hint of an approaching end. But generally this mood passed and his overflowing vitality asserted itself, and we of his family had grown so used to his rich personality and the all-embracing warmth of his affection, that it was difficult for us to think of the world without him.

I was troubled by that look of his and my mind was full of forebodings. Yet I did not think that any danger to him lay in the near future. I was myself, for some unknown reason, keeping poor health just then.

Those were the last days of the first Round Table Conference, and we were a little amused—and I am afraid our amusement had a touch of disdain in it—at the final flourishes and gestures. Those speeches and platitudes and discussions seemed unreal and futile, but one reality stood out: that even in the hour of our country's sorest trial, and when our men and women had behaved so wonderfully, there were some of our countrymen who were prepared to ignore our struggle and give their moral support to the other side. It became clearer to us than it had been before how, under the deceptive cover of nationalism, conflicting economic interests were at work, and how those with vested interests were trying to preserve them for the future in the name of this very nationalism. The Round Table Conference was an obvious collection of these vested interests. Many of them had opposed our struggle; some had silently stood aside, reminding us, however, from time to time that "they also serve who only stand and wait." But the waiting period came to a sudden end when London beckoned, and they trooped up to ensure the safety of their own particular interests and to share in such further spoils as might be forthcoming. This general lining up in London was hastened by a realisation that the Congress was going increasingly to the Left and the masses were influencing it more and more. Instinctively, it was felt that if a root and branch political change came in India, it would mean the dominance, or at least the emergence into importance, of various mass elements, and these would inevitably press towards radical social changes and thus endanger those vested interests. The Indian vested interests drew back from this, to them, alarming prospect, and this led them to oppose any far-reaching political change. They wanted the British to remain in India as a deciding factor, to preserve the existing social structure and the existing vested interests. This was the real thought that underlay the insistence on Dominion Status. A well-known Indian Liberal leader once got rather irritated with me for insisting that, as an essential part
of a settlement with Great Britain, the British Army should withdraw immediately from India and the Indian Army must be put under Indian democratic control. He went to the length of saying that even if the British Government agreed to do this, he would oppose it with all his might. He opposed this obvious and essential preliminary to any kind of national freedom, therefore, not because it was difficult of achievement under existing circumstances, but because he considered it undesirable. Partly, it may be thought, this was due to fear of external invasion, and he wanted the British Army to protect us from this. Quite apart from the possibility or otherwise of such an invasion, it seems a humiliating thought for any Indian of spirit to ask for an outsider's protection. But I do not think this is the real reason behind the desire to keep the strong arm of the British in India; the British are required to preserve Indian vested interests against Indians themselves, against undiluted democracy, against an upsurge of the masses.

So the Indian Round Table Delegates, not only the declared reactionaries and communalists, but even those who called themselves progressives and nationalists, found much in common between themselves and the British Government. Nationalism indeed seemed to us a term of wide and varied reach, if it included in its embrace both those who went to gaol in India in furtherance of the struggle for freedom and those who shook hands and lined up with our gaolers and discussed a common policy with them. There were others also in our country, brave nationalists, fluent of speech, who encouraged the Swadeshi movement in every way, telling us that therein lay the heart of Swaraj, and calling upon their countrymen to further it even at a sacrifice. Fortunately the movement brought no sacrifice to them; it increased their businesses and their dividends. And while many went to prison or faced the lathi, they sat in their counting houses counting out their money. Later, when aggressive nationalism became a little more risky, they toned down their speeches, and condemned the ‘extremists’, and made pacts and agreements with the other party.

We did not really mind or care what the Round Table Conference did. It was far away, unreal and shadowy, and the struggle lay here in our towns and villages. We had no illusions about the speedy termination of our struggle or about the dangers ahead, and yet the events of 1930 had given us a certain confidence in our national strength and stamina, and with that confidence we faced the future.

One incident in December or early January had pained us
greatly. Mr. Srinivas Sastri, in a speech at Edinburgh (where, I think, the freedom of the city was presented to him), referred with some contempt to those who were going to prison in India in the civil disobedience movement. That speech, and especially the occasion for it, hurt us to the quick. For though we differed from Mr. Sastri greatly in politics, we respected him.

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald had wound up the Round Table Conference with one of his usual brotherly speeches, and this seemed to contain an implied appeal to the Congress to give up its evil ways and join the happy throng. Just about that time—the middle of January 1931—the Congress Working Committee met at Allahabad, and, among other matters, this speech and appeal were also considered. I was in Naini Prison then, and I heard of the proceedings on my release. Father had just returned from Calcutta, and, though he was very ill, he insisted on the members gathering round his bed and discussing this subject there. Some one made a suggestion in favour of a gesture to Mr. MacDonald and toning down civil disobedience. This excited father greatly, and he sat up in bed and declared that he would not compromise till the national objective had been gained, and that he would carry on the struggle, even if he was the sole person left to do so. This excitement was very bad for him, and as his temperature shot up, the doctors succeeded at last in removing the visitors and leaving him alone.

Largely at his instance, the Working Committee passed an uncompromising resolution. Before this was published, a cable came from Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Srinivas Sastri addressed to father, requesting the Congress, through him, not to come to any decision till they had had an opportunity of a discussion. They were already on their way home. A reply was sent to the effect that a resolution had already been passed by the Working Committee, but this would be withheld from the Press till Messrs. Sapru and Sastri had arrived and had a discussion.

Inside the prison we did not know of these developments outside. But we knew that something was afoot and we were rather worried. What filled our minds much more was the approach of January 26th, the first anniversary of Independence Day, and we wondered how this would be celebrated. It was observed, as we learnt subsequently, all over the country by the holding of mass meetings which confirmed the resolution of independence, and passed an identical resolution called the "Resolution of Remembrance".\(^1\) The organisation of this

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\(^1\) This resolution is given in Appendix C. (p. 615)
celebration was a remarkable feat, for newspapers and printing presses were not available, nor could the post or telegraph be utilised. And yet an identical resolution, in the particular language of the province concerned, was passed at large gatherings held at more or less the same times at innumerable places, urban and rural, throughout the country. Most of these gatherings were held in defiance of the law and were forcibly dispersed by the police.

January 26th found us in Naini Prison musing of the year that was past and of the year that was to come. In the forenoon I was told suddenly that my father's condition was serious and that I must go home immediately. On enquiry, I was informed that I was being discharged. Ranjit also accompanied me.

That evening, many other persons were discharged from various prisons throughout India. These were the original and substitute members of the Congress Working Committee. The Government was giving us a chance to meet and consider the situation. So, in any event, I would have been discharged that evening. Father's condition hastened my release by a few hours. Kamala also was discharged that day from her Lucknow prison after a brief gaol life of 26 days. She too was a substitute member of the Working Committee.
XXXIII

DEATH OF MY FATHER

I saw father after two weeks, for he had visited me at Naini on January 14th when his appearance had given me a shock. He had now changed for the worse, and his face was even more swollen. He had some little difficulty in speaking, and his mind was not always quite clear. But his old will remained, and this held on and kept the body and mind functioning.

He was pleased to see Ranjit and me. A day or two later Ranjit (who did not come in the category of Working Committee members) was taken back to Naini Prison. This upset father, and he was continually asking for him and complaining that when so many people were coming to see him from distant parts of India, his own son-in-law was kept away. The doctors were worried by this insistence, and it was obvious that it was doing father no good. After three or four days, I think at the doctors' suggestion, the U.P. Government released Ranjit.

On January 26th, the same day that I was discharged, Gandhiji was also discharged from Yeravda Prison. I was anxious to have him in Allahabad, and when I mentioned his release to father, I found that he was eager to see him. The very next day Gandhiji started from Bombay after a stupendous mass meeting of welcome there, such as even Bombay had not seen before. He arrived at Allahabad late at night, but father was lying awake, waiting for him, and his presence and the few words he uttered had a markedly soothing effect on father. To my mother also his coming brought solace and relief.

The various Working Committee members, original and substitute, who had been released, were meanwhile at a loose end and were waiting for directions about a meeting. Many of them, anxious about father, wanted to come to Allahabad immediately. It was decided therefore to summon them all forthwith to a meeting at Allahabad. Two days later thirty or forty of them arrived, and their meetings took place in Swaraj Bhawan next to our house. I went to these meetings from time to time, but I was much too distraught to take any effective part in them, and I have at present no recollection whatever of what their decisions were. I suppose they were in favour of a continuance of the civil disobedience movement.

All these old friends and colleagues who had come, many of
them freshly out of prison and expecting to go back again soon, wanted to visit father and to have what was likely to be a last glimpse and a last farewell of him. They came to him in twos and threes in the mornings and evenings, and father insisted on sitting up in an easy-chair to receive his old comrades. There he sat, massively and rather expressionlessly, for the swelling on his face prevented much play of expression. But as one old friend came after another and comrade succeeded comrade, there was a glitter in his eye and recognition of them, and his head bowed a little and his hands joined in salutation. And though he could not speak much, sometimes he would say a few words, and even then his old humour did not leave him. There he sat like an old lion mortally wounded and with his physical strength almost gone, but still very leonine and kingly. As I watched him, I wondered what thoughts passed through his head, or was he past taking interest in our activities? He was evidently often struggling with himself, trying to keep a grip of things which threatened to slip away from his grasp. To the end this struggle continued, and he did not give in, occasionally speaking to us with extreme clarity. Even when a constriction in his throat made it difficult for him to make himself understood, he took to writing on slips of paper what he wanted to say.

He took practically no interest in the Working Committee meetings which were taking place next door. A fortnight earlier they would have excited him, but now he felt that he was already far away from such happenings. "I am going soon, Mahatmaji," he said to Gandhiji, "and I shall not be here to see Swaraj. But I know that you have won it and will soon have it."

Most of the people who had come from other cities and provinces departed. Gandhiji remained, and a few intimate friends and near relatives, and the three eminent doctors, old friends of his, to whom, he used to say, he had handed over his body for safe keeping—M. A. Ansari, Bidhan Chandra Roy, and Jivraj Mehta. On the morning of February 4th he seemed to be a little better, and it was decided to take advantage of this and remove him to Lucknow, where there were facilities for deep X-ray treatment which Allahabad did not possess. That very day we took him by car, Gandhiji and a large party following us. We went slowly, but he was nevertheless exhausted. The next day he seemed to be getting over the fatigue, and yet there were some disquieting symptoms. Early next morning, February 6th, I was watching by his bedside. He had had a
troublesome and restless night; suddenly I noticed that his face grew calm and the sense of struggle vanished from it. I thought that he had fallen asleep, and I was glad of it. But my mother’s perceptions were keener, and she uttered a cry. I turned to her and begged her not to disturb him as he had fallen asleep. But that sleep was his last long sleep, and from it there was no awakening.

We brought his body that very day by car to Allahabad. I sat in that car and Ranjit drove it, and there was Hari, father’s favourite personal servant. Behind us came another car containing my mother and Gandhiji, and then other cars. I was dazed all that day, hardly realising what had happened, and a succession of events and large crowds kept me from thinking. Great crowds in Lucknow, gathered together at brief notice—the swift dash from Lucknow to Allahabad sitting by the body, wrapped in our national flag, and with a big flag flying above—the arrival at Allahabad, and the huge crowds that had gathered for miles to pay homage to his memory. There were some ceremonies at home, and then the last journey to the Ganga with a mighty concourse of people. As evening fell on the river bank on that winter day, the great flames leapt up and consumed that body which had meant so much to us who were close to him as well as to millions in India. Gandhiji said a few moving words to the multitude, and then all of us crept silently home. The stars were out and shining brightly when we returned, lonely and desolate.

Many thousands of messages of sympathy came to my mother and to me. Lord and Lady Irwin also sent my mother a courteous message. This tremendous volume of goodwill and sympathy took away somewhat the sting from our sorrow, but it was, above all, the wonderfully soothing and healing presence of Gandhi that helped my mother and all of us to face that crisis in our lives.

I found it difficult to realise that he had gone. Three months later I was in Ceylon with my wife and daughter, and we were spending a few quiet and restful days at Nuwara Eliya. I liked the place, and it struck me suddenly that it would suit father. Why not send for him? He must be tired out, and rest would do him good. I was on the point of sending a telegram to him to Allahabad.

On our return to Allahabad from Ceylon the post brought one day a remarkable letter. The envelope was addressed to me in father’s handwriting, and it bore innumerable marks and stamps of different post offices. I opened it in amazement to
find that it was, indeed, a letter from father to me, only it was dated the 28th February, 1926. It was delivered to me in the summer of 1931, thus taking five and a half years in its journey. The letter had been written by father at Ahmedabad on the eve of my departure for Europe with Kamala in 1926. It was addressed to me to Bombay care of the Italian Lloyd steamer on which we were travelling. Apparently it just missed us there, and then it visited various places, and perhaps lay in many pigeon-holes till some enterprising person sent it on to me. Curiously enough, it was a letter of farewell.
THE DELHI PACT

On the day and almost at the very hour of my father's death, a large group of the Indian members of the Round Table Conference landed in Bombay. Mr. Srinivasa Sastri and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and perhaps some others whom I do not remember, came direct to Allahabad. Gandhiji and some members of the Congress Working Committee were already there. There were some private meetings at our house at which an account was given of what the R.T.C. had done. At the very commencement, however, there was a little incident. Mr. Sastri, entirely of his own accord, expressed regret for what he had said at Edinburgh. He added that he was much influenced always by his surroundings and his 'exuberant verbosity' was apt to run away with him.

The Round Table Delegates did not tell us anything of importance about the R.T.C. that we did not know already. They did tell us of various intrigues behind the scenes, of what Lord So-and-So said or Sir Somebody did in private. Our Liberal friends in India have always seemed to me to attach more importance to private talks and gossip with and about high officials than to principles or to the realities of the Indian situation. Our informal discussions with the Liberal leaders did not lead to anything, and our previous opinions were only confirmed that the R.T.C. decisions had not the least value. Some one then suggested—I forget who he was—that Gandhiji should write to the Viceroy and ask for an interview and have a frank talk with him. He agreed to do so, 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 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.

Conscious of this power, Gandhiji always welcomed a meeting with those who disagreed with him. But it was one thing to deal with individuals on personal or minor issues; it was quite another matter to come up against an impersonal thing like the British Government representing triumphant imperialism. Realising this, Gandhiji went to the interview with Lord Irwin with no high expectation. The Civil Disobedience movement was still going on, though it had toned down because there was much talk of pourparlers with Government.

The interview was arranged without delay, and Gandhiji went off to Delhi, telling us that if there were any serious conversations with the Viceroy regarding a provisional settlement, he would send for the members of the Working Committee. A few days later we were all summoned to Delhi. For three weeks we remained there, meeting daily and having long and exhausting discussions. Gandhiji had frequent interviews with Lord Irwin, but sometimes there was a gap of three or four days, probably because the Government of India was communicating with the India Office in London. Sometimes apparently small matters or even certain words would hold up progress. One such word was ‘suspension’ of civil disobedience. Gandhiji had all along made it clear that civil disobedience could not be finally stopped or given up, as it was the only weapon in the hands of the people. It could, however, be suspended. Lord Irwin objected to this word and wanted finality about the word, to which Gandhiji would not agree. Ultimately the word ‘discontinued’ was used. There were also prolonged discussions about the picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops. Most of our time was spent on considering provisional arrangements for a pact, and little attention was given to fundamental matters. Probably it was thought that these basic matters could be considered later under more favourable conditions when a provisional settlement had been made and the day-to-day struggle discontinued. We looked upon those talks as leading up to an armistice, which might then be followed by further conversations on the real matters in issue.

Delhi attracted in those days all manner of people. There were many foreign journalists, especially Americans, and they were somewhat annoyed with us for our reticence. They would
tell us that they got much more news about the Gandhiji-Irwin conversations from the New Delhi Secretariat than from us, which was a fact. Then there were many people of high degree who hurried to pay their respects to Gandhiji, for was not the Mahatma's star in the ascendant? It was very amusing to see these people, who had kept far away from Gandhiji and the Congress and often condemned them, now hastening to make amends. The Congress seemed to have made good, and no one knew what the future might hold. Anyway, it was safer to keep on good terms with the Congress and its leaders. A year later yet another change was witnessed in them, and they were shouting their deep abhorrence of the Congress and all its works and their utter dissociation from it.

Even the communalists were stirred by events, and sensed with some apprehension that they might not occupy a very prominent place in the coming order. And so, many of them came to the Mahatma and assured him that they were perfectly willing to come to terms on the communal issue and, if only he would take the initiative, there would be no difficulty about a settlement.

A ceaseless stream of people, of high and low degree, came to Dr. Ansari's house, where Gandhiji and most of us were staying, and in our leisure moments we watched them with interest and profit. For some years our chief contacts had been with the poor in towns and villages and those who were down and out in gaols. The very prosperous gentlemen who came to visit Gandhiji showed us another side of human nature, and a very adaptable side, for wherever they sensed power and success, they turned to it and welcomed it with the sunshine of their smiles. Many of them were staunch pillars of the British Government in India. It was comforting to know that they would become equally staunch pillars of any other government that might flourish in India.

Often in those days I used to accompany Gandhiji in his early morning walks in New Delhi. That was usually the only time one had a chance of talking to him, for the rest of the day was cut up into little bits, each minute allotted to somebody or something. Even the early morning walk was sometimes given over to an interviewer, usually from abroad, or to a friend, come for a personal consultation. We talked of many matters, of the past, of the present, and especially of the future. I remember how he surprised me with one of his ideas about the future of the Congress. I had imagined that the Congress, as such, would automatically cease to exist with the
coming of freedom. He thought that the Congress should continue, but on one condition: that it passed a self-denying ordinance, laying it down that none of its members could accept a paid job under the State, and if any one wanted such a post of authority in the State, he would have to leave the Congress. I do not at present remember how he worked this out, but the whole idea underlying it was that the Congress by its detachment and having no axe to grind, could exercise tremendous moral pressure on the Executive as well as other departments of the Government, and thus keep them on the right track.

