

Capetown,
21st March 1946.

Mahatma Gandhi,
Poona.

I much appreciate your interest and your kind message of friendship which is warmly reciprocated. Indian difficulties in Natal have become much more acute in recent years and now have to be urgently dealt with to prevent deterioration from which Indians may be greatest sufferers. Repeated local conferences with Indian organisations have produced no solutions and round table conference with outside powers is not politically feasible. As regards proposed legislation conferment of political status on Indians has become highly expedient and is great step forward even though representation is by Europeans under South Africa act. To allay fears of further penetration bill proposes demarcation of free areas in Natal where Indians and others can buy and occupy land freely and question of Indian segregation does not arise. Demarcation to be made by joint boards on which Indians adequately represented. Although bill curtails rights of Indians to buy and occupy anywhere in Natal it is essentially not unfair in intention or effort and will provide workable basis for Indian development and racial peace for many years. As such I commend it to you who know how great are the difficulties in maintaining harmony among South African of all races. I assure you of the friendly spirit in which I am acting in a situation which may easily get out of control. This is for your information and not for publication. I see no harm however in statement that you and I have been personally in communication over this matter if you consider it desirable.

Smuts

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TELEGRAM

Poona,
22nd March 1946.

Field-Marshal Smuts,
Capetown,
Union of South Africa.

Thanks for wire. India is expected to get independence this year. If you believe it, wait till then. Cloistered civilisation like cloistered virtue. Your good intention undoubted. Premise appears faulty. India's protest against inferior status. Proposed franchise doubtful privilege. Land tenure is segregation. Shall respect your wish avoid publicity contents our cables.

Gandhi

* * *

161

Valmiki Mandir,
Reading Road,
New Delhi,
15th June 1946.

Dear Mr. Abell,

His Excellency I have no doubt has seen from the papers that the passive resistance movement on the part of the Indians there has commenced against the Anti-Asiatic Act recently passed by the South African Union Legislature. Is it too much to expect His Excellency to support and express his approval of the movement, as did Lord Hardinge on a similar occasion in South Africa during his Viceroyalty?

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.,
Private Secretary to H. E. The Viceroy,
The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi.

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The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
18th June 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have shown His Excellency your letter of the 15th June, about the passive resistance movement by Indians in South Africa.

2. The Government of India have already given notice of the termination of the Trade Agreement with South Africa, and have called back their High Commissioner for consultation; they have also decided to refer the dispute to U.N.O. H. E. agreed with all these decisions.

3. H. E. has every sympathy for the Indian case and has done all he can to support and further it, but he thinks it would be a mistake for him to make any public declaration on the subject, and that it might do more harm than good to the cause of Indians in South Africa.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

New Delhi,
26th June 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

Herewith an advance copy of Gandhiji's article on South Africa which he will be grateful if you will put before H. E. It will appear in the next *Harijan*.¹

I enjoyed my lunch at Viceroy's House immensely yesterday.

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.,
Private Secretary to H. E. the Viceroy.

1. See Appendix VII.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
26th June 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

H. E. asks me to thank you for sending an advance copy of Mr. Gandhi's article on South Africa. He is very glad to hear that you enjoyed your lunch at Viceroy's House.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

P. S. Won't it be grand to have what the Americans call a recess?¹

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

Bhangi Colony,
New Delhi,
27th June 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

Gandhiji has asked me to send you copies of two cables received today from Durban.²

Please be kind enough to place them before His Excellency.

We leave for Panchgani tomorrow evening, I hope. It will, as you say, be nice to have a "breather" !

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.

1. This refers to a break in the negotiations initiated by the Cabinet Mission before Lord Wavell again took up the threads of negotiations a few weeks later.

2. See Appendix VIII.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
1st July 1946.

Dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

I write to acknowledge your letter of the 27th June, and the copies of two telegrams from South Africa which you enclosed.

2. Mr. Abell has gone to Simla, and I am sending the papers on to him.

Yours sincerely,

I. D. Scott

Dy. Private Secretary to the Viceroy

Raikumari Amrit Kaur.

Poona,
4th July 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

I am enclosing a copy of a cable received this morning by Gandhiji from H. H. the Aga Khan.

Gandhiji would like to know if H. E. can do anything to help in the matter of the air passage for Ashwin Chowdhuri which the Aga Khan wants.

