

**GANDHIJI'S
CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GOVERNMENT
1944-47**

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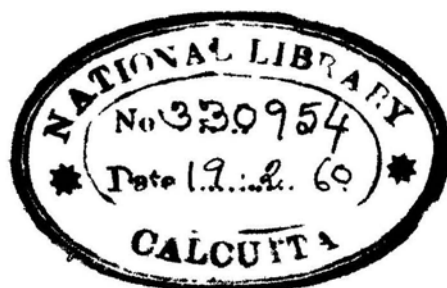
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FOREWORD

On our release from detention camp at Poona in May 1944, I, under Gandhiji's instructions, prepared for publication a volume of his correspondence with the Government during his 21 months of detention. It was published under the title *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government (1942-44)*. While working on my recent book *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase*, I felt that a corresponding publication for the period covered by *The Last Phase* would be of use. This book is the result.

The present volume takes up the thread where it was left in the earlier volume, namely, from Gandhiji's release in May, 1944, to the advent of Independence on August 15, 1947, except for a few letters exchanged after that date with some of the British functionaries who had played an important role in the drama of the transfer of power.

Gandhiji's was a multi-dimensional personality. He functioned not on one plane but on several planes simultaneously. Thus while he was conducting negotiations with the representatives of the British Government he was also carrying on brisk correspondence with a variety of people in the non-official world and was moulding current history by his public utterances and writings in the Press. To present a comprehensive record of Gandhiji's political activity for the period covered by the two volumes of *The Last Phase* would thus require not one volume but several volumes.

Gandhiji's correspondence with the representatives of the British Government alone has been presented in this collection. Correspondence with the popular Ministers, both at the Centre and in the Provinces, had to be excluded from its scope. Highly interesting and valuable as this part of the record is, it can only come as a separate volume, along with Gandhiji's correspondence with the national leaders — whether in the Congress or in the opposite camp — and with colleagues, co-workers and friends in different fields. Circumstances permitting, I might return to the task.

This was perhaps the stormiest period in Gandhiji's life and a crucial one in India's history. The record of Gandhiji's correspondence for this period, covering the intricate negotiations that heralded Indian independence—hitherto largely unpublished—has, therefore, an importance all its own. Providing as it does an insight into the working of Gandhiji's mind and that of the British statesmen, who were engaged in those negotiations, it cannot but be of profound significance to all students of Gandhiji's life and of contemporary history.

The book has been divided chronologically and episodically into twelve sections. The first four sections deal with Gandhiji's correspondence with Lord Wavell. Section I contains letters exchanged on his release by Gandhiji in an attempt to resolve the Indian political deadlock—the legacy of the Second World War. Section II gives the story of a characteristic personal letter which Gandhiji addressed to Mr. Churchill, the British Prime Minister, in the same connection. Section III covers the Simla Conference of June-July 1945, and Lord Wavell's well-meant but abortive attempt to form a war-time popular Government at the Centre. Correspondence in Section IV covers a variety of matters of national importance, as for instance, the trial of the Indian National Army prisoners, the release of prisoners undergoing detention for their political views or activities, and the reprieve of prisoners condemned for the same. This is followed in Section V by correspondence with Mr. R. G. Casey, the Australian war-time Governor of Bengal, and Sir Frederick Burrows, his successor, marking the change over from war time repression to the conciliatory phase of post-war British policy. Section VI again takes up correspondence with Lord Wavell in regard to the food crisis in the early part of 1946, when South India was threatened with an extensive famine. Of special interest in terms of planning for Sarvodaya are the letters exchanged between Gandhiji on the one hand and Lord Wavell, his officials and some members of the Cabinet Mission on the other, for the abolition of the Salt Tax in Section VII. Section VIII contains correspondence with the British Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy in 1946, in connection with the negotiations

for the transfer of power. This is followed by correspondence in Section IX with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, and Lord Wavell in connection with the formation of a National Interim Government at the Centre and the effort to bring the Muslim League into it. Section X deals with the correspondence with Sir Hugh Dow, the Governor of Bihar, during Gandhiji's stay in Bihar in March, 1947, while Section XI covers the correspondence with Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy. The book concludes with a few personal letters in Section XII exchanged with Sir Frederick Burrows, Lord Mountbatten, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Ismay, on the eve of and after independence.

The originals of some of the incoming letters included in this volume bear the cryptic annotation "acknowledged" but there is no copy of the reply on record. The reason for this is that during this period Gandhiji and his assistants used frequently to meet the members of the Government and it was not necessary always to acknowledge or to reply in writing all letters that were received. An acknowledgment was sometimes sent over the telephone and the points at issue cleared by personal discussion or by oral messages sent through friends. No copy of enclosures sent to the officials in the original was, as a rule, kept. Nor was it possible always to keep copies of all hand-written letters sent under Gandhiji's instructions. I have, however, tried to cover the gaps resulting from a break in the continuity of the correspondence or from its abrupt termination by putting in supplementary footnotes wherever necessary.

Sometimes the correspondents chose to be so cryptic as to create a veritable headache for the editor. A typical instance will be found on pages 280-81 in the letters exchanged between Gandhiji and Lord Mountbatten. As neither Gandhiji's office records nor any of the people who were intimately connected with the general course of events at the time could provide the slightest clue as to the subject matter under correspondence, I sought Lord Mountbatten's and Pandit Nehru's help in the matter. In reply to my query Lord Mountbatten wrote:

"I regret to say that I cannot remember what my correspondence of October 1974 with Gandhiji was

about, particularly as we both seem to have been so terribly discreet in our letters."

Pandit Nehru, too, attempted a guess with which he himself was not satisfied. It needed laborious research and sifting of collateral evidence to discover that the point in issue was Lord Mountbatten's retirement from the Governor-Generalship of India some time after independence. He was keen on going but the Indian leaders were unwilling to let him do so when so many post-partition problems were hanging fire, the Kashmir crisis was brewing and the ship of the State was weathering heavy seas.

Barring a few exceptions relating to the post-independence period, where history has not yet taken over from current events, the record presented in this volume is exhaustive. I have, in the Introduction, outlined in brief the historical setting in which this correspondence took place. For the convenience of the general reader I have endeavoured to make the volume so far as possible self-explanatory and self-contained. But to derive full value from it, it has to be read in conjunction with the two volumes of *The Last Phase*, to which it is intended primarily to serve as a companion volume.

A number of documents referred to in the correspondence have for the sake of convenience been given at the end as Appendices.

My thanks are due to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Lord Mountbatten, Rt. Hon'ble Mr. R. G. Casey, Sir Frederick Burrows and Sir Hugh Dow, for permission to include their letters in this volume, and to Lady Cripps and Lord Wavell's son in respect of letters by Sir Stafford and Lord Wavell respectively. I am also thankful to the Navajivan Trust for providing the facilities to compile this volume.

New Delhi,
New Year's Eve, 1959

Pyarelal

INTRODUCTION

On May 6, 1944, when Gandhiji was all of a sudden released, owing to his illness, governmental repression was in full swing. The "Quit India" struggle had lost much of its initial momentum, jails were full to over-crowding with civil resisters, practically all the principal Congress leaders were in prison, and the movement was being conducted mainly by a handful of workers who had gone underground.

The resolution of the All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) of August 8, 1942, had not launched the "Quit India" struggle. It had only authorised Gandhiji to launch a struggle if all attempts to arrive at an honourable settlement failed. And Gandhiji, on his part, had declared that he would take the earliest opportunity to seek an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, towards that end. But on August 9, in the early dawn, he and the Congress leaders were all arrested. There was no provision in the resolution of the A.I.C.C. for the appointment of a successor if the leader of the movement was arrested. Instead every man was asked, in that event, to be his own leader and to act, according to his best judgment, within the four-corners of the principles of truth and non-violence. The particular struggle envisaged in the "Quit India" resolution was thus never launched. What followed the arrest of the leaders was, held Gandhiji, the spontaneous upsurge of the leaderless mass goaded into madness by the savage governmental repression.

The position in which Gandhiji found himself on his release was an extremely difficult and baffling one. He had no official status in the Congress organisation. Since 1934 he had ceased to be even its primary member. The August 8 resolution of the A. I. C. C. had invested him with power to launch a struggle under certain conditions but that power had lapsed with his imprisonment (under the rules of Satyagraha a civil resister on his imprisonment suffers "civil death") and it was Gandhiji's view that his release did not automatically restore that power to him. Some eminent jurists, whom he had consulted, confirmed his interpretation.

Here was a General appointed specifically for the execution of a certain mandate. That mandate had been rendered inoperative by the march of events. He had no power to alter its terms. Fresh authority could be given him only by the Working Committee of the Congress whose members were in prison and whom he was not allowed to see.

It was in this setting that in his first letter to Lord Wavell — who had in the meantime replaced Lord Linlithgow — Gandhiji as a free man repeated his request which he had been denied as a prisoner, viz. to be allowed to meet the members of the Working Committee of the Congress. Without knowing their mind he could do but little to resolve the political deadlock.

The permission was refused and the stalemate continued.

At this stage a British journalist, Stuart Gelder of the *News Chronicle*, entered upon the scene. In an interview with Gandhiji he asked: Would not the Viceroy, from his point of view, be justified in refusing him the permission that he had asked for, since the opportunity could well be utilised by him to get himself reinvested with the power to launch civil disobedience which according to his own statement had under the rules of civil resistance lapsed?