Now this is an extraordinary idea which I find it difficult to grasp, and innumerable difficulties present themselves. It seems to me that such an assembly, if it could be conceived, would be exploited by some vested interest. But practicality apart, it does help one to understand a little the background of Gandhiji’s thought. It is the very opposite of the modern idea of a party which is built up to seize the State power in order to refashion the political and economic structure according to certain pre-conceived ideas; or that kind of party, found often enough nowadays, whose function seems to be (to quote Mr. R. H. Tawney) to offer the largest possible number of carrots to the largest number of donkeys.

Gandhiji’s conception of democracy is definitely a metaphysical one. It has nothing to do with numbers or majority or representation in the ordinary sense. It is based on service and sacrifice, and it uses moral pressure. In a recent statement he defines a democrat. He claims to be ‘a born democrat’. "I make that claim, if complete identification with the poorest of mankind, longing to live no better than they, and a corresponding conscious effort to approach that level to the best of one’s ability, can entitle one to make it.” He further discusses democracy:

"Let us recognise the fact that the Congress enjoys the prestige of a democratic character and influence not by the number of delegates and visitors it has drawn to its annual function, but by an ever-increasing amount of service it has rendered. Western democracy is on its trial, if it has not already proved a failure. May it be reserved to India to evolve the true science of democracy by giving a visible demonstration of its success.

"Corruption and hypocrisy ought not to be the inevitable products of democracy, as they undoubtedly are to-day. Nor

1 Dated September 17, 1934.
is bulk a true test of democracy. True democracy is not inconsistent with a few persons representing the spirit, the hope and the aspirations of those whom they claim to represent. I hold that democracy cannot be evolved by forcible methods. The spirit of democracy cannot be imposed from without; it has to come from within."

This is certainly not Western democracy, as he himself says; but, curiously enough, there is some similarity to the communist conception of democracy, for that, too, has a metaphysical touch. A few communists will claim to represent the real needs and desires of the masses, even though the latter may themselves be unaware of them. The mass will become a metaphysical conception with them, and it is this that they claim to represent. The similarity, however, is slight and does not take us far; the differences in outlook and approach are far greater, notably in regard to methods and force.

Whether Gandhiji is a democrat or not, he does represent the peasant masses of India; he is the quintessence of the conscious and subconscious 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.

India, even urban India, even the new industrial India, had the impress of the peasant upon her, and it was natural enough for her to make this son of hers, so like her and yet so unlike, an idol and a beloved leader. He revived ancient and half-forgotten memories, and gave her glimpses of her own soul. Crushed in the dark misery of the present, she had tried to find relief in helpless muttering and in vague dreams of the past and the future, but he came and gave hope to her mind and strength to her much-battered body, and the future became an alluring vision. Two-faced like Janus, she looked both backwards into the past and forward into the future, and tried to combine the two.

Many of us had cut adrift from this peasant outlook, and the old ways of thought and custom and religion had become alien to us. We called ourselves modern, and thought in terms of 'progress', and industrialisation and a higher standard of living and collectivisation. We considered the peasant's viewpoint reactionary, and some, and a growing number, looked with favour towards socialism and communism. How came we to associate ourselves with Gandhiji politically, and to become, in many instances, his devoted followers? The question is hard to answer, and to one who does not know Gandhiji, no answer is likely to satisfy. Personality is an indefinable thing, a strange force that has power over the souls of men, and he possesses this in ample measure, and to all who come to him he often appears in a different aspect. He attracted people, but it was ultimately intellectual conviction that brought them to him and kept them there. They did not agree with his philosophy of life, or even with many of his ideals. Often they did not understand him. But the action that he proposed was something tangible which could be understood and appreciated intellectually. Any action would have been welcome after the long tradition of inaction which our spineless politics had nurtured; brave and effective action with an ethical halo about it had an irresistible appeal, both to the intellect and the emotions. Step by step he convinced us of the rightness of the action, and we went with him, although we did not accept his philosophy. To divorce action from the thought underlying it was not perhaps a proper procedure and was bound to lead to mental conflict and trouble later. Vaguely we hoped that
Gandhiji, being essentially a man of action and very sensitive to changing conditions, would advance along the line that seemed to us to be right. And in any event the road he was following was the right one thus far, and if the future meant a parting it would be folly to anticipate it.

All this shows that we were by no means clear or certain in our minds. Always we had the feeling that while we might be more logical, Gandhiji knew India far better than we did, and a man who could command such tremendous devotion and loyalty must have something in him that corresponded to the needs and aspirations of the masses. If we could convince him, we felt that we could also convert these masses. And it seemed possible to convince him for, in spite of his peasant outlook, he was the born rebel, a revolutionary out for big changes, whom no fear of consequences could stop.

How he disciplined our lazy and demoralised people and made them work—not by force or any material inducement, but by a gentle look and a soft word and, above all, by personal example! In the early days of Satyagraha in India, as long ago as 1919, I remember how Umar Sobani of Bombay called him the ‘beloved slave-driver’. Much had happened in the dozen years since then. Umar had not lived to see these changes, but we who had been more fortunate looked back from those early months of 1931 with joy and elation. Nineteen-thirty had, indeed, been a wonder yeat for us, and Gandhiji seemed to have changed the face of our country with his magic touch. No one was foolish enough to think that we had triumphed finally over the British Government. Our feeling of elation had little to do with the Government. We were proud of our people, of our women folk, of our youth, of our children for the part they had played in the movement. It was a spiritual gain, valuable at any time and to any people, but doubly so to us, a subject and down-trodden people. And we were anxious that nothing should happen to take this away from us.

To me, personally, Gandhiji had always shown extraordinary kindness and consideration, and my father’s death had brought him particularly near to me. He had always listened patiently to whatever I had to say, and had made every effort to meet my wishes. This had, indeed, led me to think that perhaps some colleagues and I could influence him continuously in a socialist direction, and he had himself said that he was prepared to go step by step as he saw his way to do so. It seemed to me almost inevitable then that he would accept the fundamental socialist
position, as I saw no other way out from the violence and in-
justice and waste and misery of the existing order. He might
disagree about the methods but not about the ideal. So I
thought then, but I realise now that there are basic differences
between Gandhiji’s ideals and the socialist objective.

To go back to Delhi in February 1931. The Gandhi-Irwin
talks went on from time to time, and then they came to a
sudden stop. For several days Gandhiji was not sent for by
the Viceroy, and it seemed to us that the break had come. The
members of the Working Committee prepared to leave Delhi
for their respective provinces. Before leaving we conferred to-
gether about our future plans and civil disobedience (which
was in theory still going on). We felt certain that as soon as
the break was definitely announced we would have no further
opportunity of meeting and conferring together. We expected
arrest, and we had been told, and it seemed likely, that the
Government would launch a fierce offensive against the Con-
gress; something much fiercer than we had so far had. So we
met together at what we thought was our final meeting, and
we passed various resolutions to guide the movement in the
future. One resolution had a certain significance. So far, the
practice had been for each Acting-President to nominate his
successor in case of arrest, and also to fill by nomination the
vacancies in the Working Committee. The substitute Working
Committees hardly functioned and had little authority to take
the initiative in any matter. They could only go to prison.
There was always a risk, however, that this continuous process
of substitution might place the Congress in a false position.
There were obvious dangers to it. The Working Committee in
Delhi, therefore, decided that in future there should be no
nominations of acting-Presidents or substitute members. So
long as any members (or member) of the original Committee
were out of gaol they would function as the full Committee.
When all of them were in prison, then there would be no
Committee functioning, but, we said rather grandiloquently,
the powers of the Working Committee would then vest in each
man and woman in the country, and we called upon them to
carry on the struggle uncompromisingly.

This resolution was a brave lead for a continuance of the
fight, and it left no loophole for compromise. It was also a
recognition of the fact that it was becoming increasingly diffi-
cult for our headquarters to keep in touch with all parts of
the country and to issue instructions regularly. This was
inevitable, as most of our workers were well-known men and
women, and they worked openly. They could always be arrested. During 1930 a secret courier service had been built up to carry instructions, bring reports, and do inspection work. This worked well, and it demonstrated to us that we could organise secret information work of this kind with great success. But to some extent it did not fit in with our open movement, and Gandhiji was averse to it. In the absence of instructions from headquarters we had to place the responsibility for carrying on the work on local people, as otherwise they would simply wait helplessly for directions from above and do nothing. When possible, of course, instructions were sent.

So we passed this resolution and other resolutions (none of them were published or became effective because of subsequent events) and packed up to go. Just then another summons came from Lord Irwin, and the conversations were resumed.

On the night of the 4th of March we waited till midnight for Gandhiji’s return from the Viceroy’s house. He came back about 2 a.m., and we were woken up and told that an agreement had been reached. We saw the draft. I knew most of the clauses, for they had been often discussed, but, at the very top, clause 2 with its reference to safeguards, etc., gave me a tremendous shock. I was wholly unprepared for it. I said nothing then, and we all retired.

There was nothing more to be said. The thing had been done, our leader had committed himself; and even if we disagreed with him, what could we do? Throw him over? Break from him? Announce our disagreement? That might bring some personal satisfaction to an individual, but it made no difference to the final decision. The Civil Disobedience movement was ended for the time being at least, and not even the Working Committee could push it on now, when the Government could declare that Mr. Gandhi had already agreed to a settlement. I was perfectly willing, as were our other colleagues, to suspend civil disobedience and to come to a temporary settle-

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1 Clause 2 of the Delhi Settlement (dated March 5, 1931): “As regards constitutional questions, the scope of future discussion is stated, with the assent of His Majesty’s Government, to be with the object of considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme there outlined, Federation is an essential part; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India, for such matters as, for instance, defence; external affairs; the position of minorities; the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations.”
ment with the Government. It was not an easy matter for any of us to send our comrades back to gaol, or to be instrumental in keeping many thousands in prison who were already there. Prison is not a pleasant place to spend our days and nights, though many of us may train ourselves for it and talk lightly of its crushing routine. Besides, three weeks or more of conversations between Gandhiji and Lord Irwin had led the country to expect that a settlement was coming, and a final break would have been a disappointment. So all of us in the Working Committee were decidedly in favour of a provisional settlement (for obviously it could be nothing more), provided that thereby we did not surrender any vital position.

So far as I was concerned I was not very much concerned with many of the points that had given rise to great argument. Two matters interested me above all others. One was that our objective of independence should in no way be toned down, and the second was the effect of the settlement on our U.P. agrarian situation. Our no-tax or no-rent campaign had so far been a great success, and in certain areas hardly any collections had been made. The peasantry were in fine mettle, and world agricultural conditions and prices were worse than ever, making it difficult for them to pay. Our no-tax campaign had been both political and economic. If there was a provisional settlement with the Government, civil disobedience would be withdrawn and the political basis for the no-tax campaign would go. But what of the economic side, of the terrible fall in prices, and of the inability of most of the peasants to pay anything like the demand? Gandhiji had made this point quite clear to Lord Irwin. He had stated that while the no-tax campaign would be withdrawn, we could not advise the peasantry to pay beyond their capacity. This matter could not be discussed in detail with the Government of India as it was a provincial matter. We were assured that the Provincial Government would gladly confer with us on the subject and would do everything in its power to relieve the distress of the peasantry. It was a vague assurance, but, under the circumstances, it was difficult to have anything more definite. This matter was thus, for the time being, disposed of.

The other and vital question of our objective, of independence, remained. And now I saw in that Clause 2 of the settlement that even this seemed to be jeopardised. Was it for this that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this? The independence resolution of the Congress, the pledge of January 26, so often
repeated? So I lay and pondered on that March night, and in my heart there was a great emptiness as of something precious gone, almost beyond recall.

"This is the way the world ends,
Not with a bang, but a whimper."
XXXV

KARACHI CONGRESS

Gandhiji learnt indirectly of my distress, and the next morning he asked me to accompany him in his usual walk. We had a long talk, and he tried to convince me that nothing vital had been lost, no surrender of principle made. He interpreted Clause 2 of the agreement in a particular way so as to make it fit in with our demand for independence, relying chiefly on the words in it: “in the interests of India.” The interpretation seemed to me to be a forced one, and I was not convinced, but I was somewhat soothed by his talk. The merits of the agreement apart, I told him that his way of springing surprises upon us frightened me; there was something unknown about him which, in spite of the closest association for fourteen years, I could not understand at all and which filled me with apprehension. He admitted the presence of this unknown element in him, and said that he himself could not answer for it or foretell what it might lead to.

For a day or two I wobbled, not knowing what to do. There was no question of opposing or preventing that agreement then. That stage was past, and all I could do was to dissociate myself theoretically from it, though accepting it as a matter of fact. That would have soothed my personal vanity, but how did it help the larger issue? Would it not be better to accept gracefully what had been done, and put the most favourable interpretation upon it, as Gandhi ji had done? In an interview to the Press immediately after the agreement he had stressed that interpretation and that we stood completely by independence. He went to Lord Irwin and made this point quite clear, so that there might be no misapprehension then or in the future. In the event of the Congress sending any representative to the Round Table Conference, he told him, it could only be on this basis and to advance this claim. Lord Irwin could not, of course, admit the claim, but he recognised the right of the Congress to advance it.

So I decided, not without great mental conflict and physical distress, to accept the agreement and work for it wholeheartedly. There appeared to me to be no middle way.

In the course of Gandhi ji’s interviews with Lord Irwin prior to the agreement, as well as after, he had pleaded for
the release of political prisoners other than the civil disobedience prisoners. The latter were going to be discharged as part of the agreement itself. But there were thousands of others, both those convicted after trial and detenus kept without any charge, trial or conviction. Many of these detenus had been kept so for years, and there had always been a great deal of resentment all over India, and especially in Bengal which was most affected, at this method of imprisonment without trial. Like the Chief of the General Staff in Penguin Island (or was it in the Dreyfus case?) the Government of India believed that no proofs are the best proofs. No proofs cannot be disproved. The detenus were alleged by the Government to be actual or potential revolutionaries of the violent type. Gandhiji had pleaded for their release, not necessarily as part of the agreement, but as eminently desirable in order to relieve political tension and establish a more normal atmosphere in Bengal. But the Government was not agreeable to this.

Nor did the Government agree to Gandhiji's hard pleading for the commutation of Bhagat Singh's death sentence. This also had nothing to do with the agreement, and Gandhiji pressed for it separately because of the very strong feeling all over India on this subject. He pleaded in vain.

I remember a curious incident about that time, which gave me an insight into the mind of the terrorist group in India. This took place soon after my discharge from prison, either a little before father's death or a few days after. A stranger came to see me at our house, and I was told that he was Chandrashekhar Azad. I had never seen him before, but I had heard of him ten years earlier, when he had non-co-operated from school and gone to prison during the N.C.O. movement in 1921. A boy of fifteen or so then, he had been flogged in prison for some breach of gaol discipline. Later he had drifted towards the terrorists, and he became one of their prominent men in north India. All this I had heard vaguely, and I had taken no interest in these rumours. I was surprised, therefore, to see him. He had been induced to visit me because of the general expectation (owing to our release) that some negotiations between the Government and the Congress were likely. He wanted to know if, in case of a settlement, his group of people would have any peace. Would they still be considered, and treated, as outlaws; hunted out from place to place, with a price on their heads, and the prospect of the gallows ever before them? Or was there a possibility of their being allowed to pursue peaceful vocations? He told me that as far as he was
concerned, as well as many of his associates, they were convinced now that purely terrorist methods were futile and did no good. He was not, however, prepared to believe that India would gain her freedom wholly by peaceful methods. He thought that some time in the future a violent conflict might take place, but this would not be terrorism. He ruled out terrorism as such, so far as the question of Indian freedom was concerned. But then, he added, what was he to do when no chance was given him to settle down, as he was being hounded all the time? Many of the terroristic acts that had occurred recently, according to him, were purely in self-defence.

I was glad to learn from Azad, and I had confirmation of this subsequently, that the belief in terrorism was dying down. As a group notion, indeed, it had practically gone, and individual and sporadic cases were probably due to some special reason, act of reprisal, or individual aberration, and not to a general idea. This did not mean, of course, that the old terrorists or their new associates had become converts to non-violence, or admirers of British rule. But they did not think in terms of terrorism as they used to. Many of them, it seems to me, have definitely the fascist mentality.

I tried to explain to Chandrashekhar Azad what my philosophy of political action was, and tried to convert him to my view-point. But I had no answer to his basic question: what was he to do now? Nothing was likely to happen that would bring him, or his like, any relief or peace. All I could suggest was that he should use his influence to prevent the occurrence of terrorist acts in the future, for these could only injure the larger cause as well as his own group.

Two or three weeks later, while the Gandhi–Irwin talks were going on, I heard at Delhi that Chandrashekhar Azad had been shot down and killed by the police in Allahabad. He was recognised in the day-time in a park, and was surrounded by a large force of police. He tried to defend himself from behind a tree; there was quite a shooting-match, and he injured one or two policemen before he was shot down.

I left Delhi soon after the provisional settlement was arrived at, and went to Lucknow. We had taken immediate steps to stop civil disobedience all over the country, and the whole Congress organisation had responded to our new instructions with remarkable discipline. We had many people in our ranks who were dissatisfied, many fire-brands, and we had no means of compelling them to desist from the old activities. But without a single exception known to me, the huge organisation
accepted in practice the new rôle, though many criticised it. I was particularly interested in the reactions in our province, as the no-tax campaign was going strong in some areas there. Our first job was to see that the civil disobedience prisoners were discharged. Thousands of these were discharged from day to day, and after some time only a number of disputed cases were left in prison; apart, of course, from the thousands of detenus and those convicted for violent activities, who were not released.