I hope you are enjoying your respite from the heat.

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.

[ENCLOSURE TO THE ABOVE]

* TELEGRAM

Nairobi

Mahatma Gandhi,
Poona.

Sorabjee arrested. Most important Ashwin Chowdhuri proceed New York explain our case public opinion. Unless he gets proper air priority impossible. Am doing my best from here but position unsatisfactory. Kindly intervene. Get Ashwin Chowdhuri air priority arranged through Indian Government.

Approach Bhopal, Jinnah. Please have united front. And now finally if Government desire send me New York any capacity howsoever humble this matter notwithstanding ill health will consider it.

Aga Khan

169

Viceroy's Camp, India,
Simla,
9th July 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

Thank you for your letter of the 4th July about an air passage from South Africa to America for Mr. Ashwin Chaudhuri.

2. It appears from a Reuter's message of the 7th July from Durban that Mr. Chaudhuri will leave for New York on the 10th July, which presumably means that a passage has been obtained. I am however asking Commonwealth Relations Department on His Excellency's behalf to ascertain the exact position from the High Commissioner's Office.

It is lovely and cool here but a good deal of rain.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

(W) ABOUT REPRESSION IN GOA

170

Camp: Panchgani,
19th July 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

Gandhiji desires me to refer you to happenings in Goa, a vivid description of which is given on page 6 of the *Bombay Chronicle* of 18-7-'46.¹

1. The Portuguese authorities had begun to take suppressive measures against the people in Goa struggling for civil liberties. Dr. Lohia was expelled from Goa for a period of 5 years. The founder and the secretary of the Goa Congress were arrested and "court martialed" although no martial law was in force in Goa. Public meetings were banned and those, including women, who took part in them in spite of the ban, beaten.

I enclose a copy of a wire Gandhiji received yesterday from "Joachim Dias".¹ Goan friends have been to see him too and related their woes. He wonders whether H. E. the Viceroy can do anything to stem the tide of what would appear to be lawlessness on the part of authority in Goa.

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

Encl: 1

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.,
Private Secretary to H. E. the Viceroy,
New Delhi.

171

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
3rd August 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

In your letter to me of July 19th you wrote about the affairs in Goa. While it is not possible for the Government of India to intervene in the affairs of a friendly foreign country, events in Goa have not escaped their attention and they have taken steps to keep themselves fully informed of developments.

2. It appears from the Press that the position has lately improved.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

172

Sevagram,
13th August 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

Yours of the 3rd instant (NO. 624/3) has only arrived here today, having gone to Panchgani first.

The position in Goa has not improved from the news that comes to Gandhiji. I enclose a copy of a note he has

1. The telegram reported the arrest of the Secretary of Goa Congress and his detention in a military prison pending court martial.

written for the coming *Harijan*.¹ While "Intervention in the affairs of a friendly foreign country" may not be possible, surely a friendly remonstrance against harsh and unjust treatment of Indians should not be an impossibility.

At Gandhiji's suggestion I also enclose a copy of the Archbishop of Bombay's letter.² It will give you an insight into the way things are happening in Goa. Is it not an unfriendly act to regard Indians from this part as strangers going to Goa?

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

Encl: 2

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.,
Private Secretary to H. E. the Viceroy,
New Delhi.

173

Sevagram,
17th August 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

I am instructed by Gandhiji to send you a copy of a wire just received by him.³ It needs no comment. Things

1. See Appendix IX(a). For an earlier article by Gandhiji on the arrest of Dr. Lohia in Goa, and for correspondence between Governor-General of Goa and Gandhiji that followed see Appendix IX (b), IX(c) and IX(d).

2. Gandhiji had received a complaint against the Roman Catholic Bishop of Goa to the effect that the Bishop was party to the lawlessness there. To ascertain facts Gandhiji wrote to the Archbishop of Bombay that the matter called for investigation by him. The Archbishop's reply was to the effect that "the Patriarch of Goa is responsible to the Holy See alone", and that "with all countries of the world the universal Catholic Church has to live on working compromise as to all non-essentials."