In replying to this question Gandhiji categorically stated that he had in fact no such intention; 1944 was not 1942; as a realist he realised that the country could not be taken back to 1942; history could not repeat itself and as a Satyagrahi he could never wish to launch civil resistance merely to embarrass the Government.

But the authorities were determined not to allow any relaxation of their hold on India while the war was on.

At the back of this policy, it was well known, was no less a person than the redoubtable Mr. Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister. To touch his heart if possible, therefore, Gandhiji addressed to him a characteristically personal letter entreating him to shed his distrust and make use of him — “the naked fakir” — for the good “both of your country and mine”.

Churchill's response to it was just a polite acknowledgment. “Whatever I touch,” remarked Gandhiji sorrowfully in

a letter to Agatha Harrison, an English friend, "turns to dust. But I have faith."

As the tide of war turned slowly in favour of the Allies, different considerations began to prevail. Even after the defeat of Germany in Europe, it was realised that it would take at least two years to put Japan completely out of the field. Lord Wavell, as the man on the spot, saw that this would inevitably put an additional strain on India, which would thereafter become the principal base of Allied operations in the East, making whole-hearted cooperation of the various Indian political parties more necessary than ever. The country was threatened by the prospect of another famine and a host of formidable post-war problems had begun to loom on the horizon. Besides, with the termination of the war, it would no longer be possible to keep India indefinitely under the ordinance rule. The only wise course, therefore, was to anticipate events and establish a popular coalition Government at the Centre as a step towards return to normalcy.

Accordingly, in late 1944, in a meeting with Bhulabhai Desai, the leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly, Lord Wavell told him that if a National Government was formed at the Centre by the Congress and the Muslim League Parliamentary Parties, he would welcome it. Bhulabhai thereupon met Liaquat Ali Khan, the deputy leader of the Muslim League Party in the Central Assembly, and they exchanged copies of a draft agreement bearing their respective initials for the formation of a coalition Government ("Bhulabhai-Liaquat Ali Pact"). The full story of that ill-fated pact and its sequel will be found in the first volume of *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*. The attempt failed owing, among other things, to careless handling on Bhulabhai's part, and was subsequently repudiated by both Jinnah and Liaquat Ali on the one hand and the Congress High Command, when they came out of prison, on the other. But in the meantime it had laid the basis for another attempt, some time after, by the Viceroy to resolve the political deadlock. Inasmuch as it was an attempt to solve the Indian question by the joint effort of the Indian parties themselves, without British intervention, and its basis was political as

against the communal, Gandhiji never lost his partiality for it.

Lord Wavell had in the meantime never ceased to press his views on the British Government. In June 1945, after a visit to London, with the concurrence of the Coalition Government at home, he called a conference of the representatives of the various parties chosen by himself for the formation of a Government at the Centre. At the same time orders were issued for the release of the members of the Congress Working Committee. The invitees to the Conference included among others Gandhiji and Jinnah as the "recognised leaders" of the two main political parties". The Congress President was not invited.

Gandhiji took strong exception to this. The Congress could only be represented by its President, but he would, he wrote to Lord Wavell, attend the conference in his individual capacity if the Viceroy so desired. The omission in regard to the invitation to the Congress President was, as a result, rectified and Gandhiji agreed, at the Viceroy's request, to be at Simla during the conference as an unofficial adviser.

The Viceregal broadcast about the conference contained a reference to "caste-Hindu Muslim parity" in the National Government to be formed at the Centre. It was on the issue of isolating the scheduled castes from the rest of the Hindu society for electoral purposes in the communal decision of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's Tory-Labour Coalition Government that Gandhiji had, in 1932, launched, from behind the prison walls, his fast unto death, which had resulted in the reversal of the British decision. Gandhiji saw in reversion on the eve of independence, to that principle in a different garb in the formula of "caste-Hindu Muslim parity" the cloven hoof of partition on the basis of the "two nation" theory of the Muslim League.

According to this theory, the Muslims constituted a separate "nation" from the Hindus by virtue of their religion, history, tradition, culture etc., and were therefore entitled to the sovereign right of "self-determination". Consistently with this theory the League had not hesitated to encourage separatist claims on the part of all sections and groups

outside itself while claiming for itself the exclusive right to be regarded as the representative of all Muslims. Constitutionally this was a device in a democratic set up, to equate minority with the majority and even to claim preponderance for it in certain areas.

Gandhiji refused to have to do anything with the conference — and advised the Congress also to that effect — if acceptance of the invitation to participate in it implied that the Congress had accepted the “caste-Hindu Muslim parity” formula. The Viceroy, however, explained that acceptance of the invitation committed the parties to nothing; the Congress would be free to accept or to reject any part of the Viceregal proposal. That cleared the way for the Congress to participate in the conference.

When, however, the conference actually met at Simla, the Congress leaders, to Gandhiji's surprise, informed him that they were committed to the parity formula. Gandhiji pleaded with them that even so, they could render nugatory that part of the Viceregal proposal by voluntarily choosing sub-parity for the Hindus and selecting the bulk of their nominees from among the minorities. They would thereby vindicate the claim of the Congress to be a truly national organisation instead of a Hindu or a caste Hindu one as Jinnah had dubbed it. But in spite of his advice they allowed themselves to be ruled by considerations of political gain. In the result the “parity” principle remained to stay and dogged their footsteps till it reached its natural culmination in India's partition two years later.

The conference at Simla broke when Jinnah insisted that the Viceroy should give in advance an assurance that all the Muslim members of the proposed National Government would be selected from the pannel of names submitted by the Muslim League. The Viceroy thereupon declared that the conference had failed to achieve its objective and dissolved it though he had begun by saying that no party would be allowed out of wilfulness to obstruct the course of negotiations. He took the blame for the failure upon his own shoulders. Private advice from London, received later, however, was to the effect that, as at the time of the Cripps Mission of 1942, the Viceregal decision was dictated from London by

the Caretaker Government headed by Mr. Churchill when it was no longer necessary to maintain the Wavell offer as a part of the election necessities. "It grieves me to think," wrote Gandhiji in a letter to Lord Wavell at the end of the conference, "that the conference which began so happily and so hopefully should have ended in apparent failure. . . . You have taken the blame on your own shoulders. But the world will think otherwise. India certainly does."

Taking advantage of the new climate that had been created by the change in the official attitude, Gandhiji had for some time been trying, with the cooperation of the Government, to liquidate the bitterness left by the repressive measures to put down the "Quit India" struggle. The issues he took up with the Viceroy included the release of the prisoners involved in what was known as Ashti and Chimur case and prisoners under various other categories related to the "Quit India" struggle; maltreatment of Satyagrahi prisoners in jail; some measures of a restrictive nature in respect of Khadi and Gur industry; and the repressive policies pursued by the Portuguese Government and the Government of South Africa respectively in the Portuguese enclaves on the Western coast of India and in South Africa. Apart from the humanitarian aspect of these issues Gandhiji was strongly of the view that the response of the authorities to these would provide, more than anything else, a concrete test of the sincerity of the British Government's professions and an earnest of the things to come.

Midnapore in Bengal had borne the brunt of governmental repression during the "Quit India" struggle. It had further been ravaged by a terrible cyclone. There were, besides, a large number of security prisoners in Bengal. They had been kept in detention without a trial over a number of years under various ordinances promulgated ostensibly to put down terrorist activities. Gandhiji had in consequence long wanted to pay Bengal a visit. But he could not profitably go there so long as the Bengal Government's attitude towards him was not one of cooperation. While returning from Lord Wavell's conference at Simla, he received an intimation that, as a result of the changed political climate, the way had now been set clear, and Mr. R. G. Casey, the

war-time Governor of Bengal, would in fact welcome his visit to Bengal and the opportunity that this would afford of meeting him during his stay there. In the winter of 1945-46, accordingly, Gandhiji went to Bengal and had a series of meetings with Mr. Casey. These meetings covered a wide range of subjects. Some of them were topical like the excesses committed recently by a unit of the pioneer force in Chittagong and the alleged favouritism in the elections on the part of the officials. Others were of a long standing nature like the continued detention of the security prisoners and the removal of the notorious salt tax which weighed most heavily upon the poorest, having been described by no less a person than the late Mr. Ramsay McDonald as "an exaction and oppression".

In the first week of May 1945, while Lord Wavell was still in London the war in Europe ended with the defeat of Germany. The Labour Party was not willing to continue its Coalition with the Tories till Japan was defeated. The war-time Coalition Ministry was, therefore, dissolved, and July 5, 1945, was fixed as the date for the General Elections in Great Britain. As a result of the elections, the Tories were thrown out and a Labour Government under Mr. Attlee came into power. In August, 1945, an announcement was made from New Delhi that elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, so long postponed owing to the war, would be held in the coming cold weather. In the following month the Viceroy, after another visit to London, further announced that it was the intention of His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy, immediately after the elections to the Central Assembly and in the Provinces were over, to (1) invite the resumption of ministerial responsibility in the Provinces, (2) convene a constitution-making body as soon as possible, and (3) reconstitute the Viceroy's Executive Council with the support of the main Indian parties. To reassure Indian public opinion, in the meantime, and to overcome the Indian distrust of British professions that had become chronic, a parliamentary delegation was sent out to India in December, 1945. The delegation toured extensively all over India and met Gandhiji in January 1946 at Madras.