These discharged prisoners, when they went home to their town or villages, were naturally welcomed back by their people. There were often decorations and buntings, and processions, and meetings, and speeches and addresses of welcome. It was all very natural and to be expected, but the change was sudden from the time when the police  had always in evidence, and meetings and processions were forcibly dispersed. The police felt rather uncomfortable, and probably there was a feeling of triumph among many of our people who came out of gaol. There was little enough reason to be triumphal, but a coming out of gaol always brings a feeling of elation (unless the spirit has been crushed in gaol), and mass gaol deliveries add very much to this exhilaration.

I mention this fact here, because in later months great exception was taken by the Government to this ‘air of triumph’, and it was made a charge against us! Brought up and living always in an authoritarian atmosphere, with a military notion of government and with no roots or supports in the people, nothing is more painful to them than a weakening of what they consider their prestige. None of us, so far as I know, had given the least thought to the matter, and it was with great surprise that we learnt later that Government officials, from the heights of Simla to the plains below, were simmering with anger and wounded pride at this impudence of the people. The newspapers that echo their views have not got over it yet; and even now, three and a half years later, they refer with almost a visible shudder to those bold, bad days when, according to them, Congressmen went about in triumph as if they had won a great victory. These outbursts on the part of the Government and its friends in the Press, came as a revelation to us. They showed what a state of nerves they had been in, what suppressions they had put up with, resulting in all manner of complexes. It was extraordinary that a few processions and a few speeches of our rank-and-file men should so upset them.
As a matter of fact there was in Congress ranks then, and even less in the leadership, no idea of having 'defeated' the British Government. But there was a feeling of triumph amongst us at our own people's sacrifices and courage. We were a little proud of what the country had done in 1930; it raised us in our self-esteem, gave us confidence, and even our littlest volunteer straightened himself and held up his head at the thought of this. We also felt that this great effort, which had attracted world attention, had brought enormous pressure on the British Government, and had taken us nearer our goal. All this had nothing to do with defeating the Government, and indeed many of us were fully conscious of the fact that the Government had done rather well in the Delhi Pact. Those of us who pointed out that we were far from our goal, and big and difficult struggles lay ahead, were accused by friends of the Government of war-mongering and going behind the spirit of the Delhi Pact.

In the United Provinces we had now to face the agrarian problem. Our policy now was one of co-operation, as far as possible, with the British Government and immediately we put ourselves in touch with the U.P. Provincial Government. After a long interval—for a dozen years we had had no official dealings with them—I visited some of the high officials of the province to discuss the agrarian question. We also carried on a lengthy correspondence on the subject. Our Provincial Congress Committee appointed one of our leading men, Govind Ballabh Pant, as a special liaison officer to keep in continuous touch with the Provincial Government. The facts of the agrarian crisis, of the tremendous fall in agricultural prices, and of the inability of the average peasant to pay the rent demanded, were admitted. The question was, what remissions should be given, and in this matter the initiative lay with the Provincial Government. Ordinarily the Government dealt with the landlords alone, and not with their tenants direct, and it was for the landlords to reduce or remit rents. But the landlords refused to do any such thing, so long as the Government did not remit part of their revenue demand; and in any event they were not, as a rule, keen on giving remissions to their tenantry. So the decision rested with the Government.

The Provincial Congress Committee had told the peasantry that the no-tax campaign was off, and they should pay as much of their rent as they could. But, as their representatives, they had demanded heavy remissions. For a long time Government took no action. Probably it was handicapped by the absence
on leave or special duty of the Governor, Sir Malcolm Hailey. Prompt and far-reaching action was necessary, but the acting Governor and his colleagues hesitated to commit themselves, and preferred to delay matters till the return of Sir Malcolm Hailey in the summer. This indecision and delay made a difficult situation worse, and resulted in much suffering for the tenantry.

I had a little breakdown in health soon after the Delhi Pact. Even in gaol I had been unwell, and then the shock of father’s death, followed immediately by the long strain of the Delhi negotiations, proved too much for my physical health. I recovered somewhat for the Karachi Congress.

Karachi is far to the north-west of India, difficult of access, and partly cut off from the rest of the country by desert regions. But it attracted a great gathering from distant parts, and truly represented the temper of the country at the moment. There was a feeling of quiet, but deep satisfaction at the growing strength of the national movement in India; pride in the Congress organisation which had so far worthily responded to the heavy calls made on it, and fully justified itself by its disciplined sacrifice; a confidence in our people, and a restrained enthusiasm. At the same time there was a heavy sense of responsibility at the tremendous problems and perils ahead; our words and resolutions were now the preludes to action on a national scale, and could not be lightly uttered or passed. The Delhi Pact, though accepted by the great majority, was not popular or liked, and there was a fear that it might lead us to all manner of compromising situations. Somehow it seemed to take away from the clarity of the issues before the country. On the very eve of the Congress, a new element of resentment had crept in—the execution of Bhagat Singh. This feeling was especially marked in North India, and Karachi, being itself in the north, had attracted large numbers of people from the Punjab.

The Karachi Congress was an even greater personal triumph for Gandhiji than any previous Congress had been. The president, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, was one of the most popular and forceful men in India with the prestige of victorious leadership in Gujarat, but it was the Mahatma who dominated the scene. The Congress also had a strong contingent of ‘Red-shirts’ from the Frontier Province under the leadership of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. These Redshirts were popular and drew a cheer wherever they went, for India had been impressed by their extraordinary and peaceful courage in the face of great
provocation from April 1930 onwards. The name ‘Redshirts’ led some people to think, quite wrongly, that they were Communists or left-wing labourites. As a matter of fact their name was “Khudai Khidmatgar”, and this organisation had allied itself to the Congress (later in 1931 they were to become integral parts of the Congress organisation). They were called Redshirts simply because of their rather primitive uniforms, which were red. They had no economic policy in their programme, which was nationalistic and also dealt with social reform.

The principal resolution at Karachi dealt with the Delhi Pact and the Round Table Conference. I accepted it, of course, as it emerged from the Working Committee, but when I was asked by Gandhiji to move it in the open Congress, I hesitated. It went against the grain, and I refused at first, and then this seemed a weak and unsatisfactory position to take up. Either I was for it or against it, and it was not proper to prevaricate or leave people guessing in the matter. Almost at the last moment, a few minutes before the resolution was taken up in the open Congress, I decided to sponsor it. In my speech I tried to lay before the great gathering quite frankly what my feelings were and why I had wholeheartedly accepted that resolution and pleaded with them to accept it. That speech, made on the spur of the moment and coming from the heart, and with little of ornament or fine phrasing in it, was probably a greater success than many of my other efforts, which had followed a more careful preparation.

I spoke on other resolutions, too, notably on the Bhagat Singh resolution and the one on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy. The latter resolution interested me especially, partly because of what it contained, and even more so because it represented a new outlook in the Congress. So far the Congress had thought along purely nationalist lines, and had avoided facing economic issues, except in so far as it encouraged cottage industries and swadeshi generally. In the Karachi resolution it took a step, a very short step, in a socialist direction by advocating nationalisation of key industries and services, and various other measures to lessen the burden on the poor and increase it on the rich. This was not socialism at all, and a capitalist state could easily accept almost everything contained in that resolution.

This very mild and prosaic resolution evidently made the big people of the Government of India furiously to think. Perhaps they even pictured, with their usual perspicacity, the red gold
of the Bolsheviks stealing its way into Karachi and corrupting the Congress leaders. Living in a kind of political harem, cut off from the outer world, and surrounded by an atmosphere of secrecy, their receptive minds love to hear tales of mystery and imagination. And then these stories are given out in little bits in a mysterious manner, through favoured newspapers, with a hint that much more could be seen if only the veil were lifted. In this approved and well-practised manner, frequent references have been made to the Karachi resolution on Fundamental Rights, etc., and I can only conclude that they represent the Government view of this resolution. The story goes that a certain mysterious individual with communist affiliations drew up this resolution, or the greater part of it, and thrust it down upon me at Karachi; that thereupon I issued an ultimatum to Mr. Gandhi to accept this or to face my opposition on the Delhi Pact issue, and Mr. Gandhi accepted it as a sop to me, and forced it down on a tired Subjects Committee and Congress on the concluding day.

The name of the ‘mysterious individual’ has, so far as I know, not been directly mentioned, but numerous hints make it quite clear who is meant. Not being myself used to ways of mystery and roundabout methods of expression, I might as well state that this person seems to be M. N. Roy. It would be interesting to know, and instructive to the big ones of Simla and Delhi to find out, what M. N. Roy or any other person ‘communistically inclined’ thinks of that very innocent Karachi resolution. It may surprise them to discover that any such person is rather contemptuous of the resolution because, according to him, it is a typical product of a bourgeois reformist mentality.

So far as Mr. Gandhi is concerned, I have had the privilege of knowing him pretty intimately for the last seventeen years, and the idea of my presenting ultimatums to him or bargaining with him seems to me monstrous. We may accommodate ourselves to each other; or we may, on a particular issue, part company, but the methods of the market-place can never affect our mutual dealings.

The idea of getting the Congress to pass a resolution of this kind was an old one. For some years the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee had been agitating in the matter, and trying to get the A.I.C.C. to accept a socialist resolution. In 1929 it succeeded to some extent in getting the A.I.C.C. to accept the principle. Then followed civil disobedience. During my early morning talks in Delhi with Gandhiji in February
and March 1931, I had referred to this matter, and he had welcomed the idea of having a resolution on economic matters. He asked me to bring the matter up at Karachi, and to draft a resolution and show it to him there. I did so at Karachi, and he made various changes and suggestions. He wanted both of us to agree on the wording, before we asked the Working Committee to consider it. I had to make several drafts, and this delayed matters for a few days, and we were otherwise very much occupied with other matters. Ultimately Gandhiji and I agreed on a draft, and this was placed before the Working Committee, and later before the Subjects Committee. It is perfectly true that it was a new subject for the Subjects Committee and some members were surprised. However, it was easily passed by the Committee and the Congress, and was referred to the A.I.C.C. for further elucidation and enlargement on the lines laid down.

While I was drafting this resolution various people, who used to come to my tent, were sometimes consulted by me about it. But M. N. Roy had absolutely nothing to do with it, and I knew well enough that he would disapprove of it and laugh at it.

I had come across M. N. Roy in Allahabad some days before coming to Karachi. He turned up suddenly one evening at our house, and though I had no notion that he was in India, I recognised him immediately, having seen him in Moscow in 1927. He saw me at Karachi also, but that was probably for not more than five minutes. During the past few years Roy had written a great deal in condemnation of me politically, and he had often succeeded in hurting me a little. There was a great deal of difference between us, and yet I felt attracted towards him, and when later he had been arrested and was in trouble, I wanted to do what little I could (and that was little enough) to help him. I was attracted to him by his remarkable intellectual capacity; I was also attracted to him because he seemed such a lonely figure, deserted by everybody. The British Government was naturally after him; nationalist India was not interested in him; and those who called themselves Communists in India condemned him as a traitor to the cause. I knew that after many years' residence in Russia and close co-operation with the Comintern, he had parted with them or, perhaps, been made to part. Why this happened I did not know, nor do I know still, except very vaguely, what his present views or his differences with the orthodox Communists are. But this desertion of a man like him by almost everybody pained me,
and, against my usual habit, I joined the Defence Committee. Since that summer in 1931, over three years ago now, he has been in prison, unwell and practically in solitary confinement.

One of the final acts of the Congress session at Karachi was to elect a new Working Committee. This is elected by the All-India Congress Committee, but a convention has grown up that the suggestions of the President for the year (made in consultation with Gandhiji and sometimes other colleagues) are accepted by the A.I.C.C. The Karachi election of the Working Committee led to an untoward result, which none of us anticipated then. Some Muslim members of the A.I.C.C. objected to this election, in particular to one (Muslim) name in it. Perhaps they also felt slighted because no one of their group had been chosen. In an all-India committee of fifteen it was manifestly impossible to have all interests represented, and the real dispute, about which we knew nothing, was an entirely personal and local one in the Punjab. The result was that the protestant group gradually drifted away from the Congress in the Punjab, and joined others in an 'Ahrar Party' or 'Majlis-e-Ahrar'. Some of the most active and popular Muslim Congress workers in the Punjab joined this, and it attracted large numbers of Punjab Muslims to it. It represented chiefly the lower middle-class elements and it had numerous contacts with the Muslim masses. It thus became a powerful organisation, far stronger than the decrepit Muslim communal organisations of upper-class folk, which functioned in the air or, rather, in drawing-rooms and committee rooms. Inevitably, the Ahrars drifted towards communalism, but because of their touch with the Muslim masses they remained a live body with a vague economic outlook. They played an important part later in Muslim agitations in Indian States, notably Kashmir, where economic ills and communalism were strangely and unhappily mixed together. The defection of some of the leaders of the Ahrar Party from the Congress was a serious loss for the Congress in the Punjab. But we did not know of this at Karachi; the realisation came slowly in later months. This defection did not, of course, come because of resentment at the election of the Congress Working Committee. That was just a straw showing the drift of the wind; the real causes lay deeper.

While we were all at Karachi news had come of the Hindu-Muslim riots at Cawnpore, to be followed, soon after, by the report of the murder of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi by a frenzied mob of persons whom he was trying to help. Those terrible and brutal riots were bad enough, but Ganeshji's death
brought them home to us as nothing else could have done. He was known to thousands in that Congress camp, and to all of us of the U.P. he was the dearest of comrades and friend, brave and intrepid, far-sighted and full of wise counsel, never downhearted, quietly working away and scorning publicity and office and the limelight. In the pride of his youth he willingly offered his life for the cause he loved and served, and foolish hands struck him down, and deprived Cawnpore and the province of the brightest of their jewels. There was gloom over our U.P. camp in Karachi when this news came; the glory seemed to have departed. And yet there was pride in him, that he had faced death so unfalteringly and died so gloriously.
XXXVI

A SOUTHERN HOLIDAY

My doctors urged me to take some rest and go for a change, and I decided to spend a month in Ceylon. India, huge as the country is, did not offer a real prospect of change or mental rest, for wherever I might go, I would probably come across political associates and the same problems would pursue me. Ceylon was the nearest place within reach of India, and so to Ceylon we went—Kamala, Indira and I. That was the first holiday I had had since our return from Europe in 1927, the first time since then that my wife and daughter and I holidayed together peacefully with little to distract our attention. There has been no repetition of that experience, and sometimes I wonder if there will be any.

And yet we did not really have much rest in Ceylon, except for two weeks at Nuwara Eliya. We were fairly overwhelmed by the hospitality and friendliness of all classes of people there. It was very pleasant to find all this goodwill, but it was often embarrassing also. At Nuwara Eliya groups of labourers, teagarden workers and others would come daily, walking many miles, bringing gracious gifts with them—wild flowers, vegetables, home-made butter. We could not, as a rule, even converse together; we merely looked at each other and smiled. Our little house was full of these precious gifts of theirs, which they had given out of their poverty, and we passed them on to the local hospital and orphanages.

We visited many of the famous sights and historical ruins of the island, and Buddhist monasteries, and the rich tropical forests. At Anuradhapura, I liked greatly an old seated statue of the Buddha. A year later, when I was in Dehra Dun Gaol, a friend in Ceylon sent me a picture of this statue, and I kept it on my little table in my cell. It became a precious companion for me, and the strong, calm features of Buddha’s statue soothed me and gave me strength and helped me to overcome many a period of depression.

Buddha has always had a great appeal for me. It is difficult for me to analyse this appeal, but it is not a religious appeal, and I am not interested in the dogmas that have grown up round Buddhism. It is the personality that has drawn me. So also the personality of Christ has attracted me greatly.
I saw many Buddhist bhikkus (monks) in their monasteries and on the highways, meeting with respect wherever they went. The dominant expression of almost all of them was one of peace and calm, a strange detachment from the cares of the world. They did not have intellectual faces, as a rule, and there was no trace of the fierce conflicts of the mind on their countenances. Life seemed to be for them a smooth-flowing river moving slowly to the great ocean. I looked at them with some envy, with just a faint yearning for a haven, but I knew well enough that my lot was a different one, cast in storms and tempests. There was to be no haven for me, for the tempests within me were as stormy as those outside. And if perchance I found myself in a safe harbour, protected from the fury of the winds, would I be contented or happy there?

For a little while the harbour was pleasant, and one could lie down and dream and allow the soothing and enervating charm of the tropics to steal over one. Ceylon fitted in with my mood then, and the beauty of the island filled me with delight. Our month of holiday was soon over, and it was with real regret that we bade good-bye. So many memories come back to me of the land and her people; they have been pleasant companions during the long, empty days in prison. One little incident lingers in my memory; it was near Jaffna, I think. The teachers and boys of a school stopped our car and said a few words of greeting. The ardent, eager faces of the boys stood out, and then one of their number came to me, shook hands with me, and without question or argument, said: "I will not falter." That bright young face with shining eyes, full of determination, is imprinted in my mind. I do not know who he was; I have lost trace of him. But somehow I have the conviction that he will remain true to his word and will not falter when he has to face life's difficult problems.