3. The telegram was to the effect that Purushottam Kakodkar, another Goan leader, who was arrested in connection with the Satyagraha movement in Goa was being kept in a "dingy, ill-ventilated cell" in company with criminals awaiting trial for murder and robbery and that the food supplied was "unsufficient, being half normal meal", although he had "expressed willingness to work for his meal".

in Goa seem to be in a bad way.
Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.

174

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
22nd August 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

Many thanks for your letter of the 17th August about Goa.

2. H. E. and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had a talk today and are having another. It looks as though the Interim Government were well on the way to completion. I do hope the League will agree to cooperate soon.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

V
CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GOVERNORS
OF BENGAL : 1945-46
(RT. HON'BLE MR. R. G. CASEY & SIR FREDERICK BURROWS)

(A) ABOUT CLOTH SHORTAGE AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

175

Sevagram,
2nd August 1945.

Dear Friend,

Shri Sudhir Ghosh kindly gave me copies of your two speeches, one of which I finished yesterday during moments snatched from my daily work.

I write this to draw attention to two things for the moment. Cloth shortage you can deal with without delay by following the policy laid down by the All India Spinners' Association which is represented in Bengal too. In one sentence the scheme is to ask every home practically to spin its cotton and every village to weave its own cloth. It is the largest cooperative effort that can be conceived, in the world.

The second is the cattle question. For that you should meet Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta of Khadi Pratisthan. He is ailing and may not be available just now. He has just published a monumental work on the question.¹

Shri Sudhir Ghosh has given me your message about my visiting Bengal. I thank you for it. I am anxious to come as early as the rains of Bengal will permit. When I come my first business will be to give myself the privilege of meeting you.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

His Excellency the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

1. *The Cow in India*, Khadi Pratisthan, 15 Bankim Chatterji Street, Calcutta 12.

Government House,
Calcutta,
8th August 1945.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter of 2nd August. I shall be very glad to see you when you come to Bengal and hope you will let me know if there are any facilities that I can offer for your visit.

I shall be glad to have a car put at your disposal in Calcutta if you wish, and to have arrangements made for any other transport facilities that may be feasible. You will not, I know, lack hospitality in the rural areas, but I would in particular mention Mr. Symonds of the Friends Ambulance Unit, whom you know; he will, I know, be glad to offer you any assistance he can in cooperation with the Friends Ambulance Unit during your mofussil visits.

I look forward to talking to you at greater length on the subjects of cloth and cattle that you have mentioned, and on many others, during your visit.

With best wishes,

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

Sevagram,
14th August 1945.

Dear Friend,

Many thanks for your letter of 8th instant received yesterday afternoon.

I shall gladly avail myself of your kind offer of assistance, if I need it. Of course I know Mr. Symonds very well.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

His Excellency the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

Government House,
Calcutta,
1st December 1945.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

I am sending this note to you by hand of Sudhir Ghosh to say that I look forward very much to seeing you whenever you feel you would like to do so — possibly tomorrow (Sunday) or Monday.

I expect that you will be a little tired after your long journey, which I hope was as comfortable as possible, and that you were not too much bothered on the way.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

(B) ABOUT COTTAGE INDUSTRIES & IRRIGATION

179

Sodepur,
6th December 1945.

Dear Friend,

As you were eager to have a copy of the Constructive Programme¹ I had procured a copy. But today's post brought me a proof copy of the revised edition. I send it for your perusal. You will read what you like. The copy need not be returned to me.

The other things I am trying to collect as fast as possible in the midst of the overwhelming work before me.

May I repeat the pleasure it gave me to meet you and Mrs. Casey.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

1. *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, by Gandhiji, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 14.

Government House,
Calcutta,
9th December 1945.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Many thanks for the copy of the printer's proof of your revised version of "Constructive Planning" — which I have read with great interest, and which I will read again.

My first reaction to it (or rather to the portions dealing with home spinning and weaving) is that I entirely agree with you. As I think I told you, one of our many difficulties in the last two years has been a woefully small supply of yarn — so that only a proportion of the more or less professional weavers of the Province could keep going. I believe the shortage of yarn has been an all-India manifestation. As to each cultivator growing his own cotton — the ground space (although admittedly not large) involved would reduce his already very small area for the growing of his main crop — paddy. I would believe that it would be very difficult to induce him to do this.