As the year 1945 drew to a close, the prospect of another famine owing to the failure of the winter crop began to threaten

South India. Only cooperation of the various political parties could enable the Government satisfactorily to cope with it. In the middle of February 1946, Lord Wavell, therefore, invited Gandhiji to Delhi to discuss with him how this could be done. Gandhiji was not at that time, owing to the state of his health, in a position to undertake a journey to Delhi. At his suggestion the Viceroy, therefore, sent his Private Secretary, Mr. Abell, to meet him at Sevagram.

In the course of their meeting Gandhiji suggested to Mr. Abell that only a responsible executive chosen from among the representatives of the various parties in the Central Assembly could adequately meet the situation. The irresponsible executive that was then in office should, therefore, be replaced by a responsible one as soon as possible. His suggestion was not acted upon. He, however, continued to give his advice and cooperation to the authorities in his individual capacity.

In the middle of March 1946, Mr. Abell again saw Gandhiji in Bombay with a proposal from the Viceroy to constitute an advisory board with the Viceroy as the Chairman, consisting of Gandhiji and Jinnah with perhaps the addition of the Nawab of Bhopal, who was then the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, to help him to meet the food situation. Gandhiji put forth his difficulty: while Jinnah represented the Muslim League he himself lacked any official status whatsoever, and as a humble servant of the Congress, he could not be party to any arrangement to by-pass the Congress President. Mr. Abell thereupon asked Gandhiji whether he could, in the event of the Congress President being invited, consider the possibility of himself coming to assist the Congress President. To this Gandhiji answered in the affirmative. But when he reduced to writing the substance of their talk and sent it to Mr. Abell for confirmation, Mr. Abell felt embarrassed. He had not been sent, he explained, as a plenipotentiary with power to negotiate but only as an emissary. At Mr. Abell's request, Gandhiji, therefore, dropped the idea of having an agreed note of their conversation in writing, Mr. Abell on his part promising faithfully to convey to the Viceroy Gandhiji's position. Nothing further, however, came out of it. Obviously what Gandhiji had offered to do did not fit in with the Viceroy's plan.

In the meantime on February 19, 1946, an announcement was made in the British Parliament that a mission consisting of three Cabinet Ministers would shortly proceed to India in order to give effect to the programme outlined in the Viceregal announcement of September, 1945. This was followed by a remarkable utterance by Mr. Attlee, the British Prime Minister, in a debate in the House of Commons. In the course of it he said: "India must choose what will be her future constitution. . . . If . . . she elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so. . . . We are very mindful of the rights of minorities . . . (but) we cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority. . . . There is the problem of the Indian States. . . . I do not believe for a moment that the Indian Princes would desire to be a bar to the forward march of India."

Constituting as it did a landmark in the history of Indo-British relationships, this pronouncement revived hopes of a final settlement of the Indo-British question. In anticipation of the arrival of the Cabinet Mission, Gandhiji opened correspondence with the Viceroy for the abolition of the Salt Tax. This, he felt, would give to the people a foretaste of independence. The correspondence was continued after the arrival of the Cabinet Mission in India but without any success.

The three members of the Cabinet Mission, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Alexander, arrived in India on March 23, 1946. Gandhiji was at that time at Uruli Kanchan, a village 18 miles from Poona, deeply engrossed in an experiment he was conducting in nature cure, his favourite, which in the evening, of his life had become a passion with him. In answer to their invitation brought by a special messenger, Sudhir Ghosh, he arrived in Delhi on April 1, 1946. Sudhir Ghosh provided a liaison between them and the Congress throughout their stay in India and later, when the Cabinet Mission returned to London, he was, at their request, sent there to continue his good work.

Previous to their arrival in India Gandhiji had enjoyed intimate personal relations with Lord and Lady Pethick-Lawrence and Sir Stafford Cripps over a number of years and had been in correspondence with them since

the formation of the Labour Government in England in 1945. "If the India Office is to receive a decent burial and a nobler monument is to rise from its ashes," he wrote in a letter to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, congratulating him on his appointment as the Secretary of State for India, "who can be the fitter person than you for the work?"

All through the negotiations that followed Gandhi's role was that of an unofficial adviser to both the Congress and the Cabinet Mission. He had, as at the time of the Simla Conference of 1945, no official position in the Congress. Official negotiations with the Cabinet Mission on behalf of the Congress were, therefore, carried on by its President Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, assisted by his Working Committee.

For the first half of April, 1946, the Cabinet Mission occupied themselves with interviewing representative Indians belonging to all groups and parties in order to arrive at the greatest common measure of agreement among the parties. They then adjourned for a short recess and went on a week's holiday to Kashmir to review the results of their interviews. On their return to Delhi, on April 27, they invited the Presidents of the Congress and of the Muslim League respectively to meet them in a tripartite conference in "still another attempt" to obtain an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League, an agreement based on the following fundamental principles:

The future constitutional structure of British India to be as follows:

A Union Government dealing with the following subjects: Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. There will be two groups of Provinces, the one of the predominantly Hindu Provinces and the other of the predominantly Muslim Provinces, dealing with all other subjects which the Provinces in the respective groups desire to be dealt with in common. The Provincial Governments will deal with all other subjects and will have all the residuary sovereign rights.

The conference met at Simla from May 5 to May 12. There was at this time a preponderance of Muslim

population in five out of twelve Provinces, viz. in Baluchistan, N.W.F.P., the Punjab, Sind and Bengal, representing a total population of a little over 9 crores as against 19 crores in the seven Hindu majority Provinces. Among the "suggested points for agreement" between the Congress and the Muslim League, that were placed before the members on behalf of the Cabinet Mission in the course of the conference, was parity of representation "in the Legislature of the Union... from the Muslim-majority Provinces and from the Hindu-majority Provinces whether or not these or any of them have formed themselves into Groups. The Government of the Union shall be constituted in the same proportion as the Legislature." This proved an unsurmountable obstacle.

The Cabinet Mission, thereupon, announced that the conference had failed, and, on May 16, they published their own recommendations for the solution of the Indian problem. Their plan consisted of two parts—a long term plan for setting up a constitution-making body and a short term proposal for the formation of an "Interim Government" having the support of the major political parties. While rejecting the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan, they recommended in its place a three-tier scheme foreshadowed in their "suggested points for agreement" at Simla. The top tier would consist of a Union of British India and the Princely States, dealing with the three subjects of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. The bottom tier would consist of Provinces and States in whom would vest all residuary powers. This was coupled with a provision to give to the *Provinces* freedom to form groups with executives and legislatures. These would constitute the middle tier.

The procedure laid down for grouping was that after the preliminary meeting of the constitution-making body, the representatives of the Provinces would meet in three separate sections: A, B and C. Section B would consist of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P.), Baluchistan and Sind; C of Bengal and Assam; and A of the remaining Provinces that were not included in either of the two groups. The *sections* would then proceed to settle the Provincial constitution included in each section and also decide whether any group constitution should be set up for

those sections. Finally, it was provided that the Provinces would have the power to opt out of the group to which they had been notionally assigned, by a majority decision of the legislature of the Provinces set up under the new constitution.

There was an obvious conflict in the language used in para 15 clause (5) and in para 19 clauses (iv) and (v) of the Cabinet Mission's plan. Para 15 clause (5) read: "*Provinces should be free to form Groups with executive and legislatures, and each Group could determine the Provincial subjects to be taken in common.*" Para 19, clauses (iv) and (v) read: "Thereafter the Provincial representatives will divide up into the three sections. . . . These sections shall proceed to settle the Provincial constitution . . . and shall also decide whether any group constitution shall be set up for those Provinces. . . ."

In effect this meant that the power of settling the constitution for a Province and of the final opting out was taken out of the hands of the *Province* and transferred to the majority in the *section*, who could force a Province to join or remain in a particular group even against the wishes of the representatives of that Province. The Congress contended that this introduced into the plan an element of compulsion whereas according to the Cabinet Mission's own statement, the basis of the whole plan was recommendatory.

Gandhiji sought clarification from the Cabinet Mission in regard to the legal and moral aspect of the issue in a series of letters and interviews. He put forth the view that if the document meant what it said, then since the Cabinet Mission had stated that the basis of their whole plan of May 16 was voluntary, it should be possible to remove by the method of legal interpretation whatever discrepancy there might be between the wording of their statement and the substance that was intended to be conveyed.

In its meeting of May 24, 1946, the Working Committee of the Congress, therefore, while withholding its final opinion on May 16 plan, resolved that to remove the inconsistency between the various parts of the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16, and to square it with the meaning of the Cabinet Mission, they interpreted para 15 of the statement to mean that "in the first instance the respective

Provinces shall make their choice whether or not to belong to the section in which they were placed." At the same time they set themselves to examine some other aspects of the Cabinet Missions' plan so as to have a full picture of the connected problems involved in the setting up of the constitution-making body.

The principal ones of these related to (1) the immediate withdrawal of British troops, (2) the right of the Europeans to be returned to or to vote for election to the Constituent Assembly, (3) Paramountcy, and (4) the method of the representation of the Indian States in the Constituent Assembly.