From Ceylon we went to South India, right to the southern tip at Cape Comorin. Amazingly peaceful it was there. And then through Travancore, Cochin, Malabar, Mysore, Hyderabad—mostly Indian States, some the most progressive of their kind, some the most backward. Travancore and Cochin educationally far in advance of British India; Mysore probably ahead industrially; Hyderabad almost a perfect feudal relic. We received courtesy and welcome everywhere, both from the people and the authorities, but behind that welcome I could sense the anxiety of the latter lest our visit might lead the people to think dangerously. Mysore and Travancore seemed to give some civil liberty and opportunities of political work at the
time; in Hyderabad even this was wholly absent; and I felt, in spite of the courtesy that surrounded us, stifled and suffocated. Latterly the Mysore and Travancore governments have withdrawn even the measure of civil liberty and political activity that they had previously permitted.

In Bangalore, in the Mysore State, I had hoisted at a great gathering a national flag on an enormous iron pole. Not long after my departure this pole was broken up into bits, and the Mysore government made the display of the flag an offence. This ill-treatment and insult of the flag I had hoisted pained me greatly.

In Travancore to-day even the Congress has been made an unlawful association, and no one can enrol ordinary members for it, although in British India it is now lawful since the withdrawal of civil disobedience. Thus both Mysore and Travancore are crushing ordinary peaceful political activity and have taken back some facilities they had previously allowed. They have moved backwards. Hyderabad had no necessity for going back or withdrawing facilities, for it had never moved forward at all or given any facility of the kind. Political meetings are unknown in Hyderabad, and even social and religious gatherings are looked upon with suspicion, and special permission has to be taken for them. There are no newspapers worthy of the name issued there, and, in order to prevent the germs of corruption from coming from outside, a large number of newspapers published in other parts of India are prevented entry. So strict is this policy of exclusion that even Moderate journals are excluded.

In Cochin we visited the quarter of the 'White Jews', as they are called, and saw one of the services in their old tabernacle. The little community is very ancient and very unique. It is dwindling in numbers. The part of Cochin they live in, we were told, resembled ancient Jerusalem. It certainly had an ancient look about it.

We also visited, along the backwaters of Malabar, some of the towns inhabited chiefly by Christians belonging to the Syrian churches. Few people realise that Christianity came to India as early as the first century after Christ, long before Europe turned to it, and established a firm hold in South India. Although these Christians have their religious head in Antioch or somewhere in Syria, their Christianity is practically indigenous and has few outside contacts.

To my surprise, we also came across a colony of Nestorians in the South; I was told by their bishop that there were ten thou-
sand of them. I had laboured under the impression that the Nestorians had long been absorbed in other sects, and I did not know that they had ever flourished in India. But I was told that at one time they had a fairly large following in India, extending as far north as Benares.

We had gone to Hyderabad especially to pay a visit to Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and her daughters, Padmaja and Leilamani. During our stay with them a small purdanashin gathering of women assembled at their house to meet my wife, and Kamala apparently addressed them. Probably she spoke of women's struggle for freedom against man-made laws and customs (a favourite topic of hers) and urged the women not to be too submissive to their menfolk. There was an interesting sequel to this two or three weeks later, when a distracted husband wrote to Kamala from Hyderabad and said that since her visit to that city his wife had behaved strangely. She would not listen to him and fall in with his wishes, as she used to, but would argue with him and even adopt an aggressive attitude.

Seven weeks after we had sailed from Bombay for Ceylon we were back in that city, and immediately I plunged again into the whirlpool of Congress politics. There were meetings of the Working Committee to consider vital problems—a rapidly-changing and developing situation in India, the U.P. agrarian impasse, the phenomenal growth of the 'Redshirt' movement in the Frontier province under Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's leadership, Bengal in an extreme state of tension and suppressed anger and unrest, the ever-present communal problem, and petty local conflicts, over a variety of issues, between Congressmen and Government officials, involving mutual charges of breaches of the Delhi Pact. And then there was the ever-recurring question: was the Congress to be represented at the second Round Table Conference? Should Mahatma Gandhi go there?
Friction During Truce Period

Should Gandhiji go to London for the Round Table Conference or not? Again and again the question arose, and there was no definite answer. No one knew till the last moment—not even the Congress Working Committee or Gandhiji himself. For the answer depended on many things, and new happenings were constantly giving a fresh turn to the situation. Behind that question and answer lay real and difficult problems.

We were told repeatedly, on behalf of the British Government and their friends, that the Round Table Conference had already laid down the framework of the constitution, that the principal lines of the picture had been drawn, and all that remained was the filling of this picture. But the Congress did not think so, and so far as it was concerned, the picture had to be drawn or painted from the very beginning on an almost blank canvas. It was true that by the Delhi agreement the federal basis had been approved and the idea of safeguards accepted. But a federation had long seemed to many of us the best solution of the Indian constitutional problem, and our approval of this idea did not mean our acceptance of the particular type of federation envisaged by the first Round Table Conference. A federation was perfectly compatible with political independence and social change. It was far more difficult to fit in the idea of safeguards and, ordinarily, they would mean a substantial diminution of sovereignty, but the qualifying phrase “in the interests of India” helped us to get over this difficulty to some extent at least, though not perhaps very successfully. In any event, the Karachi Congress had made it clear that an acceptable constitution must provide for full control of defence, foreign affairs, and financial and economic policy, and an examination of the question of India’s indebtedness to foreign (meaning largely British) interests before liabilities were undertaken; and the fundamental rights resolution had also indicated some of the political and economic changes desired. All this was incompatible with many of the Round Table Conference decisions, as well as with the existing framework of administration in India.

The gulf between the Congress view-point and that of the British Government was immense, and it seemed exceedingly
unlikely that it could be bridged at that stage. Very few Congressmen expected any measure of agreement between the Congress and the Government at the Round Table Conference, and even Gandhiji, optimistic as he always is, could not look forward to much. And yet he was never hopeless and was determined to try to the very end. All of us felt that whether success came or not, the effort had to be made, in continuation of the Delhi agreement. But there were two vital considerations which might have barred our participation in the second Round Table Conference. We could only go if we had full freedom to place our viewpoint in its entirety before the Round Table Conference, and were not prevented from doing so by being told that the matter had already been decided, or for any other reason. We could also be prevented from being represented at the Round Table Conference by conditions in India. A situation might have developed here which precipitated a conflict with Government, or in which we had to face severe repression. If this took place in India and our very house was on fire, it would have been singularly out of place for any representative of ours to ignore the fire and talk academically of constitutions and the like in London.

The situation was developing swiftly in India. This was noticeable all over the country, and especially so in Bengal, the United Provinces, and the Frontier Province. In Bengal the Delhi agreement had made little difference, and the tension continued and grew worse. Some civil disobedience prisoners were discharged, but thousands of politicals, who were technically not civil disobedience prisoners, remained in prison. The detenus also continued in gaol or detention camps. Fresh arrests were frequently made for 'seditious' speeches or other political activities, and generally it was felt that the Government offensive had continued without any abatement. For the Congress, the Bengal problem has been an extraordinarily difficult one because of the existence of terrorism. Compared to the normal Congress activities and civil disobedience, these terrorist activities were, in extent and importance, very little. But they made a loud noise and attracted great attention. They also helped in making it difficult for Congress work to function as in most other provinces, for terrorism produced an atmosphere which was not favourable to peaceful direct action. Inevitably they invited the severest repression from the Government, and this fell with considerable impartiality on terrorist and non-terrorist alike.

It was difficult for the police and the local executive
authorities not to make use of the special laws and ordinances (meant for the terrorists) for Congressmen, labour and peasant workers and others whose activities they disapproved of. It is possible than the real offence of many of the detenu, kept now for years without charge or trial or conviction, was not terrorist activity but other effective political activity. They have been given no chance of proving or disproving anything, or even of knowing what their sins are. They are not tried in court, presumably because the police have not sufficient evidence against them to secure a conviction, although it is well known that the British-Indian laws for offences against the State are amazingly thorough and comprehensive, and it is difficult to escape from their close meshes. It often happens that a person is acquitted by the law courts and is immediately arrested again and thereafter treated as a detenu.

The Congress Working Committee felt very helpless before this intricate problem of Bengal. They were continually oppressed by it, and some Bengal matter was always coming up before them in different forms. They dealt with it as best they could, but they knew well that they were not really tackling the problem. So, rather weakly, they simply allowed matters to drift there; it is a little difficult to say what else they could have done, placed as they were. This attitude of the Working Committee was much resented in Bengal, and an impression grew up there that the Congress executive, as well as the other provinces, were ignoring Bengal. In the hour of her trial Bengal seemed to be deserted. This impression was entirely wrong, for the whole of India was full of sympathy for the people of Bengal, but it did not know how to translate this sympathy into effective help. And, besides, every part of India had to face its own troubles.

In the United Provinces the agrarian situation was becoming worse. The Provincial Government temporised with the problem and delayed a decision about rent and revenue remissions, and forcible collections were begun. There were wholesale ejectments and attachments. While we were in Ceylon there had taken place two or three agrarian riots when forcible attempts were made to collect rents. The riots were petty in themselves, but unhappily they resulted in the death of the landlord or his agent. Gandhiji had gone to Naini Tal (also when I was in Ceylon) to discuss the agrarian situation with the Governor of the U.P., Sir Malcolm Hailey, without much result. When the Government announced its remissions, they fell far short of expectations, and in the rural areas there was a continuous and an
ever-growing uproar. As the pressure of landlord plus govern-
ment grew on the peasantry, and thousands of tenants were
ejected from their holdings and had their little property seized,
a situation developed which in most other countries would have
resulted in a big peasant rising. I think it was very largely due
to the efforts of the Congress which kept the tenants from in-
dulging in violent activity. But there was an abundance of
violence against them.

There was one bright side to this agrarian upheaval and dis-
tress. Owing to the very low prices of agricultural produce, the
poorer classes, including the peasants, unless they were dis-
possessed, had more to eat than they had had for a long time.

In the Frontier Province, as in Bengal, the Delhi Pact brought
no peace. There was a permanent state of tension there, and
government was a military affair, with special laws and ordi-
nances and heavy punishments for trivial offences. To oppose
this state of affairs, Abdul Ghaffar Khan led a great agitation,
and he soon became a bugbear to the Government. From village
to village he went striding along, carrying his six-feet-three of
Pathan manhood, and establishing centres of the ‘Redshirts’.
Wherever he or his principal lieutenants went, they left a trail
of their ‘Redshirts’ behind, and the whole province was soon
covered by branches of the ‘Khudai Khidmatgar’. They were
thoroughly peaceful and, in spite of vague allegations, not a
single definite charge of violence against them has been estab-
lished. But whether they were peaceful or not, they had the
tradition of war and violence behind them, and they lived near
the turbulent frontier, and this rapid growth of a disciplined
movement, closely allied to the Indian national movement,
thoroughly upset the Government. I do not suppose they ever
believed in its professions of peace and non-violence. But even
if they had done so, their reactions to it would only have been
of fright and annoyance. It represented too much of actual
and potential power for them to view it with equanimity.

Of this great movement the unquestioned head was Khan
Abdul Ghaffar Khan—“Fakhr-e-Afghan”, “Fakr-e-Pathan”,
the ‘Pride of the Pathans’, ‘Gandhi-e-Sarhad’, the ‘Frontier
Gandhi’, as he came to be known. He had attained an amazing
popularity in the Frontier Province by sheer dint of quiet,
persevering work, undaunted by difficulties or Government
action. He was, and is, no politician as politicians go; he knows
nothing of the tactics and manoeuvres of politics. A tall,
straight man, straight in body and mind, hating fuss and too
much talk, looking forward to freedom for his Frontier Province
people within the framework of Indian freedom, but vague about, and uninterested in, constitutions and legal talk. Action was necessary to achieve anything, and Mahatma Gandhi had taught a remarkable way of peaceful action which appealed to him. For action, organisation was necessary; therefore, without further argument or much drafting of rules for his organisation, he started organising—and with remarkable success.

He was especially attracted to Gandhiji. At first his shyness and desire to keep in the background made him keep away from him. Later they had to meet to discuss various matters, and their contacts grew. It was surprising how this Pathan accepted the idea of non-violence, far more so in theory than many of us. And it was because he believed in it that he managed to impress his people with the importance of remaining peaceful in spite of provocation. It would be absurd to say that the people of the Frontier Province have given up all thoughts of ever indulging in violence, just as it would be absurd to say this of the people generally in any province. The masses are moved by waves of emotion, and no one can predict what they might do when so moved. But the self-discipline that the frontier people showed in 1930 and subsequent years has been something amazing.

Government officials and some of our very timid countrymen look askance at the 'Frontier Gandhi'. They cannot take him at his word, and can only think in terms of deep intrigue. But the past years have brought him and other frontier comrades very near to Congress workers in other parts of India, and between them there has grown up a close comradeship and mutual appreciation and regard. Abdul Ghaffar Khan has been known and liked for many years in Congress circles. But he has grown to be something more than an individual comrade; more and more he has come to be, in the eyes of the rest of India, the symbol of the courage and sacrifice of a gallant and indomitable people, comrades of ours in a common struggle.

Long before I had heard of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, I knew his brother, Dr. Khan Sahib. He was a student at St. Thomas's Hospital in London when I was at Cambridge, and later, when I was eating my Bar dinners at the Inner Temple he and I became close friends, and hardly a day went by, when I was in London, when we did not meet. I returned to India, leaving him in England, and he stayed on for many more years, serving as a doctor in war-time. I saw him next in Naini Prison.

The frontier 'Redshirts' co-operated with the Congress, but they were an organisation apart. It was a peculiar position.
The real connecting link was Abdul Ghaffar Khan. This question was fully considered by the Working Committee in consultation with the Frontier Province leaders in the summer of 1931, and it was decided to absorb the ‘Redshirts’ into the Congress. The ‘Redshirt’ movement thus became part of the Congress organisation.

It was Gandhiji’s wish to go to the Frontier Province immediately after the Karachi Congress, but the Government did not encourage this at all. Repeatedly, in later months, when Government officials complained of the doings of the ‘Redshirts’, he pressed to be allowed to go there to find out for himself, but to no purpose. Nor was my going there approved. In view of the Delhi agreement, it was not considered desirable by us to enter the Frontier Province against the declared wish of the Government.

Yet another of the problems before the Working Committee was the communal problem. There was nothing new about this, although it had a way of reappearing in novel and fantastic attire. The Round Table Conference gave it an added importance at the time, as it was obvious that the British Government would keep it in the forefront and subordinate all other issues to it. The members of the Conference, all nominees of the Government, had been mainly chosen in order to give importance to the communal and sectional interests, and to lay stress on these divergences rather than on the common interests. The Government had even refused, pointedly and aggressively, to nominate any leader of the Nationalist Muslims. Gandhiji felt that if the Conference, at the instance of the British Government, became entangled in the communal issue right at the beginning, the real political and economic issues would not get proper consideration. Under these circumstances, his going to the Conference would be of little use. He put it to the Working Committee, therefore, that he should only go to London if some understanding on the communal issue was previously arrived at between the parties concerned. His instinct was perfectly justified, but nevertheless the Committee overruled him and decided that he must not refuse to go merely on the ground that we had failed to solve the communal problem. An attempt was made by the Committee, in consultation with representatives of various communities, to put forward a proposed solution. This had no great success.

These were some of the major problems before us during that summer of 1931, besides a large number of minor issues. From all over the country we were continually receiving complaints
from local Congress Committees pointing out breaches of the Delhi Pact by local officials. The more important of these were forwarded by us to the Government, which, in its turn, brought charges against Congressmen of violation of the Pact. So charges and counter-charges were made, and later they were published in the Press. Needless to say, this did not result in the improvement of the relations between the Congress and the Government.

And yet this friction on petty matters was by itself of no great importance. Its importance lay in its revealing the development of a more fundamental conflict, something which did not depend on individuals but arose from the very nature of our national struggle and the want of equilibrium of our agrarian economy, something that could not be liquidated or compromised away without a basic change. Our national movement had originally begun because of the desire of our upper middle classes to find means of self-expression and self-growth, and behind it there was the political and economic urge. It spread to the lower middle classes and became a power in the land; and then it began to stir the rural masses who were finding it more and more difficult to keep up, as a whole, even their miserable rock-bottom standard of living. The old self-sufficient village economy had long ceased to exist. Auxiliary cottage industries, ancillary to agriculture, which had relieved somewhat the burden on the land, had died off, partly because of State policy, but largely because they could not compete with the rising machine industry. The burden on land grew and the growth of Indian industry was too slow to make much difference to this. Ill-equipped and almost unawares, the overburdened village was thrown into the world market and was tossed about hither and thither. It could not compete on even terms. It was backward in its methods of production, and its land system, resulting in a progressive fragmentation of holdings, made radical improvement impossible. So the agricultural classes, both landlords and tenants, went downhill, except during brief periods of boom. The landlords tried to pass on the burden to their tenantry, and the growing pauperisation of the peasantry—both the petty landholders and the tenants—drew them to the national movement. The agricultural proletariat, the large numbers of landless labourers in rural areas, were also attracted; and for all these rural classes 'nationalism' or 'swaraj' meant fundamental changes in the land system, which would relieve or lessen their burdens and provide land for the landless. These desires found no clear expression either
in the peasantry or in the middle-class leaders of the national movement.

The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 happened to fit in unbeknown to its own leaders at first, with the great world slump in industry and agriculture. The rural masses were powerfully affected by this slump, and they turned to the Congress and civil disobedience. For them it was not a matter of a fine constitution drawn up in London or elsewhere, but of a basic change in the land system, especially in the zamindari areas. The zamindari system, indeed, seemed to have outlived its day and had no stability left in it. But the British Government, situated as it was, could not venture to undertake a radical change of this land system. Even when it had appointed the Royal Agricultural Commission, the terms of reference to it barred a discussion of the question of ownership of land or the system of land tenure.