However — as I have said — I have no quarrel at all with your proposition. I would welcome any means of usefully employing some or all of the now wasted time of the average Bengal cultivator.

But even if your scheme were to mature — it would not do what irrigation would do — it would not free the cultivator from the thralldom of the monsoon — or the many other disabilities arising out of the lack of irrigation in Bengal.

On another subject — I have written by air mail to Australia to get a small supply of the best Australian wool — from which to make you a really good shawl — which I will, if I may, send you in due course.

I am grateful to you for signing the photograph of the two of us — and I had pleasure, in return, in sending you a small contribution to your Fund.

With best wishes to you,

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
8th December 1945.

Dear Friend,

I have just finished reading your broadcast to be delivered today. It makes interesting and informative reading. If the waters of the rivers can be captured and utilised by the people of Bengal, instead of being wasted in the Bay, it would be a great gain. But it is a long term proposition. The millions, meanwhile, must be taught to utilise every minute of the working hours for their own benefit. If they learn this art they will make good use of the captured waters. You have well said: "The tens of millions of farmers of Bengal are idle more than half the time. They constitute the biggest problem of unemployment in the world and the biggest waste of potential human effort."

I have provided you with a complete answer which can be worked out today with a very little outlay on the part of the Government. Regard human labour more even than money and you have an untapped and inexhaustible source of income which ever increases with use. If I had been your adviser, before the speech was printed I would have suggested the insertion immediately after, "Let us examine the problem", of a paragraph or two, showing the way of immediate utilisation of human effort. You could then have followed it up with your entrancing scheme as a long range proposition.

Is your peroration right? You say: "The answer to my mind lies not in our politics, our religion or our individual ambition, but in the abiding factors of our environment, i.e., the land and water of Bengal." This is a gross error of thought and consequent action, handed down from generation to generation by the British official element. Your gigantic project will come to nothing until the whole mass of the people of Bengal is interested in the Government of the province. Therefore, religion and even individual ambition are intermixed. They are as much abiding factors of our environment as the land and water of Bengal, and they are equally shifting.

You asked me for my reaction to your thoughtful speech and I have given it as it has come to me.

Very many thanks for your prompt action on my letter of this morning on seed potatoes.¹

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

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PERSONAL

Government House,
Calcutta,
10th December 1945.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

I venture to write again about your letter of December 8th (about my broadcast on Irrigation in Bengal) and with regard to your "Constructive Programme".

While I am at one with you in looking forward to the regeneration of village life through the provision of profitable and healthy village occupations, I still believe that I am correct, at least in the circumstances of Bengal, in laying all the stress that I can on the control of physical environment as fundamental to prosperity. I believe that the fundamental curse of Bengal (I don't claim to know about the rest of India) is poverty, which brings in its train illiteracy and disease. So long as the people are undernourished and impoverished so long will it be impossible (to my way of thinking) for them to be happy or, in any complete sense, free. You know the saying: "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind", — which in Bengal are *land* and *water* — so that mankind may ride free.

It seems to me that we both have the same goal but we proceed to it in different ways. The goal is human happiness — that is, freedom in the complete sense. I wish to create the physical circumstances which, in my belief, are a prerequisite to happiness. Your bolder vision, if my interpretation is correct, sees its attainment without the control of these physical circumstances.

1. See letter No. 186.

Do not, please, mistake me in thinking that I have no immediate regard for home spinning and weaving, and other village crafts. We in Bengal have been crying out for yarn, for we are grievously short of it. Only a proportion of the weavers — that is, even the more or less professional ones — have been able to keep going in recent years, and, despite our best efforts, I know very well that they have had a hard time of it.

As for each cultivator growing, so to speak, his own clothes, again I have no exception to take to the idea — but the fact remains that (as I think I said to you in my hand-written letter) if he were to grow cotton he would have to grow less rice. We have been trying to get the cultivators to sacrifice a very small portion of their paddy land for the growing of some nourishing fodder crop for their working and milch cattle (who now “live” on rice straw which has no nourishment) — but without any success.

I should be glad to see the renaissance of village crafts, but I cannot see that this would be a real cure in itself for the ills of Bengal. These ills are shortage of food, under-nourishment and poverty. They derive from the insufficient productivity of the land, and, in my belief, they could be largely cured by the integration and development of the land and water of the province.