The issue in regard to the first was: was the Constituent Assembly a "sovereign body", and if so, could it function as such so long as the British troops remained in India? Again, could there be natural behaviour in the Constituent Assembly in the face of the British troops? In regard to the second, the constitution of independence for India was, according to the Cabinet Mission, to be framed by Indians alone. How could then the Europeans, who were aliens, have a place in the Constituent Assembly? Besides in Bengal the Europeans, by virtue of the weightage that they enjoyed under the 1935 Government of India Act, could tip the balance in the vital issue of the future of Assam in group C. Finally, the British Government had in the past claimed paramountcy over the Indian States by right of conquest and its suzerain position. On the withdrawal of the British Power, should not that right automatically be transferred to its successor, the free India Government, or terminated forthwith if it could not be so transferred? There were over six hundred Indian States, big and small, scattered all over the country. A British creation largely, they were all of them more or less autocracies. None of them had a fully representative system of Government. Unless there was some measure of parity between the Princely India and the British India in regard to the method of representation in the Constituent Assembly, there was every possibility of the constitution-making body being swamped by disparate elements, as a result of introduction into it of the States' representatives. Besides, would not the presence of the nominees of the States in the Constituent

Assembly, while the States remained under British paramountcy, introduce into that body British influence like the warriors hidden in the belly of the wooden horse of Troy in the Greek epic? A good portion of Gandhiji's correspondence with the Cabinet Mission was taken up by an examination of these issues.

Following upon the Working Committee's resolution of May 24, there was a brief lull in the negotiations pending the decision of the Muslim League on the Cabinet Mission's plan. The Muslim League Council was to meet for this purpose in the first week of June. The Working Committee, therefore, dispersed and Gandhiji went for a brief interval to Mussoorie—a cool hill station in the Himalayas.

On June 6, the Muslim League accepted the May 16 plan of the Cabinet Mission as it saw “seeds of Pakistan” inherent in it by virtue of compulsory grouping of the six Muslim-majority Provinces in sections B and C.

The formation of an Interim Government at the Centre in the meantime, had hardly made any progress. The Muslim League would have nothing to do with a plan for the Interim Government which in any way jeopardised the attainment of Pakistan. The Congress, on the other hand, while it was wedded to the ideal of an undivided India, maintained that the nature of the constitution for India to be framed was essentially for the constitution-making body to decide. The function of the Interim Government was effectively to maintain the administration while the constitution for independence was being settled. It should therefore consist of homogeneous elements who would work together harmoniously as a team. The quickest and the best way to achieve this, Gandhiji held, was to entrust the formation of the Government either to the League or to the Congress, whichever commanded the British Government's confidence. The attempt to please both parties would only result in interminable delay besides creating an explosive mixture of incompatibles. The British Government should, therefore, take the risk of making the choice between the one or the other. But the Cabinet Mission could not be persuaded to take that view. And so the attempt to consti-

tute an Interim Government at the Centre on the basis of parity in one form or other continued.

As Gandhiji had forewarned, the attempt failed and, on June 16, the Viceroy issued a statement abandoning further negotiations and putting forth his own proposal for the formation of an Interim Government. Paragraph 8 of the statement ran: "In the event of the two major parties or either of them proving unwilling to join in the setting up of a *Coalition Government* on the above lines, it is the intention of the Viceroy to proceed with the formation of an Interim Government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the Statement of May 16th." (Italics mine.)

After several modifications, the composition of the Interim Government was settled on the basis of 14 members, six being Hindu members of the Congress, including one from the Scheduled Castes, five members of the Muslim League, one Sikh, one Indian Christian and one Parsee. On June 18, the Working Committee of the Congress adopted a resolution accepting both the long term plan of May 16, and the short term proposal of June 16, about the formation of the Interim Government, but it was decided to communicate it to the Cabinet Mission after the concurrence of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Pathan leader of the N.W.F.P., who had been sent for for the purpose, was obtained.

The Congress Working Committee then dispersed, as there was, for the time being, nothing further for it to do.

Pandit Nehru took advantage of the recess to visit Kashmir. He was anxious to meet Sheikh Abdullah, President of the Kashmir National Conference and a personal friend of his, who was under arrest and awaiting trial. Kashmir State, a predominantly Muslim State, was ruled by Maharaja Sir Hari Singh with Pandit Kak as his Prime Minister. Like most of the other Indian States, Kashmir was under an autocratic system of rule and the National Conference had been carrying on a popular struggle for constitutional rights. Pandit Nehru, as the President of the Indian States People's Conference, was naturally interested in Sheikh Abdullah's trial. But the State Government did not relish the idea of his going to Kashmir and served a prohibitory order on him and when he disregarded it, put him under arrest.

In the meantime, on June 19, news leaked out in Delhi, that Jinnah had, unknown to the Congress, asked for and received certain assurances from the Viceroy. One of these was to the effect that a nationalist Muslim would not be allowed to be included in the Interim Government even out of the Congress quota without the assent of the Muslim League. This created a new situation and the Congress Working Committee was hurriedly resummoned to consider the whole situation *de novo*. Both the Cabinet Mission and the Congress leaders needed Pandit Nehru's presence in Delhi in this connection. At their request, Pandit Nehru agreed to return to Delhi from Kashmir, after giving notice to the Maharaja that as soon as he was free from his work in Delhi he would return to Kashmir irrespective of whether any prohibitory order against him was in force or not.

On June 25, the Congress Working Committee decided to reject the short term proposal about the formation of the Interim Government while accepting the long term plan of the Cabinet Mission about the constitution-making body, subject to their own interpretation of the disputed clauses in regard to grouping which they offered to submit to the arbitration of the Federal Court whose decision would be binding upon them.

Meeting in another part of the city on the same day, the Council of the Muslim League, in view of the assurances that Jinnah had received from the Viceroy, adopted a resolution accepting the short-term proposal about the formation of the Interim Government.

The Muslim League had expected that after the Congress decision rejecting the plan for the formation of the "Interim Government", it (the League) would be called upon to form an Interim Government all by itself. But the Cabinet Mission ruled that the Congress Working Committee's resolution was an "acceptance" of their long term plan of May 16, and therefore both the Congress and the Muslim League had qualified for inclusion in the Interim Government. But since one of the major parties had declined to join the Interim Government "the scheme for Coalition Government went because it would no longer be a coalition and we (they) should have to find some other Interim Government of those who accepted the scheme of 16th May."

Jinnah denounced the decision of the Cabinet Mission not to invite the Muslim League alone to form an Interim Government, as "a breach of faith", "most fantastic" and "dishonest".

On the June 28, Gandhiji left Delhi for Poona on his way to Panchgani. Next day the Cabinet Mission returned to England leaving Lord Wavell to continue the effort which they had initiated for the formation of an Interim Government. The A. I. C. C. met in Bombay in the first week of July, 1946, and after a passionate appeal by Gandhiji endorsed the Congress Working Committee's decision in favour of the Cabinet Mission's plan of May 16.

The Council of the Muslim League meeting in Karachi on July 28, withdrew its previous acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan. At the same time it resolved to launch "direct action" to achieve Pakistan. August 16 was declared as "direct action day" to be observed all over India as a day of protest.

Large-scale rioting broke out and inferno was let loose in Calcutta between August 16 and August 18 when Muslim hooligans began to coerce the people to close their shops in compliance with the Muslim League's resolution to observe the day as a day of protest. The police, in many places, were seen to stand by while the city was converted into a vast shambles. Very damaging evidence was later produced before the inquiry commission into the Calcutta happenings appointed by the Viceroy about the part played by Shaheed Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister of the Muslim League Government of Bengal, before, during and after the trouble broke out in Calcutta. The total casualties were computed on a conservative estimate to be 5,000 killed, thrice as many injured.

A week before the "direct action" resolution of the Muslim League was passed, Lord Wavell had, in accordance with the Cabinet Mission's statement on the eve of their departure for England, resumed his efforts for the formation of an Interim Government, consisting of both the Muslim League and the Congress. But after the "direct action" resolution of the League, he and the British Cabinet came to the decision that the Muslim League having put itself out of the field by a

reversal of its previous acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan, there was nothing left for them but to call upon the Congress to form an Interim Government at the Centre. Accordingly, on August 6, under instructions from London the Viceroy invited Pandit Nehru, who had succeeded Maulana Azad as Congress President, to form an Interim Government. At the same time he expressed the hope that the Congress would be able to persuade the Muslim League to come into the Interim Government. But Jinnah declined to join the Government at Pandit Nehru's invitation.

After the Calcutta happenings, however, and even before the Interim Government was formed, the Viceroy began again to press for the inclusion anyhow of the Muslim League in the Interim Government. In a meeting with the Congress leaders he asked them unconditionally to accept, as the price for bringing the Muslim League into the Government, the Cabinet Mission's interpretation of the provision for grouping in the statement of May 16, as against their own, and threatened not to summon the Constituent Assembly if this was not done. Gandhiji thereupon sent a message to the members of the British Cabinet that the Viceroy seemed to be completely unnerved and needed to be assisted by an "abler and legal mind". The British Cabinet intervened and under their instructions, on September 2, 1946, an Interim Government was formally installed at the Centre with Pandit Nehru as the leader.

The relations between the newly formed Interim Government and the representatives of the old regime, however, were not very happy. Lord Wavell continued to press for the Muslim League to be brought into the Interim Government. Ultimately he managed to bring it in on his own without any agreement with the Congress and without even obtaining from the League a formal reversal of its "direct action" resolution and acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan of May 16. Instead he relied on what he described as an oral assurance by Jinnah, which the latter promptly repudiated. In the result, the Interim Government, instead of functioning as a homogeneous body, was thereafter split into two sections, the Muslim League declaring that they had come expressly to carry on the policy of "direct action"

from within as a part of their battle for Pakistan which the Cabinet Mission's plan had ruled out *ab initio*.