Thus the conflict lay in the very nature of things in India then, and it could not be charmed away by phrases or compromises. Only a solution of the basic problem of land (not to mention other vital national issues) could resolve that conflict. And of this solution through the instrumentality of the British Government there was no possibility. Temporary measures might alleviate the distress for a while; severe repression might frighten and prevent public expression of it; but neither helped in the solution of the problem.

The British Government, like most governments I suppose, has an idea that much of the trouble in India is due to ‘agitators’. It is a singularly inept notion. India has had a great leader during the past fifteen years who has won the affection and even adoration of her millions, and has seemed to impose his will on her in many ways. He has played a vitally important part in her recent history, and yet more important than he were the people themselves who seemed to follow blindly his behests. The people were the principal actors, and behind them, pushing them on, were great historical urges which prepared them and made them ready to listen to their leader’s piping. But for that historical setting and political and social urges, no leaders or agitators could have inspired them to action. It was Gandhi’s chief virtue as a leader that he could instinctively feel the pulse of the people and know when conditions were ripe for growth and action.

In 1930 the national movement in India fitted in for a while with the growing social forces of the country, and because of this a great power came to it, a sense of reality, as if it was
indeed marching step by step with history. The Congress represented that national movement, and this power and strength were reflected in the growth of Congress prestige. This was something vague, incalculable, indefinable, but nevertheless very much present. The peasantry, of course, turned to the Congress and gave it its real strength; the lower middle-class formed the backbone of its fighting ranks. Even the upper bourgeoisie, troubled by this new atmosphere, thought it safer to be friendly with the Congress. The great majority of the textile mills in India signed undertakings prescribed by the Congress, and were afraid of doing things which might bring on them the displeasure of the Congress. While people argued fine legal points in London at the first R.T.C., the reality of power seemed to be slowly and imperceptibly flowing towards the Congress as representing the people. This illusion grew even after the Delhi Pact, not because of vainglorious speeches, but because of the events of 1930 and after. Indeed, probably the persons who were most conscious of the difficulties and dangers ahead were the Congress leaders, and they took every care not to minimise them.

This vague sense of a dual authority growing in the country was naturally most irritating to the Government. It had no real basis in fact, as physical power rested completely with the authorities, but that it existed psychologically there was no doubt. For an authoritarian, irremovable government this was an impossible situation, and it was this subtle atmosphere that really got on their nerves, and not a few odd village speeches or processions of which they complained later. A clash, therefore, seemed inevitable; for the Congress could hardly commit voluntary hara-kiri, and the Government could not tolerate this atmosphere of duality, and was bent on crushing the Congress. This clash was deferred because of the second Round Table Conference. For some reason or other the British Government was very keen on having Gandhiji in London, and avoided, as far as possible, doing anything to prevent this.

And yet the sense of conflict grew, and we could feel the hardening on the side of Government. Soon after the Delhi Pact, Lord Irwin had left India and Lord Willingdon had come in his place as Viceroy. A legend grew up that the new Viceroy was a hard and stern person and not so amenable to compromise as his predecessor. Many of our politicians have inherited a 'liberal' habit of thinking of politics in terms of persons rather than of principles. They do not realise that the broad imperial policy of the British Government does not depend on the
personal views of the Viceroy. The change of Viceroy, therefore, did not and could not make any difference, but, as it happened, the policy of Government gradually changed owing to the development of the situation. The Civil Service hierarchy had not approved of pacts and dealings with the Congress; all their training and authoritarian conceptions of government were opposed to this. They had an idea that they had added to the Congress influence and Gandhiji's prestige by dealing with him almost as an equal and it was about time that he was brought down a peg or two. The notion was a very foolish one, but then the Indian Civil Service is not known for the originality of its conceptions. Whatever the reason, the Government stiffened its back and tightened its hold, and it seemed to tell us, in the words of the old prophet: My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. Whereas he chastised you with whips, I will chastise you with scorpions.

But the time for chastisement was not yet. If possible the Congress was to be represented at the second Round Table Conference. Twice Gandhiji went to Simla to have long conversations with the Viceroy and other officials. They discussed many of the points at issue, especially the 'Redshirt' movement in the Frontier and U.P. Agrarian situation, the two problems, apart from Bengal, which seemed to be worrying the Government most.

Gandhiji had sent for me from Simla, and I had occasion to meet some of the Government of India officials also. My talks were limited to the U.P. They were frank talks, and the real conflicts, which lay behind the petty charges and counter-charges, were discussed. I remember being told that the Government had been in a position in February 1931 to crush the Civil Disobedience movement absolutely within three months at the most. They had perfected their machinery of repression and only a push had to be given to it; a button pressed. But preferring, if possible, a settlement by agreement to one imposed by force, they had decided to try the experiment of mutual talks which had led to the Delhi agreement. If the agreement had not come off, the button was always there, and could have been pressed at a moment's notice. And there seemed to be a hint that the button might have to be pressed in the not distant future if we did not behave. It was all said very courteously and very frankly, and both of us knew that, quite apart from us and whatever we might say or do, conflict was inevitable.

Another high official paid a compliment to the Congress. We
were for the moment discussing wider problems of a non-political nature, and he told me that, politics apart, the Congress had done a great service to India. The usual charge brought against Indians was that they were not good organisers, but during 1930 the Congress had done a wonderful bit of organising, despite enormous difficulties and opposition.

Gandhi's first visit to Simla was inconclusive in so far as the question of going to the Round Table Conference was concerned. The second visit took place in the last week of August. A final decision had to be taken one way or the other, but still he found it difficult to make up his mind to leave India. In Bengal, in the Frontier Province, and in the U.P., he saw trouble ahead, and he did not want to go unless he had some assurance of peace in India. At last some kind of an agreement was arrived at with the Government embodied in a statement and some letters that were exchanged. This was done at the very last moment to enable him to travel by the liner that was carrying the delegates to the R.T.C. Indeed, it was after the last moment, in a sense, as the last train had gone. A special train from Simla to Kalka was arranged, and other trains were delayed to make the connections.

I accompanied him from Simla to Bombay, and there, one bright morning towards the end of August, I waved good-bye to him as he was carried away to the Arabian Sea and the far West. That was my last glimpse of him for two years.
XXXVIII

THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

In a recent book an English journalist, who claims to have seen a great deal of Mr. Gandhi both in India and at the Round Table Conference in London, writes as follows:

"The leaders on board the Mooltan knew that there was a conspiracy against Mr. Gandhi within the Congress Working Committee. They knew that, when the time was ripe, Congress might expel him. But Congress, by expelling Mr. Gandhi, would expel in all probability half its members; and that was the half Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jayakar wished to attach to the Liberal cause. They never disguised the fact that Mr. Gandhi was, in their own words, 'muddle-headed'. It was worth winning a 'muddle-headed' leader when he could bring with him a million 'muddle-headed' followers." ¹

I do not know how far this quotation represents the views of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, or the other members of the R.T.C. on their way to London in 1931. But it does seem to me an astonishing thing that any person, journalist or 'leader', with the least acquaintance with Indian politics, could have made such a statement. I was astounded to read it; I had not heard of it previously even as a suggestion, though that is not difficult to understand, as I have been in prison for most of the time since then.

Who were the conspirators and what were they after? It was sometimes stated that the President, Vallabhbhai Patel, and I

¹ From G Fancy Bolton's The Tragedy of Gandhi. I have taken this extract from a review of the book, as I have had no opportunity so far of reading the book itself. I hope that I am not doing an injustice thereby to the author or to the persons mentioned in the quotation. . . . Since writing the above I have read the book. Many of the statements of Mr. Bolton and the inferences he draws are, to my thinking, wholly unjustified. There are also a number of errors of fact, especially in regard to what the Working Committee did or did not do during the Delhi Pact negotiations and after. There is also a curious assumption that Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel got the Congress presidentship in 1931, and thereby the leadership of the Congress, in rivalry with Mr. Gandhi. As a matter of fact, during the last fifteen years Mr. Gandhi has been a far bigger person in the Congress (and, of course, in the country) than any Congress Presi-
were among the extremists of the Working Committee, and, therefore, I suppose, we must have been numbered among the leaders of the conspiracy. Perhaps in the whole of India Gandhiji has had no more loyal colleague than Vallabhbhai, a man strong and unbending in his work, and yet devoted to him personally and to his ideals and policy. I could not claim to have accepted these ideals in the same way, but I had had the privilege of working with Gandhiji in the closest association, and the idea of intriguing against him in any way is a monstrous one. Indeed, that applied to the whole Working Committee. That Committee was practically his creation; he had nominated it, in consultation with a few colleagues, and the election itself was a formal matter. The backbone of the Committee consisted of members who had served on it for many years and had come to be considered almost as permanent members. There were political differences amongst them, differences in outlook and in temper; but years of association, the joint shouldering of burdens and the facing of common perils, had welded them together. Between them had
dent could possibly be. He has been the president-maker, and invariably his suggestions have been followed. Repeatedly he refused to preside and preferred that some of his colleagues and lieutenants should do so. I became president of the Congress entirely because of him. He had actually been elected, but he withdrew and forced my election. Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel’s election was not normal. We had just come out of prison, and the Congress Committees were still illegal bodies, and could not function in the ordinary way. The Working Committee, therefore, took it upon itself to elect the President of the Karachi Congress. The whole Committee, including Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, begged Mr. Gandhi to accept the presidency and thus to be the titular head, as he was the real head, of the Congress during the coming critical year. He would not agree, and insisted on Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel accepting it. I remember that it was pointed out to him at the time that he wanted to be Mussolini all the time while others were made by him temporary kings and figureheads.

It is not possible to deal with various other misapprehensions of Mr. Bolton in a footnote. One somewhat personal matter I should, however, like to refer to. He seems to be convinced that the turning-point in my father’s political career was his non-election by a European club, and that this led him not only to radical ways but to an avoidance of English society. This story, though often repeated, is wholly untrue. The real facts have little importance, but I am giving them here to clear up this mystery. In his early days at the Bar, he became a favourite of Sir John Edge, who was then
grown up friendship and camaraderie and regard for each other. They formed not a coalition but an organic unity, and it was inconceivable for any one to intrigue against the other. Gandhiji dominated the Committee, and every one looked to him for guidance. That had been so for many years; it was even more marked in 1931 after the great success that had attended our struggle in 1930.

What could have been the purpose of the 'extremists' in the Working Committee to try to 'expel' him? Perhaps it was thought that he was considered too compromising a person and was, therefore, an encumbrance. But without him where was the struggle, where was Civil Disobedience and Satyagraha? He was part of the living movement; indeed, he was the movement itself. So far as that struggle was concerned everything depended on him. The national struggle, of course, was not his creation, nor did it depend on any individual; it had deeper roots. But that particular phase of the struggle, of which civil disobedience was the symbol, was singularly dependent on him. Parting with him meant winding up that movement and building anew on fresh foundations. That would have been a difficult enough proposition at any time; in 1931 it was unthinkable for any one.

It is amusing to think how, according to some people, some of

the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court. Sir John suggested to him that he should join the Allahabad (European) Club, and wanted to propose his name himself. My father thanked him for his kindly suggestion, but pointed out that there was bound to be trouble, as many English people would object to him as an Indian and might vote against him. Any subaltern could blackball him, and he would rather not offer himself for election under these circumstances. Sir John even suggested that he would get the Brigadier-General commanding the Allahabad area to second my father's name. Ultimately, however, the matter dropped, and my father's name was not proposed, as he made it clear that he was not prepared to risk an insult. This incident, far from embittering him against English people, drew him to Sir John Edge, and most of his English friendships and connections grew up in subsequent years. This occurred in the 'nineties, and it was nearly a quarter of a century later that he became the radical politician and non-co-operator. The change was not sudden, but the Punjab Martial Law hurried up the process, and Mr. Gandhi's influence at the right moment made a difference. Even then he had no deliberate intention of giving up social contacts with Englishmen. But where Englishmen are largely officials, non-co-operation and civil disobedience inevitably prevent such contacts.
us were conspiring to drive him out of the Congress in 1931. Why should we conspire when a gentle hint to him was sufficient? A mere suggestion from him that he would retire has always been enough to upset the Working Committee as well as the country. He was so much part of our struggle that the very thought that he might leave us was unbearable. We hesitated to send him to London, because in his absence the burden in India would fall on us, and we did not welcome the prospect. We were so used to shifting it on to his shoulders. For many of us, in the Working Committee and outside, the bonds that tied us to Gandhiji were such that even failure with him seemed preferable to the winning of some temporary advantage without him.

Whether Gandhiji is 'muddle-headed' or not we can leave to our Liberal friends to decide. It is undoubtedly true that his politics are sometimes very metaphysical and difficult to understand. But he had shown himself a man of action, a man of wonderful courage, and a man who could often deliver the goods; and if 'muddle-headedness' yields such practical results perhaps it compares not unfavourably with the 'practical politics' that begin and end in the study and in select circles. True, his millions of followers were 'muddle-headed'. They knew nothing of politics and constitutions; they could think only in terms of their human needs, of food and shelter and clothing and land.

It has always seemed to me very remarkable how eminent foreign journalists, trained in the observation of human nature, go wrong in India. Is it because of the ineradicable impression of their childhood that the East is utterly different and cannot be judged by ordinary standards? Or is it, in the case of Englishmen, the kink of empire that governs their vision and distorts their view? They will believe almost anything, however unlikely it might be, without any surprise, for everything is deemed to be possible in the mysterious East. They publish books sometimes containing able surveys and acute bits of observation and, in between, amazing lapses.

I remember reading, just on the eve of Gandhiji's departure for Europe in 1931, an article by a well-known Paris correspondent (at the time) of a London newspaper. The article was about India, and in the course of it he referred to an incident which, according to him, took place in 1921 during the non-co-operation days when the Prince of Wales visited India. It was stated that in some place (probably it was Delhi) Mahatma Gandhi burst in dramatically and unannounced on the Prince, fell on his knees
clasped the Prince's feet and, weeping copiously, begged him to give peace to this unhappy land. None of us, not even Gandhiji, had heard of this remarkable story, and I wrote to the journalist pointing this out to him. He expressed regret, but added that he had got it from a reliable source. What astonished me was that he should have given credence, without any attempt at an enquiry, to a story on the face of it highly improbable, and which no one who knew anything about Mr. Gandhi, the Congress, or India could believe. It is, unhappily, true that there are many Englishmen in India who, in spite of long residence, know nothing about the country or about the Congress or about Gandhiji. The story was an incredible and ridiculous one, comparable perhaps to a fanciful account of the Archbishop of Canterbury suddenly bursting in upon Mussolini, standing on his head, and waving his legs in the air in token of greeting.

A recent report in a newspaper gives another type of story. It is stated that Gandhiji has got huge funds, running into millions of pounds, secretly deposited with friends, and the Congress is after this money. It (the Congress) is afraid that if Gandhiji retires from its membership it might lose these hoards. The story is on the face of it absurd, for he never keeps funds personally or secretly, and whatever he has collected he hands over to a public organisation. He has the bania's instinct for careful accounting, and all his collections are publicly audited.

This rumour is probably based on the story of the famous crore of rupees which were collected by the Congress in 1921. This sum, which sounds big but was not much if spread out all over India, was utilised for national universities and schools, promotion of cottage industries and especially khaddar, untouchability work and a variety of other constructive schemes. Much of it was tied up in ear-marked funds, which still exist, and are used for their special purposes. The rest of the collections were left with the local committees, and spent for Congress organisational and political work. The non-co-operation movement was financed by it, as well as Congress work for a few years after. We have been taught by Gandhiji, as well as by the poverty of the country, to carry on our political movement with exceedingly limited means. Most of our work has been wholly voluntary, and where payment has been made it has been on a starvation scale. The best of our workers, university graduates with families to support, have been paid less than the unemployment allowance in England. I
doubt if any political or labour movement on a large scale has been run anywhere with so little money as the Congress movement during the last fifteen years. And all Congress funds and accounts have been publicly audited from year to year, no part of them being secret, except during the civil disobedience periods, when the Congress was an illegal organisation.

Gandhiji had gone to London as the sole representative of the Congress to the Round Table Conference. We had decided, after long debate, not to have additional representatives. Partly this was due to our desire to have our best men in India at a very critical time, when the most tactful handling of the situation was necessary. We felt that, in spite of the R.T.C. meeting in London, the centre of gravity lay in India, and developments in India would inevitably have their reactions in London. We wanted to check untoward developments, and to keep our organisation in proper condition. This was, however, not the real reason for our sending only one representative. If we had thought it necessary and advisable, we would certainly have sent others also. Deliberately we refrained from doing so.

We were not joining the Round Table Conference to talk interminably about the petty details of a constitution. We were not interested in those details at that stage, and they could only be considered when some agreement on fundamental matters had been arrived at with the British Government. The real question was how much power was to be transferred to a democratic India. Any solicitor almost could do the drafting and the settlement of details afterwards. The Congress position was a fairly simple one on these basic matters, and there was no great room for argument over it. It seemed to us that the dignified course would be for one representative, and that one our leader, to go and explain that position, to show the essential reasonableness of it and the inevitability of it, and to try to win over, if he could, the British Government to it. That was very difficult, we knew; hardly possible as matters stood then, but then we had no other alternative. We could not give up that position and our principles and ideals, to which we were pledged and in which we firmly believed. If by a strange chance a basis of agreement was found on those fundamentals, the rest followed easily enough. Indeed, it had been settled between us that, in case of such an agreement, Gandhiji would immediately summon to London some or even all the members of the Working Committee, so that we could then share the
work of detailed negotiation. We were to keep ourselves in readiness for that summons, and even travel by air if necessary. We could thus be with him within ten days of the call.

