I have described them.

C.R. commenting on the Viceroy's reply to the delegation's memorandum said in the course of a statement

His Excellency's refusal to alter his attitude towards the Congress and the policy of seeking to humiliate nationalist India are bound to drive hostility underground and into undesirable channels. But apart from that it is most unfortunate that His Excellency while admitting the necessity for a National Government, insists on a policy which means, in effect, that throughout the period of the war, with the economic conditions created thereby, there can be no such Government in India, and that we must be content with an administration like the present with no backing except that of force.

## DEMAND FOR AN IMPARTIAL TRIBUNAL

The Non-party leaders returned to the charge again on May 22 (1943). Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. M R. Jayakar, Dr. S. Sinha, Sir Chunilal B. Mehta, Raja Maheshwar Dayal Seth and Kunwar Jagdish Prasad made a statement urging the appointment of an impartial tribunal to investigate the charges made against Congress leaders in detention or, in the alternative, release of those leaders so as to enable them to review the situation and attempt a solution of the deadlock.

Taking the situation as it is, we urge that the *ipse dixit* of the Executive Government should not be regarded as sufficient to justify the prolonged detention of imprisoned leaders without impartial investigation. Let those *ex parte* accusations be investigated by a tribunal of unchallengeable status and impartiality—a tribunal so constituted as to satisfy all reasonable men that it will carry on its investigation without fear or favour, and that its decisions will in no way be influenced by the published views of the

Executive Government. We consider that the setting up of *such a tribunal is in the highest interests of the* Government itself.

To the objection that the setting up of a tribunal would lead to public excitement, they replied:

That the continued detention of these leaders has already caused and is causing grave dissatisfaction and a keen sense of injustice in the public mind. If Mahatma Gandhi and his colleagues are not allowed to meet the charges against them until after the war and are to be kept in prison till then, the plain implication of this is that some of the most prominent Indian leaders will be kept in jail without trial for may be five years and some of them may even die during this long interval Mr Amery's *tauntingly provocative description of such detention as* 'innocuous isolation' has only increased public resentment. Government may think that they are strong enough to ignore all such feelings and that they are the sole judges as to when and whom to arrest and detain without trial for an unlimited period. Whatever may be said of such action on the part of a government of the people, it cannot apply to a government carried on by an irremovable executive irresponsible to the people of this country or to its legislature and in which the key positions are still in British hands. Whatever the legal position, the Government of India must in the circumstances seek a moral basis for its actions and it is with that object in view that we suggest an investigation by an impartial tribunal.

*In this connection, they drew pointed attention* to the Federal Court's decision which invalidated the arrest under the Defence rule.

Instead of availing themselves of the opportunity to restore those men to freedom under the sanction of a decision by the highest judicial authority in India, we *regret that the Government of India have tried to legalise* their action by a validating ordinance.

Mr. Amery, however, would not budge an inch. He told the House of Commons that the Government of India had no intention of staging a trial of Mr. Gandhi and other detained Congress leaders.

## GANDHIJI'S LETTER TO MR JINNAH

Apart from the leaders' continued efforts to solve the deadlock, Mr Gandhi himself was no less indefatigable in his endeavours even from his place of detention in the Aga Khan Palace. His letters to the Viceroy and the Government of India in August 1942, followed by his fast, all of which have been recorded in these pages, give ample proof of his earnestness and determination to leave no stone unturned to get to grips with the realities of the situation. But it was all to no purpose. Even Mr. Phillips, Roosevelt's personal envoy in India, was denied permission to meet Mr. Gandhi. And then the Government turned down Mr. Gandhi's request to forward his letter to Mr. Jinnah expressing a wish to see him. Doubtless the desired interview was not a social call, to discuss the weather! Everybody knew that it was to seek ways and means of ending the deadlock.

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