Maybe, mine is not a panacea. I remember reading somewhere that “human nature is the greatest puzzle that God has set for man in this world, and when we’ve solved it we shall have solved everything”. I do not look, as perhaps I should, to solve the problem of human nature, but I do look to the creation of circumstances in which human nature can best fulfil itself.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
12th December 1945.

Dear Friend,

I have your letter of 10th instant, for which I thank you.

I have not discounted your irrigation scheme. I have only suggested an addition to it so as to bring almost immediate individual relief to the crores of villagers by occupying their admitted leisure hours. In your written note you seem to be in entire accord with my proposition. Where then is the difficulty in the Government of Bengal sponsoring the scheme and at once creating a hopeful situation so far as the shortage of cloth is concerned? I have never suggested that attainment of happiness is possible without the control of physical surroundings. But I have no desire to enter into any argument. If you have immediate regard for home spinning and weaving and other village crafts, I have suggested a way out. That each cultivator should grow his own cotton is not a *sine qua non* of my scheme and certainly no cultivator should be compelled or even advised to grow cotton to the detriment of any staple crop. The question is one of utilising waste labour, as under your scheme it is one of utilising waste water.

If you favour the idea as practical and capable of immediate application, I could furnish you with a detailed scheme which, as I have told you, can be worked with the help of the various Khadi organizations controlled by the All India Spinners' Association.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

(C) ABOUT ACQUISITION OF GOPE PALACE

184

Government House,
Calcutta,
10th December 1945.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

A situation has arisen in which I think you can possibly help, if you would be willing to do so.

The story is this—

The Surgeon General with Bengal (Major-General W. E. R. Dimond) is making very strenuous efforts in a great many directions to increase the number of hospital beds in this Province. A great opportunity presents itself at this moment when both British and American Military Hospitals are being disposed of. We are in course of finalising quite satisfactory arrangements under which the Government of Bengal acquires all the equipment of at least four American Military Hospitals—totalling several thousand beds.

In addition to this, there is a British Military Hospital about a mile and a half outside Midnapore town. This hospital is in the grounds of the Gope Palace, the property of a gentleman called Mr. D. L. Khan. The Surgeon General is most anxious to acquire the existing hospital buildings with all their equipment, as a going concern. It would also suit our purpose (and, indeed, it is essential to our purpose) to buy the Gope Palace as well—and the buildings of the Palace would be converted into a part of the hospital on a permanent basis. The whole thing would then be used as a tuberculosis sanatorium—and would give us a very much needed 650 additional beds—an almost miraculous addition to our hospital facilities in the Province to cope with this dread disease.

I am desperately anxious to help the Surgeon General to achieve the above.

However, the efforts of the Department of Public Health and Local Self-Government to induce Mr. Khan to sell the Gope Palace have so far proved unavailing. I enclose a

letter from Mr. Khan to Mr. Bastin (District Magistrate, Midnapore) in this connection.

I understand that Mr. Khan is a member of the Congress — and it occurs to me that you might possibly be willing to use your undoubted influence with him to prevail upon him to sell his property — notwithstanding his views as to the iniquity of my Government.

I understand that Mr. Khan is a very wealthy man, and that he normally lives at 3, Minto Park Road, Calcutta — and I am told that he very infrequently uses the Gope Palace at Midnapore — and I believe that it may be said that he does not require it for his own personal convenience.

With best wishes,

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Sodepur Khadi Pratisthan.

185

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
12th December 1945.

Dear Friend,

I have your kind letter of 10th instant regarding the Gope Palace. This is a matter of such a delicate nature that I do not think I can usefully interfere. And why should there be any hurry, if a popular government is shortly to replace the present regime?¹

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

1. The General Election was in progress at this time, and as a result a popular Ministry was expected to be formed soon in Bengal. The Ministers took office in April, 1946, with Muslim League leader H. S. Suhrawardy as the Chief Minister.

(D) ABOUT SEED POTATO

186

IMMEDIATE

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
8th December 1945

Dear Friend,

I write this with the greatest hesitation. The more I see and hear, the greater is the grief over the happenings in Bengal. Here is a sample demanding immediate attention.

Satish Babu brings me the story that potato growers cannot get seed potatoes and the planting season will be over in a week's time. Seed potatoes are there in the market under Government control. But the grower cannot get them.