But if there was no initial agreement on fundamentals, then the question of further and detailed negotiations did not arise, nor was it necessary for additional Congress representatives to go to the R.T.C. So we decided to send Gandhiji only. One other member of the Working Committee, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, also attended the R.T.C., but she did not do so as a Congress representative. She was invited as a representative of Indian womanhood, and the Working Committee permitted her to go as such.

The British Government had, however, no intention of falling in with our wishes in the matter. Their policy was to postpone the consideration of fundamental questions and to make the Conference exhaust itself, more or less, on minor and immaterial matters. Even when major matters were considered, the Government held its hand, refused to commit itself, and promised to express its opinion after mature consideration later on. Their trump card was, of course, the communal issue and they played it for all it was worth. It dominated the Conference.

The great majority of the Indian members of the Conference fell in, most of them willingly, some unwillingly, with this official manœuvring. They were a motley assembly. Few of them represented any but themselves. Some were able and respected; of many others this could not be said. As a whole they represented, politically and socially, the most reactionary elements in India. So backward and reactionary were they that the Indian Liberals, so very moderate and cautious in India, shone as progressives in their company. They represented groups of vested interests in India who were tied up with British imperialism, and looked to it for advancement or protection. The most prominent representation came from various ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ groups on the communal issue. This consisted of a number of upper-class irreconcilables who, it was notorious, could never agree amongst themselves. Politically they were thorough reactionaries, and their sole interest seemed to be to gain a communal advantage, even though that might involve a surrender of political advance. Indeed they proclaimed that they would not agree to having any greater measure of political freedom unless and until their communal demands were satisfied. That was an extraordinary sight, and it revealed with painful clarity the depths to which a subject
people could fall, and how they could be made pawns in the imperialist game. It was true that the Indian people could not be said to be represented by that crowd of highnesses, lords, knights and others of high degree. The members of the Round Table Conference had been nominated by the British Government, and, from its own point of view, the Government had chosen well. And yet the mere fact that the British authorities could use and exploit us so, showed the weakness of our people, and the strange facility with which they could be side-tracked and made to undo each other’s efforts. Our upper classes were still wrapped up in the ideology of our imperialist rulers, and played their game. Was it because they did not see through it? Or did they, knowing its real significance, accept it knowingly because of their fear of democracy and freedom in India?

It was fitting that in this assembly of vested interests—imperialist, feudal, financial, industrial, religious, communal—the leadership of the British Indian delegation should usually fall to the Aga Khan, who in his own person happened to combine all these interests in some degree. Closely associated as he has been with British imperialism and the British ruling class for over a generation, residing chiefly in England, he could thoroughly appreciate and represent our rulers’ interests and view-point. He would have been an able representative of Imperialist England at that Round Table Conference. The irony of it was that he was supposed to represent India.

The scales were terribly loaded against us at that Conference and, little as we expected from it, we watched its proceedings with amazement and ever-growing disgust. We saw the pitiful and absurdly inadequate attempts to scratch the surface of national and economic problems, the pacts and intrigues and manoeuvres, the joining of hands of some of our own countrymen with the most reactionary elements of the British Conservative Party, the endless talk over petty issues, the deliberate shelving of all that really mattered, the continuous playing into the hands of the big vested interests and especially British imperialism, the mutual squabbles, varied by feasting and mutual admiration. It was all jobbery—big jobs, little jobs, jobs and seats for the Hindus, for the Muslims, for the Sikhs, for the Anglo-Indians, for the Europeans; but all jobs for the upper classes, the masses had no look-in. Opportunism was rampant, and different groups seemed to prowl about like hungry wolves waiting for their prey—the spoils under the new constitution. The very conception of freedom had taken the
as it could, by substantial rent remissions. It was not easy to have it both ways. Between the State and the cultivator stood the zamindar, from the economic point of view a useless and unnecessary addition, and it might have been possible to protect and help both the State and the cultivator at his expense. But the British Government, constituted as it is, could not for political reasons alienate one of the few classes which clung on to it.

At last the Provincial Government announced the remissions both for the landlords and the tenants. These were based on some complicated system, and it was not easy at first to make out what they were. It was clear, however, that they were far from enough. Besides, they related to the current demand and said nothing at all about the arrears due from the tenant or his debts. It was obvious that if the tenant was not in a position to pay the rent for the current half-year, much less could he pay arrears for past years or old debts. As a rule, it was the landlord’s custom to credit all realisations to past arrears. This procedure was dangerous from the tenant’s point of view, for he could always be proceeded against and dispossessed of his land on the ground of non-payment of some part of the amount due from him.

The Provincial Congress Executive was put in an extraordinarily difficult position. We were convinced that the tenants were being treated very unfairly and yet we were helpless in the matter. We did not want to take the responsibility of advising the tenants not to pay. We went on repeating that they should pay as much as they could and generally sympathising with them in their misfortunes and trying to hearten them. We agreed with them that the demand, even after the remissions, was too much for them.

The machinery of coercion, legal as well as illegal, began to move. Ejectment suits brought against thousands, attachments of cows, bullocks, personal property, beatings by agents of landlords. Large numbers of tenants paid part of the demand; according to them, this was as much as they could pay then. Very probably in some instances they could have paid more, but it was quite obvious that for the great majority this was a heavy burden. These part payments did not save them. The steam-roller of the law went on advancing, pitilessly crushing all that came in its way. Ejectment suits were decreed, even though part payment had taken place; attachments and sale of cattle and personal property continued. The tenants could not have been worse off if they had not paid at all. Indeed, they
would have been slightly better off, for they would have saved that much money at least.

They came to us in large numbers, complaining bitterly, telling us that they had followed our advice and paid what they could, and this was the consequence. In Allahabad district alone many thousands had been dispossessed, and some proceeding or other had been launched against many thousands of others. The District Congress Committee office was surrounded all day by a distraught crowd. My own house was equally besieged, and often I felt like running away and hiding myself somewhere, anywhere, to escape this dreadful predicament. Many tenants who came to us bore marks of injury, said to have been inflicted by zamindars' agents. We had them treated in hospital. What could they do? What could we do? We sent long letters to the U.P. Government. Our Committee had appointed Govind Ballabh Pant as our liaison officer to keep in touch with the Provincial Government at Naini Tal or Lucknow. He was constantly writing to the Government. Our provincial President, Tasadduq A. K. Sherwani, also wrote from time to time, and so did I.

Another difficulty arose with the approach of the monsoon in June–July. That was the tilling and sowing season. Were the tenants, who had been dispossessed, to sit idle and watch their land lie fallow in front of them? This was very difficult for a peasant; it went against the grain. The dispossession in many cases was legal and technical and not an actual moving away. A court decree had been passed and nothing else had been done. Or were they to plough the land and thereby commit an offence of criminal trespass, perhaps leading to a petty riot? To watch others till their old land was also very difficult for the peasants to tolerate. They came to us for advice. What advice could we give?

I put this difficulty to a high official in the Government of India, when I visited Simla with Gandhiji during that summer, and I asked him what advice he would give if he was in our position. His answer was a revealing one. He said that if a peasant who had been dispossessed asked him this question he would simply refuse to answer him! Even he was not prepared to tell the peasant straight off not to till his land, although he had been legally dispossessed. It was easy for him, sitting on the Simla heights, to pass orders on files as if he was dealing with an abstract problem in mathematics. He, or the provincial bosses at Naini Tal, were not brought into touch with the human factor, nor did they see the human misery involved.
We were also told at Simla that we should give only one advice to the peasantry: that they should pay the full demand or as much as they could. We should in fact act almost as the agents of the landlords. As a matter of fact we had said something like it when we asked them to pay as much as they could. We had added no doubt that they should not sell up their cattle or incur additional debt. And we had seen the result.

It was a terrible summer for all of us, and the strain of it was great. The Indian peasant has an amazing capacity to bear misfortune, and he has always had more than his share of it—famine, flood, disease, and continuous grinding poverty—and when he could endure it no longer, he would quietly and almost uncomplainingly lie down in his thousands or millions and die. That was his way of escape. Nothing happened in 1931 to compare with the periodical great misfortunes that had visited him. But, somehow, the events of 1931 did not seem to him part of Nature’s inscrutable plans, and, therefore, to be patiently endured; they were the work of man, he thought, and so he resented them. His new political education was bearing fruit. For us, too, these happenings of 1931 were especially painful because we held ourselves partly responsible for them. Had not the peasants largely followed our advice in the matter? And yet I am quite convinced that, but for our constant help, the condition of the peasantry would have been far worse. We held them together and they remained a force to be reckoned with, and because of this they obtained greater remissions than they otherwise would have done. Even the coercion and ill-treatment to which they were subjected, bad as it was, was not unusual for these unhappy people. The difference was partly one of degree (as there was much more of it now) and partly a question of publicity. Ordinarily, ill-treatment and even torture of a tenant by a zamindar’s agent in a village is almost taken for granted, and few persons outside that area hear of it, unless the victim dies. It was different now because of our organisation and the new consciousness of the peasantry which made them hang together and report all mishaps to the Congress offices.

As the summer advanced, the attempts at forcible collections toned down, and coercive proceedings lessened. What troubled us now was the question of the great number of the ejected tenants. What was to be done to them? We were pressing the Government to help them to get back their holdings, which, in the majority of cases, were lying vacant. More important still was the question of the future. The remissions that had been
so far granted were for the past season only, and nothing had yet been decided about the future. From October onwards the season for the next collections would begin. What would happen then? Would we have to go through the same terrible round again? The Provincial Government appointed a small committee, consisting of its own officials and some zamindar members of the local Council, to consider this. There was no representative of the peasantry on it. At the last moment, when the Committee had actually begun its work, Govind Ballabh Pant was asked by Government to join it on our behalf. He did not think it worth while to join at that late stage, when important decisions had already been made.

The U.P. Provincial Congress Committee had also appointed a small committee to collect various agrarian data, past and present, and to report on the existing situation. This committee submitted a long report containing an able survey of agrarian conditions in the U.P. and an analysis of the havoc caused by the agricultural slump in prices. Their recommendations were far-reaching. The report, which was published in book form, was signed by Govind Ballabh Pant, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, and Venkatesh Narayan Tewary.

Long before this report came out, Gandhiji had gone to London for the Round Table Conference. He had gone with great hesitation, and one of the reasons for this hesitation was the U.P. agrarian situation. He had in fact almost decided that, in the event of not going to London for the Round Table Conference, he would come to the U.P. and devote himself to this complex problem. The last Simla conversations with the Government dealt, inter alia, with the U.P. After his departure for England we kept him fully informed of developments. I used to write to him, during the first month or two, every week both by the air mail and the ordinary mail. During the latter part of his stay I was not so regular, as we expected him to return soon. He had given us to understand that, at the very latest, he would be back within three months; that is, some time in November, and we had hoped that no crisis would arise in India till then. Above all, we wanted to avoid crises and conflicts with Government in his absence. When, however, his return was delayed and the agrarian situation began to develop rapidly, we sent him a long cablegram informing him of the latest developments and pointing out to him how our hands were being forced. He replied by cable that he was helpless in the matter and could not do anything for us then, and told us to go ahead according to our lights.
The Working Committee was also kept fully informed by the Provincial Congress Executive. I was always there to give them first-hand information, but, as matters were taking a serious turn, the Committee also conferred with our Provincial President, Tasadduq Sherwani, and the Allahabad District President, Purushottam Das Tandon.

The Government Agrarian Committee issued its report and made certain recommendations, which were both complicated and vague, and left a great deal to local officers. On the whole, the proposed remissions were bigger than in the past season, but we felt that they were not enough. We objected to the principles underlying the recommendations as well as to their application. Also, the report dealt with the future only and ignored past arrears, debt, and the question of the large number of dispossessed tenants. What were we to do? Just advise the peasantry to pay as much as they could, as we had done in the spring and summer, and face the same consequences? That advice, we had seen, was the most foolish of all and could not be repeated. Either the peasants should make a great effort and pay the revised demand in full, if they could at all do so, or they should not pay at all for the present and await developments. To pay part of the rent demanded was neither here nor there; the tenants exhausted their financial resources and, at the same time, lost their land.

Our Provincial Congress Executive considered the position long and earnestly and decided that the Government proposals were not favourable enough to be accepted as they were, although they were an improvement on the summer's remissions. There was still a possibility of their being varied to the peasantry's advantage, and we pressed Government accordingly. But we felt that there was little hope, and the conflict we had tried to avoid seemed to approach with some rapidity. The attitude of the Provincial Government as well as the Government of India towards the Congress organisation had been progressively changing and becoming more frigid. To our long letters we received brief replies referring us to local officials. It was obvious that the policy of Government was not to encourage us in any way. One grievance and difficulty of the Government was the possibility of Congress prestige going up because of the grant of remissions to the peasantry. Through long habit, it could only think in terms of prestige, and the idea that the masses might give the credit for the remissions to the Congress irritated it, and it wanted to avoid this as far as possible.
Meanwhile, reports were coming to us from Delhi and elsewhere that the Government of India were on the point of launching a big offensive against the whole Congress movement. The little finger was going to function more vigorously now and the scorpions were going to chastise us. We even received many details of the proposed action. Some time in November, I think, Dr. Ansari sent me (as well as separately to Vallabhbhai Patel, the Congress President) a message confirming many of the previous reports received by us, and especially giving details of the proposed ordinances for the Frontier and the United Provinces. Bengal had, I believe, already received the gift of a new ordinance or, perhaps, was about to receive it. Dr. Ansari’s message was amply confirmed even in its details many weeks later, when the new ordinances appeared as if to meet a new situation. It was generally supposed that Government had delayed action because of the unforeseen prolongation of the Round Table Conference. They wished to avoid wholesale repression in India while the members of the Round Table Conference whispered sweet nothings into each other’s ears.

So tension grew, and all of us had a feeling that events were marching ahead despite our little selves, and none could stop them from their predestined course. All we could do was to prepare ourselves to face them and to play our parts, individually and together, in the drama—more likely the tragedy—of life. But we hoped still that Gandhiji would be back before the curtain went up on this clash of forces, and would take the responsibility on his shoulders for peace or war. None of us was prepared to shoulder that burden in his absence.

In the United Provinces, the Government took another step which produced a commotion in the rural areas. Remission slips were distributed to the tenants, stating how much remission had been allowed, and containing a threat that unless the amount now due was paid up within a month (sometimes the period mentioned was shorter), the remission would be cancelled and the full sum realised by legal process, which meant ejectment, attachment of property, etc. In normal years the tenants usually paid up their rent in instalments in the course of two or three months. Even this usual period was thus not allowed. The whole countryside was suddenly faced by a crisis, and, slip in hand, the tenants rushed about protesting and complaining and asking for advice. It was a very foolish threat on the part of the Government or their local officials, and it was not, we were told later, meant seriously. But it lessened the chances of a
peaceful settlement very greatly and led inevitably, step by step, to conflict.

The choice had to be made very soon now by the peasants and by the Congress; we could not postpone our decision till Gandhiji's return. What were we to do? What advice to give? Could we reasonably ask the peasants to pay up the sum demanded within the short period allowed when we knew that many of them could not possibly do so? And then what of the arrears due from them? Would they not run the risk of dispossession even if they paid a large part of the sum demanded, or even the full current demand, which might be credited to arrears?

The Allahabad District Congress Committee, with its strong peasant contingent, showed right. It decided that it could not possibly advise the peasants to pay. It was told, however, that it could not take any aggressive step without the formal permission of the Provincial Executive as well as of the All-India Working Committee. The matter was, therefore, referred to the Working Committee, and both Tasadduq Sherwani and Purushottam Das Tandon were present to place the case for the province and the district. The question before us related to Allahabad district only and it was a purely economic issue, but we realised that, in the state of political tension then existing, it might have far-reaching consequences. Should the Allahabad District Committee be permitted to advise the peasants in the district to withholds payment of rent or revenue for the time being and pending further negotiation and better terms? This was the narrow issue and we wanted to confine ourselves to it, but could we do so? The Working Committee wanted to strain every nerve to prevent a break with Government before Gandhiji's return, and, in particular, it wanted to avoid a break on an economic issue which might develop into a class issue. The Committee, though politically advanced, was not so socially, and it disliked the raising of the tenant versus zamindar question.

Being socialistically inclined, I was not considered a very safe person to advise on economic and social matters. I myself felt that the Working Committee should realise that the U.P. situation was such that even our more moderate and right wing members were being forced by events to take action, in spite of all their disinclination for it. I welcomed, therefore, the presence of Sherwani and others from our province at our Committee meeting, for Sherwani (our Provincial President) was by no means a fire-brand. Constitutionally he was a right winger in the Congress, both politically and socially, and, at the begin-
ning of the year, he had been prejudiced against the agrarian policy of the U.P. Congress Committee. But when he became the head of that Committee himself and had to shoulder the burden, he realised that there was no other alternative for us. Every subsequent step taken by the Provincial Committee was in the closest co-operation with him and, indeed, often through him, as President.

Tasadduq Sherwani’s pleading before the Working Committee, therefore, produced great effect on the members—a much greater effect than mine would have done. With great hesitation, but feeling that they could not refuse it, they gave the U.P. Committee authority to permit in any area the suspension of payment of rent and revenue. But, at the same time, they pressed the U.P. people to avoid this step if they could and to carry on negotiations with the Provincial Government.