In Calcutta, after the sudden first onslaught, the field had gone against the Muslim League when the Hindu population organised itself and hit back with parallel fury. The cry thereafter went forth that Calcutta must be avenged and the blow should be struck where numerically the Muslims held the advantage. Noakhali district in East Bengal, with a Muslim-majority of 85 per cent, offered special facilities. On the same day on which the Muslim League's entry into the Interim Government was announced, news was received of widespread communal disturbances in Noakhali marked by an orgy of killing, abduction, and rape, arson, wholesale plunder and forced marriages and conversions by Muslims. Civil authority had completely broken down and in many places the hooligans had the support of the machinery of administration at the local level. Thousands of homeless refugees poured into the border districts of Bengal and Bihar bringing with them tales of unspeakable atrocities, sometimes exaggerated but often alas, too true. It sent a wave of resentment all over India and set up a chain reaction of mob fury in Bihar where Noakhali in the reverse was enacted magnified many times over. From Bihar the flames travelled to the N.W.F.P. Here the Sikhs and the Hindus in Hazara district became special targets of Muslim fanaticism.

As soon as the news from Noakhali reached Gandhiji he decided to disengage himself from all other activities to go to Noakhali and stay there as long as necessary. This was his "do or die" mission. He would return only when the victims had developed courage and the oppressors a feeling of genuine repentance so that the two communities could live together once more in peace. From Noakhali, in March 1947, he went to Bihar to do for the Muslim sufferers there what he had been doing for the victims of the Muslim-majority in Noakhali.

Concerned at the deepening discord in the Interim Government and the spreading chaos in the country, Mr. Attlee's Government, at last on February 20, 1947, made a declaration that it was the intention of His Majesty's Government to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian

hands by a date not later than June, 1948. Under the State Paper of May 16, 1946, they had agreed to recommend to Parliament for adoption a constitution that might be framed by the Constituent Assembly. But if a constitution in terms of the Cabinet Mission plan was not worked out by a "fully representative Constituent Assembly before that time", His Majesty's Government would have to consider, the declaration went on to say, to whom powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over on due date, "whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India or in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interest of the Indian people." Simultaneously with this Lord Wavell was recalled and Lord Mountbatten was appointed in his place as the Viceroy.

There were at this time Muslim League Ministries only in two Provinces, namely, Bengal and Sind. Non-Muslim League Ministries were in office in the remaining three Provinces that the League wanted to be included in Pakistan, viz. the N.W.F.P., the Punjab and Assam. In the Punjab a non-League Unionist-Congress coalition was in power that cut across communal alignments, and Congress Ministries held power in Assam and in the Muslim-majority Province of the N.W.F.P.

The prospect of power being transferred to the existing Provincial Governments in certain parts of India, as envisaged in Mr. Attlee's announcement of February 20, 1947, was taken up by the Muslim League as a signal for an all-out attempt to overthrow the lawfully constituted Ministries in those Provinces and to instal Muslim League Ministries in their place. With this end in view it launched "direct action", which was only a euphemism for lawlessness, intimidation and violence, in the three Provinces in question. Before long it took the form of an undeclared civil war characterised by wide-spread killings, arson and loot. Whole villages were burnt down, Hindu and Sikh properties were destroyed and vast masses of men, women and children uprooted from their homes and deprived of all their belongings, were turned adrift in the country as homeless destitute refugees.

One of the first things that Lord Mountbatten did on

his arrival was to invite Gandhiji to meet him at Delhi. On March 31, Gandhiji arrived in Delhi and had a series of meetings with him. In their second meeting, he presented to the Viceroy his "master plan". The essence of it was that Jinnah should be given the option of forming a Government at the Centre. The Congress on its part would extend to it its full support in all measures that were in the interest of India as a whole. In case of a difference between the Congress and the League, Mountbatten as man, not as Viceroy, would be sole judge as to what was in the interest of India as a whole. Provided this was done, Jinnah should be free to present his demand for Pakistan to the Constituent Assembly even before the transfer of power on condition that he won support for it by appeal to reason and not by the use of force or threats. Thus no Province or part of a Province should be forced to join Pakistan against its will.

The Viceroy told Gandhiji that his plan had "many attractions" for him and asked him to speak to Lord Ismay, chief of his personal staff, so that the proposal that he had outlined, might be cast into the shape of a draft agreement. Under the impression that he had Lord Mountbatten wholly with him, Gandhiji was confident that he would have no difficulty in getting Pandit Nehru and the Working Committee to endorse his proposal. For, even as it was, Maulana Azad and some other members were favourably inclined to his point of view. But the Viceroy's advisers were strongly opposed to having any "pacts" or a formal agreement with Gandhiji. The Viceroy, too, had begun to have second thoughts on the wisdom of giving his personal approval to Gandhiji's plan before he had known how other parties would react to it. They all decided that Pandit Nehru should be informed, "before Gandhi began to work too hard on the Congress that Mountbatten was far from being committed to the Gandhi plan." Pandit Nehru was accordingly posted in advance with the Viceroy's second thoughts and Gandhiji was informed that he had probably read too much in Mountbatten's remark about his plan having "many attractions" for the Viceroy.

Sardar Patel had, even before Lord Mountbatten's arrival in India, been converted to the view that in the

circumstances partition was perhaps the only solution of the Indian problem. When the Working Committee met to consider Gandhiji's plan, Gandhiji found that with the exception of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, he was unable to carry any of the members of the Working Committee with him—not even Maulana Azad. Nor could they convert him to their view. Next day Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy to be omitted out of his consideration in further talks. On the following day, April 12, 1947, he took leave of his Congress colleagues and returned to Bihar.

A side result of the talks with the Viceroy was the issuing, under the Viceroy's aegis, of an appeal over the signatures of Jinnah and Gandhiji for communal peace. The idea was Mountbatten's. Gandhiji felt strongly that the appeal ought to be signed on behalf of the Congress by Acharya Kripalani, who had succeeded Pandit Nehru as Congress President. But Jinnah refused to sign the appeal if it bore the signature of any one besides himself and Gandhiji. Mountbatten pleaded that he was anxious to put to the test Jinnah's personal assurance to him that he did not believe in the use of force for gaining political aims. Gandhiji thereupon left the matter to be decided by Pandit Nehru, who in his turn surrendered his judgment in the matter to Mountbatten's. And so the appeal was issued without Acharya Kripalani's signature. Later the Viceroy had many a quarrel with Jinnah, when the agreement was honoured by the Muslim League more in the breach than observance. But Jinnah could afford to ignore verbal protests so long as the British Government continued to negotiate Pakistan with him even in the face of continuing violence.

Gandhiji warned Mountbatten that, unless "peace before Pakistan" was insisted upon, all the good that he, the Viceroy, might otherwise do would be turned to ashes. He offered to go to the Punjab to establish communal harmony there. But neither the Viceroy nor the Congress leaders of the Punjab nor the Congress High Command were at that stage in favour of his going there. The Viceroy, it seems, felt that a quick settlement between the Congress and the League over the main political issue was the best antidote to violence. The Congress leaders in the Punjab on the other hand,

felt that left to themselves they could very well square it out with the League, while the Congress High Command, had, it appears, come to the conclusion that what the situation called for was firm handling and Gandhiji's visit in that context would be out of place. Gandhiji's visit to the Punjab in consequence remained in abeyance and the cauldron of communal violence continued to simmer and bubble till it boiled over and all but killed independence at its birth.

In the first week of May, 1947, at the request of the Congress leaders, Gandhiji again came to Delhi from Bihar. Mountbatten was by then ready with his plan. The essential features of his plan were: (1) Partition of India, if the Indian parties were agreed on it; (2) Provinces generally to have freedom to determine their own future; (3) Bengal and the Punjab to be notionally divided for voting purposes; (4) Sylhet district in Assam, which had a Muslim majority, to be given the option of joining the Muslim Province created by the partition of Bengal; and (5) General Elections to be held in the North-West Frontier Province to decide as to which part of India it wished to join.

Driven to desperation by the continued obstructionism of the Muslim League in the Interim Government, deepening communalism in the services and spreading anarchy, which they were powerless to control with the Muslim League faction firmly planted in the heart of the Government and the British power unwilling to remove it from that position, the Congress High Command, in the words of Pandit Nehru, at last became willing "to cut off the head in order to get rid of the headache." On May 1 they accepted the principle of partition as embodied in the Mountbatten plan.

Feeling that his further presence in Delhi was no longer necessary after this, Gandhiji at the end of the first week of May, again returned to Bihar to resume his mission of reuniting the sundered hearts of the Hindus and Muslims in that unhappy Province. He was as opposed as ever to the partition of India, and even more to the division of the Punjab and Bengal, and the holding of a referendum in the N.W.F.P. The division of Bengal and the Punjab was demanded by the Congress as a natural corollary to the Muslim League

logic of partition, and as the price of their acceptance of the partition plan. Referendum on the other hand was a constitutional device to make possible the inclusion in Pakistan of the N.W.F.P.—a Province with a Congress majority Government that was uncompromisingly opposed to the Pakistan idea—as the price of the Muslim League's cooperation in the Mountbatten plan for partition. Referendum had been substituted in place of a fresh election in the N.W.F.P. in the original Mountbatten plan in view of the strong opposition of the Congress to the holding of a fresh election in that Province. Gandhiji shuddered at the idea of the fragmentation of Bengal and the Punjab and together with the N.W.F.P. their being made pawns in the game of high diplomacy. He was disturbed, too, by the British attitude in regard to the continued presence in the Interim Government of the League, with its avowedly obstructionist attitude, and the partisan spirit that had infiltrated the services, not excluding the British officials. He delivered himself of his views in regard to these and other matters of a like nature in a personal letter to Mountbatten.