There is evidently something radically wrong if the news brought by Satish Babu is true. I wonder if you can do anything. You were telling me about the clever Mr. Dey whose services you have enlisted for such matters. Can you make him over to me or some other officer who can attend to this immediate affair?

I am having this letter delivered at once. The question is small enough on the large Bengal canvas but is all in all to the poor growers whose livelihood is at stake.¹

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

(E) ABOUT FAVOURITISM IN ELECTIONS

187

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
16th December 1945.

Dear Friend,

I have insistent complaints about goondaism and favouritism at the elections. We had a talk about these. But they

1. See letter No. 181.

seem to persist. I know you do not want these things. Can something be done in the matter?¹

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

(F) ABOUT ATROCITIES IN CHITTAGONG BY PIONEER FORCE

188

Camp: Sarania Ashram,
Gauhati,
10th January 1946.

Dear Friend,

I enclose herewith copy of a wire received today.² The story seems to be unbelievable. I know you will inquire and take the necessary steps, if there is any foundation for the truth of the story.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

189

TELEGRAM

Gauhati,
12th January 1946.

Private Secretary,
H. E. Governor, Calcutta.

President Congress Committee Chittagong sends wire accusing certain pioneer force persons molesting females and

1. Gandhiji took up this matter to fulfil a promise he had made to Maulvi Fazlul Huq, an ex-Chief Minister of Bengal. The Maulvi Sahab had complained to Gandhiji of connivance by the police and Government officials at acts of hooliganism and intimidation by the Muslim Leaguers. No reply to this letter is to be found among Gandhiji's office records. Perhaps Mr. Casey dealt with this matter orally in one of his conversations with Gandhiji. See *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase*, Vol. I, p. 157.

2. See next letter.

when resisted returning in vengeance with companions attacking villagers burning houses looting property. Trust full inquiry will be made and proper justice rendered.

Gandhi

190

Government House,
Calcutta,
15th January 1946.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter of 10th January from Gauhati, about the most regrettable Chittagong affair. You will have had Tyson's (my Secretary) telegram about it.¹ I enclose copy of the official note issued to the Press here yesterday, from which you will notice that the culprits are to be tried by a civil (criminal) court.² It was a beastly business. The only small redeeming feature is that the Pioneer Unit was not a Bengali one.

The frightful loss of life at Diamond Harbour is another tragedy.³ I am trying to get at the facts and the causes so that it can be ensured that it does not happen again.

I hope it may be convenient for you to come to see me on Friday 18th at 7-30 — as it looks as if this would be the only chance mutually available to us to meet again before you

1. Not to be found among Gandhiji's office records.

2. The official note said that on January 7, 1946, a few men of civil labour unit — not recruited in Bengal — went to a village near Chittagong town for women and a quarrel broke out, whereupon the labour unit were reinforced "by about 250 to 300 men" from the remaining members of the unit. This was the beginning of a serious disorder in which the labour unit set fire to houses and looted property. Eight homesteads were burnt and 61 families rendered homeless. The casualties totalled 20 villagers injured including one who later died. One case of "alleged rape" was reported.

3. On the occasion of the Gangasagar Mela in 1946, temporarily constructed jetties to enable pilgrims to board steamers bound for Sangam island at the mouth of the river Ganga collapsed. As a result 147 people were killed and 80 injured. Of these 80 were women and 7 children.

leave. I hope to have the answers to most of the matters that you spoke to me about (reinforced by your long letter and enclosures) by then. Some of the letters are in hand, but it will not be completely investigated by then.

With best wishes,

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

(G) ABOUT BAN ON KHADI CENTRES & ABOUT
SALES TAX ON KHADI, MILK, ETC.

191

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
8th January 1946.

Dear Friend,

Herewith the note I promised last night to send to you.

1. *Mahishadal — Tamluk sub-division, Midnapore Dist.*

On the application of one Shridhar Chandra Goswami on 27th June, 1944, the presiding officer ordered the return of articles seized. These articles have not yet been returned nor compensation offered, if the articles are missing (according to my information). Original papers sent herewith. (Encl: 1)

2. *Contai sub-division.*

Water that has become saline there and probably in the other sub-divisions also should be drained out and renovated so as to be drinkable.