These negotiations were carried on for a while with little result. Some improvement was made, I believe, in the Allahabad district figures for remissions. It might have been possible, under ordinary circumstances, to arrive at a settlement or at least to avoid open conflict. The differences were being narrowed down. But the circumstances were very unusual, and on both sides—the Government and the Congress—there was the feeling of the inevitability of an approaching conflict, and there was no reality behind our negotiations. Every step taken by either party seemed to indicate a desire to manoeuvre for a position. The Government’s preparations for this could be and were in fact carried on and perfected in secret. Our strength lay entirely in the morale of the people, and this could not be prepared or raised by secret activities. Some of us—and I was one of the guilty ones—had often repeated in our public speeches that the struggle for freedom was far from over, and that we would have to face many trials and difficulties in the near future. We had asked our people to keep themselves in readiness for them, and because of this we had been criticised as war-mongers. As a matter of fact, there was a marked reluctance on the part of our middle-class Congress workers to face facts, and they hoped that somehow or other a conflict would be avoided. Gandhiji’s presence in London also distracted the attention of the newspaper-reading classes. And yet in spite of this passivity of the intelligentsia, events marched ahead, especially in Bengal, the Frontier Province and the U.P., and in November it began to dawn on many people that a crisis was approaching.

The U.P. Provincial Congress Committee, afraid of being
forestalled by events, made some domestic arrangements in the event of conflict taking place. The Allahabad Committee held a big Peasant Conference, which passed a tentative resolution stating that, in case better terms were not obtained, they would have to advise the peasants to withhold payment of rent and revenue. This resolution irritated the Provincial Government greatly, and, treating it as a *casus belli*, it refused to have any further dealings with us. That attitude again produced its reactions on the Provincial Congress, which interpreted it as a sign of the coming storm and hastened its own preparations. In Allahabad there was yet another Peasant Conference, when a stronger and more definite resolution asking the peasantry to withhold payment pending further negotiations and better terms, was passed. The attitude taken up even then, and to the end, was not one of a ‘no-rent’ campaign but a ‘fair-rent’ campaign, and we went on asking for negotiations, though the other party had ostentatiously walked away. The Allahabad resolution applied to zamindar and tenant alike, but we knew that in effect it applied to tenants and some petty zamindars only.

This was the position in the U.P. towards the end of November and the beginning of December 1931. Meanwhile in Bengal and the Frontier Province matters had also marched to a head, and in Bengal a new and terribly comprehensive ordinance had been applied. All these were signs of war, not of peace, and the question arose: when would Gandhiji return? Would he reach India before the Government started its great offensive, for which it had prepared so long? Or would he return to find many of his colleagues in prison and the struggle launched? We learnt that he was on his way back and would reach Bombay in the last week of the year. Each one of us, every prominent worker in the Congress at headquarters or in the provinces, wanted to avoid that struggle till his return. Even from the point of view of the struggle itself it was desirable for us to meet him, to have his advice and his directions. It was a race in which we were helpless. The initiative lay with the British Government.
THE END OF THE TRUCE

In spite of my preoccupation in the United Provinces, I had long been anxious to visit the two other storm centres, the Frontier Province and Bengal. I wanted to study the situation on the spot and to meet old colleagues, many of whom I had not seen for nearly two years. But, above all, I wanted to pay my homage to the spirit and courage of the people of these provinces and their sacrifices in the national struggle. The Frontier Province was beyond reach for the time being, for the Government of India did not approve of any prominent Congressman visiting it, and we had no desire to go in view of this disapproval, and thus create an impasse.

In Bengal the situation was deteriorating and, much as I was attracted to the province, I hesitated before going. I realised that I would be helpless there and could do little good. A deplorable and long-standing dispute between two groups of Congressmen in the province had long frightened outside Congressmen and kept them away, for they were afraid of getting involved in it on one side or the other. This was a feeble and ostrich-like policy, and did not help either in soothing Bengal or in solving her problems. Some time after Gandhiji had gone to London two incidents suddenly concentrated all-India attention on the situation in Bengal. These two took place in Hijli and Chittagong.

Hijli was a special detention camp gaol for detenus. It was officially announced that a riot had taken place inside the camp, the detenus had attacked the staff, and the latter had been forced to fire on them. One detenu was killed by this firing and many were wounded. A local official enquiry, held immediately after, absolved the staff from all blame for this firing and its consequences. But there were many curious features, and some facts leaked out which did not fit in with the official version, and vehement demands were made for a fuller enquiry. Contrary to the usual official practice in India, the Government of Bengal appointed an Enquiry Committee consisting of high judicial officers. It was a purely official committee, but it took evidence and considered the matter fully, and its findings were against the staff of the Detention Camp Gaol. It was held that the fault was largely that of the staff, and the firing was
unjustified. The previous Government communiqués issued on the subject were thus entirely falsified.

There was nothing very extraordinary about the Hijli occurrence. Unhappily such incidents or accidents are not rare in India, and one frequently reads of 'gaol riots' and of the gallant suppression of unarmed and helpless prisoners within the gaol by armed warders and others. Hijli was unusual in so far as it exposed, and exposed officially, the utter one-sidedness, and even the falsity of Government communiqués on such occurrences. Little credence had been attached to these communiqués in the past, but now they were completely found out.

Since the Hijli affair a large number of gaol 'occurrences' involving sometimes firing, sometimes the use of other kinds of force by the staff, have taken place all over India. Strangely enough in these 'gaol riots' only the prisoners seem to get hurt. Almost invariably an official communiqué has been issued accusing the prisoners of various misdeeds and absolving the staff. Very rarely some departmental punishments have been awarded to the staff. All demands for a full enquiry have been curtly refused, a departmental enquiry being deemed sufficient. Evidently the lesson of Hijli was well learnt by Government, that it is unsafe to have proper and impartial enquiries, and the best judge is the accuser himself. Is it surprising that the people also should learn the lesson of Hijli, that Government communiqués tell us what the Government wants them to believe and not what actually happens?

The Chittagong affair was much more serious. A terrorist shot down and killed a Muslim police inspector. This was followed by a Hindu-Muslim riot, or so it was called. It was patent, however, that it was something much more than that; something different from the usual communal riot. It was obvious that the terrorist's act had nothing to do with communalism; it was directed against a police officer, regardless of whether he was a Hindu or Muslim. Yet it is true that there was some Hindu-Muslim rioting afterwards. How this started, what was the occasion for it, has not been cleared up, although very serious charges have been made by responsible public men. Another feature of the rioting was the part taken by definite groups of other people, Anglo-Indians, chiefly railway employees, and other Government employees, who are alleged to have indulged in reprisals on a large scale. J. M. Sen-Gupta and other noted leaders of Bengal made specific allegations in regard to the occurrences in Chittagong, and challenged
an enquiry or even a suit for defamation, but the Government preferred to take no such step.

These somewhat unusual occurrences in Chittagong drew pointed attention to two dangerous possibilities. Terrorism had been condemned from many points of view; even modern revolutionary technique condemned it. But one of its possible consequences had always especially frightened me, and that was the danger of sporadic and communal violence spreading in India. I am not enough of a 'timid Hindu' to be afraid of violence as such, although I certainly dislike it. But I do feel that the disruptive forces in India are still very great, and sporadic violence would certainly give them strength and make the process of building up a united and disciplined nation a much harder task than it is. When people murder in the name of religion, or to reserve a place for themselves in Paradise, it is a dangerous thing to accustom them to the idea of terrorist violence. Political murder is bad. And yet the political terrorist can be reasoned with and won over to other ways, because presumab. the end he is striving for is an earthly one, not personal but national. Religious murder is worse, for it deals with things of the other world, and one cannot even attempt to reason about such matters. Sometimes the dividing line between the two is very thin and almost disappears, and political murder, by a metaphysical process, becomes semi-religious.

The Chittagong murder of a police official by a terrorist, and its consequences, made one realise very vividly the dangerous possibilities of terrorist activity and the enormous harm it might do to the cause of Indian unity and freedom. The reprisals that followed also showed us that fascist methods had appeared in India. Since then there have been many instances, notably in Bengal, of such reprisals, and the fascist spirit has undoubtedly spread in the European and Anglo-Indian community. Some of the Indian hangers-on of British imperialism have also imbibed it.

It is a curious thing, but the Terrorists themselves, or many of them, also have this fascist outlook, but it looks in a different direction. Their nationalist-fascism faces the imperialist-fascism of the Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and some upper-class Indians.

I went to Calcutta for a few days in November 1931. I had a very crowded programme, and, apart from meeting individuals and groups privately, addressed a number of mass meetings. In all these meetings I discussed the question of terrorism, and tried to show how wrong and futile and harmful it was for Indian freedom. I did not abuse the Terrorists, nor did I call
them 'dastardly' or 'cowardly', after the fashion of some of our countrymen who have themselves seldom, if ever, yielded to the temptation of doing anything brave or involving risk. It has always seemed to me a singularly stupid thing to call a man or woman, who is constantly risking his life, a coward. And the reaction of it on that man is to make him a little more contemptuous of his timid critics who shout from a distance and are incapable of doing anything.

On my last evening in Calcutta, a little before I was due to go to the station for my departure, two young men called on me. They were very young, about twenty, with pale, nervous faces and brilliant eyes. I did not know who they were, but soon I guessed their errand. They were very angry with me for my propaganda against terroristic violence. They said that it was producing a bad effect on young men, and they could not tolerate my intrusion in this way. We had a little argument; it was a hurried one, for the time for my departure was at hand. I am afraid our voices and our tempers rose, and I told them some hard things; and as I left them, they warned me finally that if I continued to misbehave in the future they would deal with me as they had dealt with others.

And so I left Calcutta, and as I lay in my berth in the train that night I was long haunted by the excited faces of these two boys. Full of life and nervous energy they were; what good material if only they turned the right way! I was sorry that I had dealt with them hurriedly and rather brusquely, and wished I had had the chance of long conversation with them. Perhaps I could have convinced them to apply their bright young lives to other ways, ways of serving India and freedom, in which there was no lack of opportunity for daring and self-sacrifice. Often I have thought of them in these after years. I never found out their names, nor did I have any other trace of them; and I wonder, sometimes, if they are dead or in some cell in the Andaman Islands.

It was December. The second Peasant Conference took place in Allahabad, and then I hurried south to the Karnataka to fulfil a long promise made to my old comrade of the Hindustani Seva Dal, Doctor N. S. Hardiker. The Seva Dal, the volunteer wing of the national movement, had all along been an auxiliary of the Congress, though its organisation was quite separate. In the summer of 1931, however, the Working Committee decided to absorb it completely into the Congress organisation, and to make it the Volunteer Department of the Congress. This was done, and Hardiker and I were put in charge
of it. The headquarters of the Dal continued in the Karnataka province at Hubli, and Hardiker induced me to visit the place for various functions connected with the Dal. He then took me about on tour for a few days in Karnataka, and I was amazed at the tremendous enthusiasm of the people everywhere. On my way back I visited Sholapur of Martial Law fame.

That tour in the Karnataka assumed the character of a farewell performance for me; my speeches became swan-songs, though they were rather aggressive and, I am afraid, not musical. News from the U.P. was definite and clear, the Government had struck, and struck hard. On my way to the Karnataka from Allahabad I had gone to Bombay with Kamala. She was again ill, and I arranged for her treatment in Bombay. It was in Bombay, almost immediately after our arrival from Allahabad, that we learnt that the Government of India had promulgated a special Ordinance for the United Provinces. They had decided not to wait for Gandhiji’s arrival, although he was already on the high seas, and was due in Bombay soon. The Ordinance was supposed to deal with the agrarian agitation, but it was so extraordinarily wide-flung and far-reaching that it made all political or public activity impossible. It provided even for the punishment of parents and guardians for the sins of their children and wards—a reversal of the old Biblical practice.

It was about this time that we read the report of the interview alleged to have been given by Gandhiji in Rome to the Giornale d’Italia. This came as a surprise, as it was unlike him to give an interview of this kind casually in Rome. On closer examination we found many words and phrases in it which were quite foreign to him, and it was patent to us, even before the denial came, that the interview could not have been given as published. We thought that there had been a great deal of distortion of something that he had said. Then came his emphatic contradiction of it, and his statement that he had never given any interview at all in Rome. It was evident to us that some one had played a trick on him. But to our amazement British newspapers and public men refused to believe him, and contemptuously referred to him as a liar. This hurt and angered.

I was eager to go back to Allahabad and to give up the Karnataka tour. I felt that my place was with my comrades in the U.P., and to be far away when so much was happening at home was an ordeal. I decided, however, in favour of adhering
to the Karnataka programme. On my return to Bombay some
friends advised me to stay on for Gandhiji's arrival, which was
due exactly a week later. But this was impossible. From
Allahabad came news of Purushottam Das Tandon's arrest and
other arrests. There was, besides, our Provincial Conference
which had been fixed at Etawah for that week. And so I
decided to go to Allahabad and to return to Bombay six days
later, if I was free, to meet Gandhiji and to attend a meeting
of the Working Committee. I left Kamala bed-ridden in
Bombay.

Even before I had reached Allahabad, at Chheoki station, an
order under the new Ordinance was served on me. At Allaha-
bad station another attempt was made to serve a duplicate of
that order on me; at my house a third attempt was made by
a third person. Evidently no risks were being taken. The order
interned me within the municipal limits of Allahabad, and I
was told that I must not attend any public meeting or function,
or speak in public, or write anything in a newspaper or leaflet.
There were many other restrictions. I found that a similar order
had been served on many of my colleagues, including Tasadduq
Sherwani. The next morning I wrote to the District Magistrate
(who had issued the order) acknowledging receipt of it and
informing him that I did not propose to take my orders from
him as to what I was to do or not to do. I would carry on with
my ordinary work in the ordinary way, and in the course of
this work I proposed to return to Bombay soon to meet
Mr. Gandhi, and take part in the meeting of the Working
Committee, of which I was the secretary.

A new problem confronted us. Our U.P. Provincial Con-
ference had been fixed to meet at Etawah that week. I had
come from Bombay with the intention of suggesting a post-
pomement, as it clashed somewhat with Gandhiji's arrival, and
in order to avoid conflict with the Government. But before my
return to Allahabad a peremptory message had come from the
U.P. Government to our President, Sherwani, enquiring if our
conference would consider the agrarian question, for if so, they
would prohibit the conference itself. It was patent that the
main purpose of the conference was to discuss the agrarian
question which was agitating the whole province; to meet and
not to discuss it would be the height of absurdity and self-
stultification. And in any event our President or any one else
had no authority to tie down the conference. Quite apart from
the Government's threat it was the intention of some of us to
postpone the conference, but this threat made a difference.
Many of us were rather obstinate in such matters, and the idea of being dictated to by Government was not pleasant. After long argument we decided to swallow our pride and to postpone the conference. We did so because almost at any cost we wanted still to avoid the development of the conflict, which had already begun, till Gandhiji's arrival. We did not want him to be confronted with a situation in which he was powerless to take the helm. In spite of our postponement of our Provincial Conference there was a great display of the police and military at Etawah, some stray delegates were arrested, and the Swadeshi Exhibition there was seized by the military.

Sherwani and I decided to leave Allahabad for Bombay on the morning of December 26th. Sherwani had been especially invited to the Working Committee meeting to confer on the U.P. situation. Both of us had been served with orders under the Ordinance not to leave Allahabad city. The Ordinance was said to be directed against the suspension of rent activities in the rural areas of Allahabad and some other U.P. districts. It was easy to understand that the Government should prevent us from visiting these rural areas. But it was obvious that we could not carry on this agrarian agitation in the city of Bombay; and the Ordinance, if it was really meant for the agrarian situation only, should have welcomed our departure from the province. Ever since the promulgation of the Ordinance our general policy had been a defensive one, and we had avoided coming to grips with it, although there had been individual cases of disobedience of orders. So far as the U.P. Congress was concerned, it was clear that they wanted to avoid or postpone conflict with the Government for the present at least. Sherwani and I were going to Bombay where Gandhiji and the Working Committee would consider these matters, and no one knew—certainly I was by no means sure—what their ultimate decisions might be.

All these considerations made me think that we would be permitted to go to Bombay, and the technical breach of the order of internment would, for the moment at least, be tolerated by Government. And yet in my bones I felt otherwise.

As we got into the train we read in the morning's papers of the new Frontier Province Ordinance and the arrest of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Doctor Khan Sahib and others. Very soon our train, the Bombay Mail, came to a sudden halt at a wayside station, Iradatganj, which is not one of its usual stopping places, and police officials mounted up to arrest us. A Black Maria waited by the railway line, and Sherwani and I
mounted this closed prisoners’ van and were bumped away to Naini. The Superintendent of Police, an Englishman, who had arrested us on that morning of Boxing Day looked glum and unhappy. I am afraid we had spoiled his Christmas.
And so to prison!

“Absent thee from felicity a while,
And for a season draw thy breath in pain.”
ARRESTS, ORDINANCES, PROSCRIPTIONS

Two days after our arrest Gandhiji landed in Bombay, and it was only then that he learnt of the latest developments. He had heard in London of the Bengal Ordinance, and had been much upset by it. He now found that fresh Christmas gifts awaited him in the shape of the U.P. and Frontier Ordinances, and some of his closest colleagues in the Frontier Province and the U.P. had been arrested. The die seemed to be cast and all hope of peace gone, but still he made an effort to find a way out, and sought an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, for the purpose. The interview, he was informed from New Delhi, could only take place on certain conditions—these conditions being that he must not discuss recent events in Bengal, U.P. and the Frontier, the new Ordinances, and the arrests under them. (I write from memory, and have not got the text of the Vicerregal reply before me.) What exactly Gandhiji or any Congress leader was officially supposed to discuss with the Viceroy, apart from these forbidden subjects which were agitating the country, passes one's comprehension. It was absolutely clear now that the Government of India had determined to crush the Congress, and would have no dealings with it. The Working Committee had no choice left but to resort to civil disobedience. They expected arrest at any moment, and they wanted to give a lead to the country before their enforced departure. Even so, the civil disobedience resolution was passed tentatively, and another attempt was made by Gandhiji to see the Viceroy, and he sent him a second telegram asking for an unconditional interview. The reply of the Government was to arrest Gandhiji as well as the Congress President, and to press the button which was to let loose fierce repression all over the country. It was clear that whoever else wanted or did not want the struggle, the Government was eager and over-ready for it.