While at Delhi Gandhiji had, as a result of a clever arrangement by Lord Mountbatten, two meetings with Jinnah. In the course of these meetings he again pressed his view that after the joint appeal for peace which Jinnah had signed along with himself, Jinnah had left himself no other course except to realise his Pakistan by conversion of his opponents by an appeal to reason only. Jinnah, however, maintained that the issue of Pakistan was not open to discussion.

May 17, 1947, had been fixed by Lord Mountbatten as the date for final consideration of his plan by the political parties concerned. But in the meantime London had introduced some important changes in the draft plan that the Viceroy had in the first week of May sent with Lord Ismay and Mr. Abell for the British Cabinet's approval. Pandit Nehru's reaction to these changes was so violent that Lord Mountbatten had to have the date for the proposed meeting with the political leaders hurriedly changed to June 2, while V. P. Menon, his Reforms Commissioner, at his instance redrafted the plan. On June 2, the redrafted plan was accepted by all parties and Independence of India Bill was rushed

through both the Houses of Parliament at record speed. It came into force on the 15th August, 1947, with the birth of the two dominions.

In the interval between acceptance by the Congress and the Muslim League of Lord Mountbatten's partition plan and the transfer of power on August 15, 1947, Gandhiji was chiefly preoccupied with four questions. First was the danger, more than once darkly hinted by the authorities in the course of the negotiations, that the British Power might be compelled to prolong its stay in India even beyond August 15, unless the Congress adopted a "helpful attitude" in respect of the Muslim League's demands. Secondly, with Pakistan issue no more there to divide them Gandhiji felt that there should now be direct settlement between the Congress and the League on all outstanding questions arising out of partition. The British Government's intervention should not be invoked in everything as before. He accordingly suggested to Mountbatten that since Jinnah had now got what he wanted, the Viceroy should persuade him to sit with the Congress and settle all outstanding questions directly without bringing him, the Viceroy, in. Thirdly, there was the question of the N.W.F.P. As a realist, Gandhiji saw that the battle for the N.W.F.P. as part of the Indian Union had been lost with the Congress acceptance of the Mountbatten plan. He was anxious that, having made that Province part of Pakistan, they should do everything in their power to make its passage from the Congress India to Pakistan as smooth as possible. Accordingly, he suggested to Lord Mountbatten that he should persuade Jinnah to "woo" the frontier leaders, particularly the Khan Brothers, present to them the full picture of Pakistan and the place that the N.W.F.P. would enjoy in it and win their approval for the inclusion of their Province in Pakistan, thereby obviating the need for a referendum. Lord Mountbatten did as Gandhiji had suggested to him but Jinnah took up the position that the Congress should have nothing to do whatever with the N.W.F.P. question and leave alone the Congress Ministry in the Frontier and the Frontier question to be dealt with by him in the manner he chose. This, Gandhiji felt, would mean moral suicide for the Congress.

Arrangements were consequently made for the holding of a referendum in the Frontier. The issue on which it was to be held was whether the Frontier Province would join the Indian Union or Pakistan. The Khan Brothers felt that this was a false issue. The Pathans should be free to remain as an autonomous Pakhtoon Province outside both India and Pakistan till full picture of Pakistan and their place in it was placed before them. They would then decide which of the two they would join. Independence would put all Pathans in the same cry. A referendum on the issue proposed, on the other hand, would sow division among them and might even revive the evil custom of blood-feuds from which the Khan Brothers had laboured all their life to wean them. Gandhiji agreed with the Khan Brothers but Pandit Nehru held a contrary view. He felt that it would be cowardly and undemocratic to abstain from the referendum. Gandhiji thereupon advised Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan thereafter to be led by Pandit Nehru, as after all it was Pandit Nehru who had brought the Khan Brothers to him.

The referendum in the N.W.F.P. was accordingly held, the Khan Brothers and their Khudai Khidmatgar organisation refraining from taking part in it. The Khan Brothers complained that the Muslim League was resorting to threats, political intimidation and violence to influence the result of the referendum and the Frontier officials were openly acting in a partisan manner. Gandhiji drew the Viceroy's attention to it. The Viceroy tried to do whatever he could but to little purpose and the N.W.F.P. became a part of Pakistan.

Finally, there was the question of Kashmir. With the exception of a brief visit after his arrest there in June 1946, Pandit Nehru had not been able to revisit Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah had in the meantime been sentenced and put into prison. Pandit Nehru was therefore more anxious than ever to go there. But the Maharaja and his Prime Minister Kak seem to have been nursing the dream, along with some other States like Travancore and Hyderabad, to secure an independent existence for their State. They were determined to keep out the unhealthy influence of Pandit Nehru and the like from their territory. Gandhiji thereupon offered to go himself in Pandit Nehru's place. But then Sardar Patel

objected. He preferred Pandit Nehru's going there to Gandhiji's. Ultimately it was, however, Gandhiji who went when Pandit Nehru threatened to go himself without waiting for the Maharaja's consent.

After his visit to Kashmir was over, Gandhiji once again turned to Noakhali, where much work awaited him. He had no desire to be in the Capital at the time of the independence day celebrations. To him the occasion of India's vivisection, when brother's hand was raised against his brother was no occasion for rejoicing but for mourning and self-examination. So, avoiding Delhi, on August 8 he reached Calcutta on his way to Noakhali. Here he was detained by Shaheed Suhrawardy, who with the transfer of power on August 15 would become the ex-Chief Minister of Bengal. Calcutta had never really been peaceful since the Great Calcutta Killing of August 1946. Suhrawardy pleaded that it was no use Gandhiji's going to Noakhali while Calcutta continued to burn. In the face of this argument, Gandhiji, who had resisted a proposal by Sir Frederick Burrows, the Governor of Bengal, to prolong his stay in Calcutta agreed to stay there to restore communal harmony in the city provided Shaheed Suhrawardy pledged himself unreservedly to work with him in his peace mission till Calcutta was brought back to normalcy. What followed, how his fast unto death to stop the holocaust, that broke out in the city after independence, achieved a unity of hearts between the Hindus and Muslims and the "one man boundary force", as Lord Mountbatten described him, achieved what 55,000 soldiers in the Punjab could not, is described in detail in the second volume of *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

Only a few letters were exchanged between Gandhiji and the British officials after independence. One of these was addressed to Lord Mountbatten. He wished to retire from the Governor-Generalship of India but Pandit Nehru felt he could not be spared at least for some time to come. Others were exchanged with Lord Ismay, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Mountbatten in October, 1947 on the occasion of Gandhiji's 78th birth-day anniversary—fated to be his last on earth.

Pyarelal

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**GANDHIJI'S
CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GOVERNMENT
1944 – 47**

1
CORRESPONDENCE WITH LORD WAVELL
WITH REGARD TO THE POLITICAL
DEADLOCK : 1944

1

Nature Cure Clinic,
6, Todiwala Road, Poona,
17th June 1944.

Dear Friend,

But for the fact that this letter is along the lines of your preoccupation I should not have troubled you with any letter from me.

2. Though there is little cause for it, the whole country and even many from outside expect me to make some decisive contribution to the general good. I am sorry to say my convalescence threatens to be fairly long. Even if I was quite well, I could do little or nothing, unless I knew the mind of the Working Committee of the Congress. I pleaded as a prisoner for permission to see them. I plead now as a free man for such permission. If you will see me before deciding, I shall gladly go wherever you want me to, as soon as I am allowed by my medical advisers to undertake long distance travelling.

3. I have circulated among friends for private use, copies of the correspondence that passed between the authorities and me during detention.¹ I do feel, however, that in fairness to me the Government should permit its publication in the press.

My address will be as above till 30th instant.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Viceroy,
Viceroy's Camp.

1. Subsequently published as *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government* (1942-44), Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-14.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
22nd June 1944.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have received your letter of June 17th. In consideration of the radical difference in our points of view which appeared in our recent correspondence, I feel that a meeting between us at present could have no value and could only raise hopes which would be disappointed.

I am afraid that similar considerations apply to your request to see the Working Committee. You have recently made public your adherence to the Quit India resolution, which I am afraid I do not regard as a reasonable or practical policy for the immediate future.

If after your convalescence and on further reflection you have a definite and constructive policy to propose for the furtherance of India's welfare, I shall be glad to consider it.

Since you have circulated, without any reference to me, the correspondence which passed between us and it has in consequence appeared in the Press, I have given instructions for the publication of the whole of the political letters which were written during your detention.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Nature Cure Clinic,
6, Todiwala Road, Poona.

Poona,
27th June 1944.

P. S. V.,
Viceroy's Camp.

In view persistent inquiry about exchange recent letters suggest release thereof for publication.¹

Gandhi

1. The correspondence was subsequently released to the Press from New Delhi on July 1, 1944.

"Dilkusha",
Panchgani,
15th July 1944.

Dear Friend,

You have no doubt seen the authentic copies, now published in the Indian Press, of the statements given by me to Mr. Gelder of the *News Chronicle*.¹ As I have said to the Press they were meant primarily to be shown to you. But Mr. Gelder, no doubt with the best of motives, gave the interview premature publicity. I am sorry. The publication will nevertheless be a blessing in disguise, if the interview enables you to grant at least one of my requests contained in my letter of 17th June 1944.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Viceroy,
Viceroy's Camp.