I enclose herewith the original letter from the Friends' Service Unit showing how urgent this work is. (Encl: 2)

3. *Abhay Ashram, Comilla.*

I attach hereto a paper marked Encl. 3. It discloses a curious state of affairs, as I understand it. I know personally that the Ashram activities were wholly beneficial and constructive. Schools based on social reform were run, catering for mostly Muslim children of spinning families who span yarn for wages; a depot was established for the storing of yarn,

cotton and Khadi; a hospital was conducted under the able supervision of Shri Suresh Bannerji. (Encl: 3)

4. Other Khadi Centres.

Other Khadi centres affected are shortly referred to in enclosure No. 4.

5. Sales Tax Act.

As to Sales Tax Act, I observe that the Act was passed on 1st July 1941. Handloom cloth was excluded from the operation of the Act, but it was amended on March 30th 1944, and the tax was raised from one to two pice per rupee. On 25th June 1945, it was raised to three pice per rupee by the Governor's Ordinance. Handloom cloth was made taxable though originally omitted, but it is not clear when. Dhoti, sari and lungi worth Rs. 10/-, Rs. 15/-, and Rs.18/- respectively are excluded from the operation of the Act.

My point is that Khadi, i.e. hand-spun and hand-woven or hand-spun yarn should be excluded from all taxes. Logically hand-woven cloth also, though woven from mill yarn, should be excluded for the tax hits the handloom weaver. Therefore, the exclusion of dhoti, sari and lungi is of no help. The revenue derived from Khadi is altogether negligible. The revenue derived from hand-woven cloth is fair because hand-woven cloth is large enough in quantity to yield some income to the treasury, but at the poor weaver's expense. In taxing Khadi, however, thousands of poor hand spinners are so hard hit that the tax becomes so deterrent as to be punitive. I am quite certain that such was never the intention of the framers of the Act. The oversight has only to be brought to the notice of the Government to be remedied. I may also mention that all the Khadi depots of the All India Spinners' Association are benevolent concerns. The conductors are servants of the A.I.S.A. which, according to the recent judgment of the Privy Council, has been held to be a benevolent institution, not liable to income tax.

Incidentally, I may mention that whilst fresh milk is excluded from the operation of the Act, all other forms of milk such as boiled milk, pasteurised milk, *dahi*¹ etc. are taxable

1. Curds.

under the Act. The clause baffles me. The original Act is called Bengal Act of 1941.

6. *Feni*.

Feni is within the Japanese bombed area. Therefore, 98 villages were evacuated by the Government. Assurance is said to have been given that six months after the cessation of hostilities the villages would be returned to the villagers. Nevertheless, 28 villages appear to be still in Government possession. At the time of evacuation, removal of merchandise was strictly prohibited. This is a case demanding close inquiry.

I enclose herewith an account furnished to me, marked enclosure 5.

I have hurriedly drawn up this letter. The chief aim is to involve as little reading as possible for you. If, however, any further papers are required I shall be prepared to furnish them on my return from Assam, I hope, on the 14th. As I told you last evening I cannot myself vouch for the accuracy of the facts given. They have been given to me by co-workers as being accurate. But if that is not so I stand open to correction. If, however, they are found to be accurate I suggest that they call for immediate inquiry. I have taken care to refer only to those things which can be remedied without much difficulty or expense and yet they are the things which will give relief to the neediest.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

Encls: 5

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

192

Government House,
Calcutta,
15th January, 1946.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

I write on the subject of the Sales Tax on handloom cloth and hand-spun yarn — on which you spoke to me and on which you also wrote.

I had my officers go into the whole matter — and the following is my condensation of several reports on various aspects of the matters you have raised.

There is no sales tax on yarn of any sort — whether hand or mill spun.

The present position as regards the sales tax on handloom woven cloth is that there is no sales tax on handloom woven dhotis of any size costing not more than Rs. 10/- a pair, or on handloom woven saris of any size costing not more than Rs. 15/- a pair, or on handloom woven lungis of any size costing not more than Rs. 4 each.

The above price limits were notified on 29th March 1944. Since then, of course, the cost of everything has risen appreciably — and I agree that these price-limits need revision. I will have the matter gone into at once and we will raise the figures of cost under which the sales tax will not apply. This will be done fairly so as to achieve the worthy object that I know you have in mind.