We were in gaol, of course, and all this news came to us vaguely and disjointedly. Our trial was postponed to the New Year, and so we had, as under-trials, more interviews than a convict could have. We heard of the great discussion that was going on as to whether the Viceroy should or should not have agreed to the interview, as if it really mattered either way.
This question of the interview shadowed all other matters. It was stated that Lord Irwin would have agreed to the interview, and if he and Gandhiji had met all would have been well. I was surprised at the extraordinarily superficial view that the Indian Press took of the situation and how they ignored realities. Was the inevitable struggle between Indian Nationalism and British Imperialism—in the final analysis, two irreconcilables—to be reduced to the personal whims of individuals? Could the conflict of two historical forces be removed by smiles and mutual courtesy? Gandhiji was driven to act in one way, because Indian Nationalism could not commit hara-kiri or submit willingly to foreign dictation in vital matters; the British Viceroy of India had to act in a particular way to meet the challenge of this Nationalism and to endeavour to protect British interest, and it made not the slightest difference who the Viceroy was at the time. Lord Irwin would have acted exactly as Lord Willingdon did, for either of them was but the instrument of British imperialist policy and could only make some minor deviations from the line laid down. Lord Irwin, indeed, was subsequently a member of the British Government, and he associated himself fully with the official steps taken in India. To praise or condemn individual Viceroyys for British policy in India seems to me a singularly inept thing to do, and our habit of indulging in this pastime can only be due to an ignorance of the real issues or to a deliberate evasion of them.

January 4th, 1932, was a notable day. It put a stop to argument and discussion. Early that morning Gandhiji and the Congress President, Vallabhbhai Patel, were arrested and confined without trial as State prisoners. Four new ordinances were promulgated giving the most far-reaching powers to magistrates and police officers: Civil liberty ceased to exist, and both person and property could be seized by the authorities. It was a declaration of a kind of state of siege for the whole of India, the extent and intensity of application being left to the discretion of the local authorities.1

On that 4th of January also our trial took place in Naini Prison under the U.P. Emergency Powers Ordinance, as it was called. Sherwani was sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs.150; I was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs.500 (in default six

1 Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, stated in the House of Commons on March 24, 1932: “I admit that the Ordinances that we have approved are very drastic and severe. They cover almost every activity of Indian life.”
months more). Our offences were identical; we had been served with identical orders of internment in Allahabad city; we had committed the same breach of them by attempting to go together to Bombay; we had been arrested and tried together under the same section, and yet our sentences were very dissimilar. There was, however, one difference: I had written to the District Magistrate and informed him of my intention to go to Bombay in defiance of the order; Sherwani had given no such formal notice, but his proposed departure was equally well known, and had been mentioned in the Press. Immediately after the sentence Sherwani asked the trying magistrate, to the amusement of those present and the embarrassment of the magistrate, if his smaller sentence was due to communal considerations.

Quite a lot happened on that fateful day, January 4th, all over the country. Not far from where we were, in Allahabad city, huge crowds came in conflict with the police and military, and there were the usual lathi charges involving deaths and other casualties. The gaols began to fill with civil disobedience prisoners. To begin with, these prisoners went to the district gaols, and Naini and the other great central prisons received only the overflows. Later, all the gaols filled up, and huge temporary camp gaols were established.

Very few came to our little enclosure in Naini. My old companion, Narmada Prasad, joined us, and Ranjit Pandit and my cousin, Mohanlal Nehru. A surprising addition to our little brotherhood of Barrack No. 6 was Bernard Aluvihare, a young friend from Ceylon, who had just returned from England after being called to the Bar. He had been told by my sister not to get mixed up with our demonstrations; but, in a moment of enthusiasm, he joined a Congress procession—and a Black Maria carried him to prison.

The Congress had been declared illegal—the Working Committee at the top, the Provincial Committees, and innumerable local committees. Together with the Congress all manner of allied or sympathetic or advanced organisations had been declared unlawful—kisan sabhas and peasant unions, youth leagues, students’ associations, advanced political organisations, national universities and schools, hospitals, swadeshi concerns, libraries. The lists were indeed formidable, and contained many hundreds of names for each major province. The all-India total must have run into several thousands, and this very number of outlawed organisations was in itself a tribute to the Congress and the National Movement.
My wife lay in Bombay, ill in bed, fretting at her inability to take part in civil disobedience. My mother and both my sisters threw themselves into the movement with vigour, and soon both the sisters were in gaol with a sentence of a year each. Odd bits of news used to reach us through newcomers to prison or through the local weekly paper that we were permitted to read. We could only guess much that was happening, for the press censorship was strict, and the prospect of heavy penalties always faced newspapers and news agencies. In some provinces it was an offence even to mention the name of a person arrested or sentenced.

So we sat in Naini Prison cut off from the strife outside, and yet wrapped up in it in a hundred ways; busying ourselves with spinning or reading or other activities, talking sometimes of other matters, but thinking always of what was happening beyond the prison walls. We were out of it, and yet in it. Sometimes the strain of expectation was very great; or there was anger at something wrongly done; disgust at weakness or vulgarity. At other times we were strangely detached, and could view the scene calmly and dispassionately, and feel that petty individual errors or weaknesses mattered little when vast forces were at play and the mills of the gods were grinding. We would wonder what the morrow would bring of strife and tumult, and gallant enthusiasm and cruel repression and hateful cowardice—and what was all this leading to? Whither were we going? The future was hid from us, and it was as well that it was hidden; even the present was partly covered by a veil, so far as we were concerned. But this we knew: that there was strife and suffering and sacrifice in the present and on the morrow.

"Men will renew the battle in the plain
To-morrow; red with blood will Xanthus be;
Hector and Ajax will be there again;
Helen will come upon the wall to see.

"Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
And fluctuate 'tween blind hopes and blind despairs.
And fancy that we put forth all our life,
And never know how with the soul it fares." ¹

¹ Matthew Arnold.
Those early months of 1932 were remarkable, among other things, for an extraordinary exhibition of ballyhoo on the part of the British authorities. Officials, high and low, shouted out how virtuous and peaceful they were, and how sinful and pugnacious was the Congress. They stood for democracy while the Congress favoured dictatorships. Was not its President called a dictator? In their enthusiasm for a righteous cause they forgot trifles like Ordinances, and suppression of all liberties, and muzzling of newspapers and presses, imprisonment of people without trial, seizure of properties and monies, and the many other odd things that were happening from day to day. They forgot also the basic character of British rule in India. Ministers of Government (our own countrymen) grew eloquent on how Congressmen were ‘grinding their axes’—in prison—while they laboured for the public good on paltry salaries of a few thousand rupees per month. The lower magistracy not only sentenced us to heavy terms but lectured to us in the process, and sometimes abused the Congress and individuals connected with it. Even Sir Samuel Hoare, from the serene dignity of his high office as Secretary of State for India, announced that though dogs barked the caravan moved on. He forgot for the moment that the dogs were in gaol and could not easily bark there, and those left outside were effectively muzzled.

Most surprising of all, the Cawnpore Communal Riots were laid at the door of the Congress. The horrors of these truly horrible riots were laid bare, and it was repeatedly stated that the Congress was responsible for them. As it happened, the Congress had played the only decent part in them, and one of its noblest sons lay dead, mourned by every group and community in Cawnpore. The Karachi session of the Congress, immediately on hearing of the riots, appointed an Enquiry Committee, and this Committee made a most exhaustive enquiry. After many months of labour, it issued a voluminous report, which was promptly proscribed by the Government, and printed copies were seized and, I suppose, destroyed. This attempt to suppress the results of an enquiry has not prevented our official critics and the British-owned Press from repeating from time to time that the riots were due to Congress work.
No doubt, in this and other matters, the truth will prevail in the end, but sometimes the lie has a long start.

"When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
The truth is great and shall prevail,
When none cares whether it prevails or not."

It was all very natural, I suppose, this exhibition of a hysterical war mentality, and no one could expect truth or restraint under the circumstances. But it did seem to go beyond expectation, and was surprising in its intensity and abandon. It was some indication of the state of nerves of the ruling group in India, and of how they had been repressing themselves in the past. Probably the anger was not caused by anything we had done or said, but by the realisation of their own previous fear of losing their empire. Rulers who are confident of their own strength do not give way in this manner. The contrast between this picture and the other was very marked. For on the other side silence reigned, not the silence of voluntary and dignified restraint, but the silence of prison and of fear and an all-pervasive censorship. But for this enforced gagging, no doubt the other side would have also excelled in hysterical outbursts and exaggeration and abuse. One outlet, however, there was—unauthorised news sheets which were issued in various towns from time to time.

The British-owned Anglo-Indian newspapers in India joined in this game of ballyhoo with gusto, and gave utterance and publicity to many a thought which perhaps they had nurtured and repressed in secret for long. Ordinarily they have to be a little careful of what they say, for many of their readers are Indians, but the crisis in India swept away these restraints and gave us a glimpse of the minds of all, English and Indian alike. There are few Anglo-Indian newspapers left in India; one by one they have dropped out. Several of those that remain are high-class journals, both in the news they supply and their general get-up. Their leading articles on world affairs, though always representing the conservative viewpoint, are able and show knowledge and grasp. Undoubtedly as newspapers they are probably the best in India. But on Indian political problems there is a sudden fall, and their treatment of them is amazingly one-sided; and, in times of crisis, this partiality often becomes hysteria and vulgarity. They represent faithfully the Government of India, and the continuous propaganda they do for it has not the merit of being unobtrusive.
Compared to these selected few Anglo-Indian newspapers, the Indian newspapers are usually poor stuff. Their financial resources are limited, and there is little attempt on the part of their owners to improve them. They carry on their day-to-day life with difficulty, and the unhappy editorial staff has no easy time. Their get-up is poor, their advertisements often of the most objectionable kind, and their general attitude to life and politics sentimental and hysterical. Partly, I suppose, this is due to the fact that we are a sentimental race; partly because the medium (of the English newspapers) is a foreign tongue and it is not easy to write simply and, at the same time, forcefully. But the real reason is that all of us suffer from any number of complexes due to long repression and subjection, and every outlet is apt to be surcharged with emotion.

Among the Indian-owned English newspapers, *The Hindu* of Madras is probably the best, so far as get-up and news service are concerned. It always reminds me of an old maiden lady, very prim and proper, who is shocked if a naughty word is used in her presence. It is eminently the paper of the *bourgeois*, comfortably settled in life. Not for it is the shady side of existence, the rough and tumble and conflict of life. Several other newspapers of moderate views have also this 'old maiden lady' standard. They achieve it, but without the distinction of *The Hindu* and, as a result, they become astonishingly dull in every respect.

It was evident that the Government had long prepared its blow, and it wanted it to be as thorough and staggering as possible right at the beginning. In 1930 it was always attempting, by fresh Ordinances, to catch up an ever-worsening situation. The initiative remained then with the Congress. The 1932 methods were different, and Government began with an offensive all along the line. Every conceivable power was given and taken under a batch of all-India and provincial Ordinances; organisations were outlawed; buildings, property, automobiles, bank accounts were seized; public gatherings and processions forbidden, and newspapers and printing presses fully controlled. On the other hand, unlike 1930, Gandhiji was definitely desirous of avoiding civil disobedience just then, and most of the members of the Working Committee thought likewise. Some of them, including myself, thought that a struggle was inevitable, however much we disliked it, and should therefore be prepared for, and in the United Provinces and the Frontier Province a growing tension had directed people's minds to the approaching conflict. But, on the whole, the middle classes and the
intelligentsia were not thinking then in terms of struggle although they could not wholly ignore the possibility. Somehow, they hoped that this struggle would be avoided on Gandhi’s return; the wish was obviously father to the thought.

Thus the initiative early in 1932 was definitely with the Government, and Congress was always on the defensive. Local Congress leaders in many places were taken by surprise by the rapid developments leading to the Ordinances and civil disobedience. In spite of this there was a remarkable response to the Congress call, and there was no lack of civil resisters. Indeed I think that there can be little doubt that the resistance offered to the British Government in 1932 was far greater than in 1930, although in 1930 there was more show and publicity, especially in the big cities. In spite of this greater endurance shown by the people in 1932, and their remaining overwhelmingly peaceful, the initial push of inspiration was far less than in 1930. It was as if we entered unwillingly to battle. There was a glory about it in 1930 which had faded a little two years later. The Government countered Congress with every resource at its command; India lived practically under martial law, and Congress never really got back the initiative or any freedom of action. The first blows stunned it, and most of its bourgeois sympathisers who had been its principal supporters in the past. Their pockets were hit, and it became obvious that those who joined the civil disobedience movement, or were known to help it in any way, stood to lose not only their liberty, but perhaps all their property. This did not matter so much to us in the U.P., where the Congress was a poor man’s concern; but in the big cities, like Bombay, it made a great deal of difference. It meant absolute ruin for the merchant class and great loss to professional people. The mere threat of this (and it was sometimes carried out) paralysed these well-to-do city classes. I learnt later of a timid but prosperous merchant, who had little to do with politics, except perhaps to give an occasional donation, being threatened by the police with a fine of five lakhs of rupees, besides a long term of imprisonment. Such threats were fairly common, and were by no means empty talk, for the police were all-powerful then and instances occurred daily of threats being translated into action.

I do not think any Congressman has a right to object to the procedure adopted by the Government, although the violence and coercion used by the Government against an overwhelmingly non-violent movement was certainly most objectionable from any civilised standards. If we choose to adopt revolu-
tionary direct action methods, however non-violent they might be, we must expect every resistance. We cannot play at revolution in a drawing-room, but many people want to have the advantage of both. For a person to dabble in revolutionary methods, he must be prepared to lose everything he possesses. The prosperous and the well-to-do are therefore seldom revolutionaries, though individuals may play the fool in the eyes of the worldly-wise and be dubbed traitors to their own class.

Other methods had to be adopted, of course, to deal with the masses, who had no cars or banking accounts or other property worth seizing, and on whom the real burden of the struggle lay. One interesting result of the ruthlessness of Government action in all directions was to whip up that crowd of people, who might be called (to borrow a word from a recent book) "Governmentarians," into activity. Some of them had recently begun to flirt with the Congress, not knowing what the future might bring. But Government could not tolerate this, and no passive loyalty was enough. In the words of Frederick Cooper of Mutiny fame the authorities "would brook nothing short of absolute, active, and positive loyalty. Government could not condescend to exist upon the moral sufferance of its subjects." A year ago Mr. Lloyd George referred to his old colleagues, the leaders of the British Liberal Party who had joined the National Government, as "specimens of those changeable reptiles who adapt their hue to their environments." The new environment in India tolerated no neutral hues, and so some of our countrymen appeared in the brightest of approved colours and, with song and feasting, they declared their love and admiration for our rulers. They had nothing to fear from the Ordinances and the numerous prohibitions and inhibitions and curfew orders and sunset laws; for had it not been officially stated that all this was meant for the disloyal and the seditious, and the loyal need have no cause for alarm? And so they could view the turmoil and conflict all round them with a measure of equanimity, devoid of that fear that gripped many of their countrymen. With Chloe (in *The Faithful Shepherdess*) they might perhaps have agreed when she said:

"For from one cause of fear I am most free,
   It is impossible to ravish me,
   I am so willing."

The Government had somehow got hold of the idea that Congress was going to exploit women in the struggle by filling
the gaols with them, in the hope that women would be well treated or would get light sentences. It was a fantastic notion, as if any one likes to push his womenfolk into prison. Usually when girls or women took an active part in the campaign, it was in spite of their fathers or brothers or husbands, or at any rate not with their full co-operation. Government, however, decided to discourage women by long sentences and bad treatment in prison. Soon after my sisters' arrest and conviction, a number of young girls, mostly 15 or 16 years old, met in Allahabad to discuss what they could do. They had no experience, but were full of enthusiasm and wanted advice. They were arrested as they were meeting in a private house, and each of them was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. This was a minor incident, one of many that were occurring all over India from day to day. Most of the girls and women who were sentenced had a very bad time in prison, even worse than the men had. I heard of many painful instances, but the most extraordinary account that I saw was one prepared by Miraben (Madeleine Slade) giving her experiences, together with those of other civil disobedience prisoners, in a Bombay gaol.

In the United Provinces our struggle was centred in the rural areas. Owing to the unceasing pressure of the Congress, as representing the peasantry, fairly substantial remissions had been promised, though we did not think them enough. Immediately after our arrest additional remissions were announced. It was curious that this announcement did not come earlier, for it could have made a great deal of difference. It would have been difficult for us to reject it on the spot. But then Government was very anxious that the Congress should not get the credit for these remissions, and so on the one side they wanted to crush the Congress, and on the other to give as much as possible remissions to the peasants to keep them quiet. It was noticeable that the remissions were highest wherever the Congress pressure had been greatest.

These remissions, considerable as they were, did not solve the agrarian problem, but they did ease the situation greatly. They took the edge off the peasantry's resistance, and from the point of view of our larger struggle, weakened us at the moment. That struggle brought suffering to scores of thousands of peasants in the U.P., and many were completely ruined by it. But the pressure of that struggle brought millions of peasants almost the highest possible remissions under the existing system, and saved them (the consequences of civil disobedience and its offshoots apart) from a tremendous amount of harassment. These petty