Viceroy's Camp, India,
22nd July 1944.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter of 15th July. I have seen the statements you made to Mr. Gelder, and your subsequent explanation of them. I do not think I can usefully comment at present, except to repeat what I said in my last letter that if you will submit to me a definite and constructive policy I shall be glad to consider it.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

. 1. See Appendix I.

(As at "Ashram", Sevagram),
Camp Panchgani,
27th July 1944.

Dear Friend,

I must admit my disappointment over your letter of 22nd instant. But I am used to work in the face of disappointment. Here is my concrete proposal.

I am prepared to advise the Working Committee to declare that in view of changed conditions mass Civil Disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942 cannot be offered and that full cooperation in the war effort should be given by the Congress if a declaration of immediate Indian Independence is made and a National Government responsible to the Central Assembly be formed subject to the proviso that, during the pendency of the war, the military operations should continue as at present but without involving any financial burden on India. If there is a desire on the part of the British Government for a settlement, friendly talks should take the place of correspondence. But I am in your hands. I shall continue to knock so long as there is the least hope of an honourable settlement.

After the foregoing was written I saw Lord Munster's speech in the House of Lords.¹ The summary given by him to the House of Lords fairly represents my proposal. This summary may serve as a basis for mutual friendly discussion.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Viceroy,
Viceroy's Camp.

1. See Appendix II.

11th August 1944.

Verbal message from the Viceroy conveyed through the telephone by the Deputy Commissioner, Wardha:

Thank you for your letter of July 27th. Partly owing to tour in Assam reply has been delayed, but I will send one soon.

Reply conveyed by the telephone to the Deputy Commissioner for the Viceroy:

Thank you for the message. Gandhiji quite understands the reasons for the delay and is looking forward to the reply.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
15th August 1944.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter of 27th July. Your proposals are:

(i) that you should undertake to advise the Working Committee (a) "that in view of changed conditions mass Civil Disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August, 1942, cannot be offered", and (b) "that full cooperation in the war effort should be given by Congress" provided

(ii) that H. M. G. (a) declare immediate Indian Independence, and (b) form a "National Government" responsible to the Central Assembly, "subject to the proviso that, during the pendency of the war the military operations should continue as at present but without involving any financial burden on India".

2. H. M. G. remain most anxious that a settlement of the Indian problem should be reached. But proposals such as those put forward by you are quite unacceptable to H. M. G. as a basis for discussion, and you must realise this if you have read Mr. Amery's statement in the House of

Commons on July 28th last. They are indeed very similar to the proposals made by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to Sir Stafford Cripps in April 1942 and H. M. G.'s reasons for rejecting them are the same as they were then.

3. Without recapitulating all these reasons in detail I should remind you that H. M. G. at that time made it clear:

(a) that their offer of unqualified freedom after the cessation of hostilities was made conditional upon the framing of a constitution agreed by the main elements of India's national life and the negotiation of the necessary Treaty arrangements with H. M. G.;

(b) that it is impossible during the period of hostilities to bring about any change in the constitution, by which means alone a "National Government", such as you suggest, could be made responsible to the Central Assembly.

The object of these conditions was to ensure the fulfilment of their duty to safeguard the interests of the racial and religious minorities and of the depressed classes, and their treaty obligations to the Indian States.

4. It was upon the above conditions that H. M. G. invited Indian leaders to take part in an interim Government which would operate under the existing constitution. I must make it quite clear that until the war is over, responsibility for defence and military operations cannot be divided from the other responsibilities of Government, and that until hostilities cease and the new constitution is in operation, H. M. G. and the Governor-General must retain their responsibility over the entire field. So far as the question of India's share of the cost of the war is concerned, this is essentially a matter for settlement between H. M. G. on the one hand and the Government of India on the other, and existing financial arrangements can only be reopened at the instance of one or the other.

5. It is clear in these circumstances that no purpose would be served by discussion on the basis which you suggest. If however the leaders of the Hindus, the Muslims and the important minorities were willing to cooperate in a transitional Government established and working within the present constitution, I believe good progress might be made. For such a transitional Government to succeed there must before

it is formed be agreement in principle between Hindus and Muslims and all important elements as to the method by which the new constitution should be framed. This agreement is a matter for Indians themselves. Until Indian leaders have come closer together than they are now I doubt if I myself can do anything to help. Let me remind you too that minority problems are not easy. They are real and can be solved only by mutual compromise and tolerance.

6. The period after the termination of hostilities for which the transitional Government would last would depend on the speed with which the new constitution could be framed. I see no reason why preliminary work on that constitution should not begin as soon as the Indian leaders are prepared to cooperate to that end. If they can arrive at a genuine agreement as to the method of framing the constitution no unnecessary time need be spent after the war in reaching final conclusions and in agreeing treaty arrangements with H. M. G. There again the primary responsibility rests on the Indian leaders.¹

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

1. In a Press statement on August 18, 1944, Gandhiji commented on the Viceroy's reply: "Boiled down, the Viceroy's proposition means that unless all the main parties agree as to the constitution of the future, and there is agreement between the British Government and the main parties, there is to be no change in the constitutional position, and the Government of India as at present is to be carried on. The names of the parties given in the Government reply are illustrative only. I have no doubt that, on due occasion, more will be exhibited as from a conjurer's bag and who knows how and when the British Government will agree to surrender control. It is as clear as crystal that the British Government do not propose to give up the power they possess over the 400 millions, unless the latter develop strength enough to wrest it from them. I shall never lose hope that India will do so by purely moral means." — *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, p. 35.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
15th August 1944.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

His Excellency has asked me to let you know that as soon as his letter of 15th August 1944 has been delivered to you he will have it published in the Press together with your letters to him of 15th and 27th July 1944 and his letter to you of 22nd July 1944.

Yours sincerely,
E. M. Jenkins

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

II
CORRESPONDENCE WITH LORD WAVELL
ABOUT LETTER TO MR. WINSTON
CHURCHILL : 1944

10

“Dilkusha”,
Panchgani,
17th July 1944.

Dear Friend,

I ventured to write to you yesterday repeating my previous request.¹ I feel that my effort would be incomplete unless I sent the accompanying to the Prime Minister. May I seek your help, if you agree, to send the enclosed, in the quickest manner possible ?

I am,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Viceroy,
Viceroy's Camp.

[ENCLOSURE TO THE ABOVE]

11

“ Dilkusha ”,
Panchgani,
17th July 1944.

Dear Prime Minister,

You are reported to have the desire to crush the ‘ naked fakir ’, as you are said to have described me. I have been long trying to be a fakir and that, naked—a more difficult task. I therefore regard the expression as a compliment though unintended. I approach you then as such and ask you to trust and use me for the sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world.

Your sincere friend,
M. K. Gandhi

Mr. Winston Churchill.

1. See letter No. 4

12

(As at Sevagram),
Camp : Birla House,
Bombay,
10th September 1944.

Dear Friend,

I wrote to you on 17-7-'44 asking you kindly to send a letter of same date addressed to the Prime Minister. May I know whether that letter was sent as requested? I am asking because so far I have had no acknowledgment of my letter.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Viceroy,
Viceroy's House,
New Delhi.

13

Viceroy's Camp, India,
(Simla),
13th September 1944.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

His Excellency asks me to thank you for your letter of 10th September, and to let you know that your letter of 17th July was not received by him. Would you very kindly send me a copy of it, and of its enclosure, so that His Excellency may deal with it?

Yours sincerely,
E. M. Jenkins

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Camp "Birla House",
Bombay.

12

Birla House,
Mount Pleasant Road,
Malabar Hill, Bombay,
17th September 1944.

Dear Sir Evan,

I thank you for your letter of 13th instant.

This is the first time in my experience that an important letter has miscarried. Here are the copies of the missing communications. Though the psychological moment has passed, I attach very great importance to my letter which was written in answer to a deep heart searching. Therefore even at this late hour I should like my letter to be sent to the Prime Minister.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

Sir Evan M. Jenkins, K. C. S. I.,
Viceroy's Camp, India.

Birla House,
Mount Pleasant Road,
Malabar Hill, Bombay,
17th September 1944.

Dear Sir Evan,

Gandhiji had sent you today a letter with two enclosures in reply to yours of the 13th instant. It was to have been sent under certificate of posting, but I was not aware whether it could be so done on a Sunday. Having however just now found that the General Post Office of Bombay do accept letters under certificate of posting on Sundays and holidays, I hasten to send you herewith copies of the same in the manner suggested by Gandhiji as an extra precaution. My hope however is that even the original letter of Gandhiji will reach you safely this time.

I remain,

Yours truly,
Pyarelal

Encls: 3

Sir Evan M. Jenkins, K. C. S. I.,
Viceroy's Camp, India.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
20th September 1944.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

As Sir Evan Jenkins is away on leave I am writing to acknowledge your letter of September 17th.

The Copy of your letter of July 17th to the Prime Minister is being forwarded to him by fast air mail.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

Dy. Private Secretary to the Viceroy

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
24th September 1944.

Dear Mr. Pyarelal,

Your letter of 17th September 1944 reached me in Simla, where I have been on a short holiday, a few days ago. Mr. Gandhi's letter to me of the same date, and its enclosures, were duly received and acknowledged in my absence by Mr. Abell.

Yours truly,
E. M. Jenkins

Pyarelal, Esq.,
Birla House,
Mount Pleasant Road,
Malabar Hill, Bombay.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
2nd November 1944.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

The Prime Minister desires me to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter of July 17th.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi Esq.,
Sevagram, (Wardha).

Sevagram,
3rd December 1944.

Dear Friend,

This is with reference to your letter of 2nd November last.

My letter of 17th July to Mr. Churchill was, in my estimation, of a sacred character, not meant for the public eye. I now contemplate an occasion or time when it might need publication without losing the sacred character. Even so I do not wish to publish it without the Prime Minister's permission. May I have it, in case I need to publish it?

I should tell you that I have shown the contents to a few friends.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Viceroy,
Viceroy's Camp.

Viceroy's Camp,
India, (Bombay),
7th December 1944.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

His Excellency asks me to acknowledge with thanks your letter of December 3rd and to say that he has telegraphed to London enquiring whether the Prime Minister will give his consent to the publication of your letter to him dated July 17th.

Yours Sincerely,
E. M. Jenkins

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
21st December 1944.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

This is in continuation of my letter of the 7th December in which I acknowledged your letter of 3rd December asking for the Prime Minister's consent to the publication of your letter to him dated 17th July.

2. The Prime Minister agrees to the publication of your letter, and of the fact that it was duly acknowledged.

Yours sincerely,
E. M. Jenkins

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

III
CORRESPONDENCE WITH LORD WAVELL
RELATING TO THE SIMLA CONFERENCE : 1945

22

EXPRESS

Panchgani,
14th June 1945.

P. S. V.,
New Delhi.

Have read in Viceregal broadcast my name mentioned as an invitee.¹ I have repeatedly made clear that I represent no institution. Therefore I must not attend as representing Congress. That function belongs to the Congress President or whomsoever he nominates. I send earliest intimation in order avoid misunderstanding or misconception.

Gandhi

23

IMMEDIATE

New Delhi,
14th June 1945.

M. K. Gandhi Esq.,
Panchgani.

You may have heard my broadcast this evening. The text and that of the Secretary of State's simultaneous announcement in Parliament will appear in newspapers tomorrow. I hope you will agree to attend the conference which I have proposed. I have suggested 11 a. m. on 25th June at Viceregal Lodge, Simla for the first meeting. If you accept my invitation I should welcome a discussion with you before the opening of the conference and suggest subject to your convenience 3 p. m. on the 24th June at Viceregal Lodge, Simla. I have arranged to make a bungalow called Armsdell available for you in the hope that you will accept.

Viceroy

1. See Appendix III.

Panchgani,
15th June 1945.

H. E. Viceroy,
New Delhi.

Received kind wire of invitation. For reasons given in my wire sent you last night I have no place in your conference. As an individual I can only tender advice. May I then say that there are no caste and casteless Hindus who are at all politically minded. Therefore the word rings untrue and offensive. Who will represent them at your table? Not Congress which seeks to represent without distinction all Indians who desire and work for independence. Hence the existence of Hindu Mahasabha claiming to represent Hindus as such. I apprehend that even that body will disclaim representing caste Hindus. Moreover broadcast seems rigorously to exclude use of word independence. Accordingly it seems to me to demand revision to bring it in line with modern Indian thought. I suggest publication of our wires.

Gandhi

New Delhi,
15th June 1945.

M. K. Gandhi Esq.,
Panchgani.

Thanks for your telegram of fourteenth. Whatever the technical position may be I shall value your help and hope you will accept invitation which was telegraphed to you last night. As regards representation of Congress perhaps you will kindly let me have your final views after further consideration and any consultations you think necessary. I know you will appreciate the importance and difficulty of the task I have undertaken and do all you can to help.

Viceroy

Panchgani,
16th June 1945.

H. E. Viceroy,
New Delhi.

In reply your kind wire of yesterday am posting letter.
Gandhi

"Dilkusha",
Panchgani,
16th June 1945.

Dear Friend,

I thank you for your telegram of yesterday received at 3.45 p. m. My second telegram acknowledging your kind telegraphic invitation evidently crossed yours. I am sending you this letter in reply, instead of wiring, because I am anxious that you should understand my position thoroughly. However, I am sending you a wire intimating the despatch of this letter. For ready reference, I am enclosing herewith a copy of my press message which was issued yesterday in the morning.¹ I would like you to go through it.

While it is true that my position is technical, the reality of it is truer. My official and legal connection with the Congress was deliberately, and with the consent of the All India Congress Committee, severed in order to enable me all the better to serve the common cause. This position therefore cannot be changed at will. In the forthcoming official conference, I can have no official position. My presence in it will change the official colour, unless I become an official representative of the Congress. But if you think that my help is desirable and that without being a member of the conference I am likely to be useful, I shall make it a point to be at your service before and even during the conference proceedings, assuming, of course, that the Working Committee wishes likewise.

1. See Appendix IV

I want to cite an analogy. You may have known the late Deenabandhu as C. F. Andrews was affectionately called by us. He severed his official connection with the Cambridge Mission and the Church in order to serve religion, India and humanity better. The position he occupied as a valuable link between India and England, whether official or non-official and between all classes and parties, grew as days went. If I can, I would love to occupy such a position. It may never come to me. Man can but try.

You have suggested further consideration and consultation, both of which I have done. I am within an easy distance of Yeravda Central Prison, where Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Shri Shankarrao Dev were recently transferred from Ahmednagar Fort. Almost immediately after their discharge from the jail yesterday they motored to Panchgani and are still with me. I have shown them all the necessary papers and they concur with me in what I am writing.

In the task you have undertaken, of which I hope I fully appreciate the difficulty and delicacy, you certainly need the assistance and goodwill of all the parties you can. The Congress help you naturally cannot have without the Congress being officially represented at your table. The first and also perhaps the main purpose of the discharge of the remaining members of the Working Committee will be frustrated unless you secure the presence at your table of the President of the Congress or whomsoever he and his Committee may appoint for the purpose. If my supposition is correct, my immediate advice is that you should invite the President of the Congress. I expect that the ban on the Congress has been or will be lifted to the extent it still exists.

I am,

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

Encl: 1

H. E. The Viceroy,
The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi.

New Delhi,
16th June 1945.

M. K. Gandhi Esq.,
Panchgani.

Many thanks for your telegram of fifteenth June. I have also seen your statement in today's newspapers. As regard your attendance at the conference I will await your letter referred to in your telegram of 16th June which I have just received. I assure you term "Caste Hindus" was not used with offensive intention. Meaning is that there should be equality between Moslems and Hindus other than members of scheduled castes. Subject to this exact composition of council would of course have to be decided after discussion at conference. On question of independence I invite your attention to Secretary of States speech in Parliament on 14th June as published in Indian Press. Following is relevant passage.

The offer of March 1942 stands in its entirety. That offer is based on two main principles. First no limit is set to India's freedom to decide her own destiny whether as a free partner in the Commonwealth or even without it. Second that this can only be achieved under a constitution or constitutions framed by Indians to which the main elements are consenting parties.

It would not be practicable to modify the terms of my broadcast. It is only a simple statement of the proposals approved by His Majesty's Government and my intention is to deal at the conference itself with any points requiring clarification. I do not think it advisable to enter into detailed discussions before the conference which I hope as you do yourself will be held in a friendly atmosphere and without party bitterness. As you suggest I am releasing our telegrams to the Press.

Viceroy

Panchgani,
17th June 1945.

H. E. Viceroy,
New Delhi.

Deeply appreciate your wire received yesterday evening. In order regularise procedure and facilitate despatch of work without disturbing number of members conference I suggest immediate invitation to Congress President attend conference or depute Congress nominee. If fixity of parity between caste Hindus and Muslims unchangeable religious division will become officially stereotyped on eve of independence. Personally I can never subscribe to it nor Congress if I know its mind. In spite of having overwhelmingly Hindu membership Congress has striven to be purely political. I am quite capable advising Congress to nominate all non-Hindus and most decidedly non-caste Hindus. You will quite unconsciously but equally surely defeat purpose of conference if parity between caste Hindus and Muslims is unalterable. Parity between Congress and League understandable. I am eager to help you and British people but not at sacrifice of fundamental and universal principles. For it will be no help. If you desire text yesterday's letter earlier I can telegraph contents.

Gandhi

New Delhi,
17th June 1945.

M. K. Gandhi Esq.,
Panchgani.

Thank you for your letter of 16th June. I understand your position. I am looking forward to seeing you on 24th and hope means may be found for you to take part in proceedings of conference. I shall be grateful if you will communicate following message to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad from me.

I invite you to attend or to nominate duly authorised representative to attend conference at Viceregal Lodge, Simla at 10.30 a. m. on Monday 25th June. Accommodation will be arranged for representative if required.

I have not released your letter or this telegram to the Press. But have no objection to their being published.

Viceroy

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EXPRESS

Panchgani,
17th June 1945.

H. E. Viceroy,
New Delhi.

Many thanks your prompt reply to my letter of 16th. But in absence of reply to my wire even date you will admit Congress position and mine remains uncertain. Hence I must not even on your behalf invite President without acceptance of my necessary amendment. You will not and cannot according to your wire of 16th let conference discuss the question. Therefore to my great regret I have taken no action on your wire under reply. Working Committee has not still been called. Private telegraphic communication tardy. Time appears to be against date fixed by you. With all my willingness to help I hope you will appreciate unavoidable delay. I suggest your altering date and clarifying issue raised by me and if clarification satisfactory sending your invitation directly for avoiding delay. I should inform you Congress Premiers are held up pending Working Committees decision. I am not releasing these communications pending final decision. But in this you shall judge.

Gandhi