As you will realise from what I have said, these exemptions apply equally to cloth that is hand-woven from either hand-spun or mill yarn.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Sodepur Ashram,
Sodepur.

193

Government House,
Calcutta,
30th January 1946.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

I write in continuation of my letter of the 15th January on the subject of the sales tax in Bengal, about which, you will remember, we had some further discussion. I have given a lot of thought to this matter and have thrashed it out thoroughly with my officers — as I realised from our discussions that you had this matter much at heart. As a result, I have now

decided to raise the price level for exemptions (i.e. below which they will not attract sales tax) of dhotis, lungis and saris from Rs. 10/-, Rs. 4/- and Rs. 15/- respectively to Rs. 20/-, Rs. 8/- and Rs. 25/- respectively. This exemption, of course, applies both to hand-woven and to mill-made cloth and to cloth made from hand-spun or mill-made yarn. I find that it is not really practicable, from the point of view of administering the tax, to make a distinction between the two.

So far as Khadi is concerned, the effect of this is that a poor man buying the kind of garment that the poor man wears, in Khadi, will be able to get it tax free. Though the method of giving exemption was altered in April 1944, cheap Khadi has in fact always been exempt from the sales tax. I must, however, emphasise that Government's primary object in framing exemptions is to give relief to the poorer consumer, not to the producer who, as a producer, I still believe, passes the tax on to the consumer.

I have given close consideration as to whether we should restore, as an additional item in the schedule of exemptions, handloom cloth woven from hand-spun yarn whatever its sale price, but have come to the conclusion that this would cut across the principle on which our exemptions are primarily framed—that is to give relief to the poorer section of the consumers. If anyone wishes to buy expensive Khadi, I really cannot see any valid reason why he should not pay tax on it and I believe it is the consumer who pays the tax in such a case.

So far as the exemption of "milk" is concerned, it is, I find, clearly understood by the Commissioner of Commercial Taxes that boiled milk and pasteurized milk are covered by the existing exemption and I am told that tax is not in fact levied on boiled or pasteurized milk as such. If you know of cases to the contrary, I shall be glad to have executive instructions issued on the point but for the present I am advised that these are unnecessary.

Here again, as regards milk, the exemption is intended to assist the poor man. I am told that *dahi*, which you also mentioned to me, is not really an article of common purchase among the poor, but is rather in the nature of a luxury (except as regards those who themselves keep cows) and

for this reason and because of administrative difficulties I have not seen my way to add *dahi* to the exemptions.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Hindusthannagar,
Madras.

194

Government House,
Calcutta,
18th January 1946.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have had the matter investigated of a number' of tanks in the Contai and Tamluk Subdivisions being saline following on the cyclone. It is clear that, although some work has been done (by way of cleaning out the tanks of saline water and letting them refill with sweet water in the monsoon) in this regard, a lot still remains to be done. I am told that probably about 2000 tanks have been so dealt with (in Contai and Tamluk Subdivisions) although, as I say, there are many that still have to be done. I will see that this work is speeded up.

As regards tubewells in Contai and Tamluk Subdivisions, the situation is not unlike the above. Something has been done — but more could be done (particularly now that materials are becoming more readily available) — and I will see that it is done. I am told that tubewell sinking is a difficult business in Contai Subdivision particularly, owing to the nature of the soil and the fact that it is necessary to go very deep to get sweet water. I am returning Mr. Lee's letter.

With regard to your references to Abhoy Ashram at Comilla and certain other centres in Bankura and Calcutta — I have had the District Magistrates concerned asked for reports, and those will be carefully gone into as soon as received.

As regards the compulsory evacuation of villages in the Feni area (Noakhali District), the Commissioner has been

asked to report and this matter too will be given careful attention as soon as we have full particulars.

With regard to the application of Shridhar Chandra Goswami for return of articles seized, I have asked for a report from the District Magistrate and will have it gone into as soon as we have particulars.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

195

Sevagram,
Via : Wardha,
8th February 1946.

Dear Friend,

I have to acknowledge receipt of your three letters of 30-1-'46, 30-1-'46 and 1-2-'46.¹

Now that you are about to leave your office and also India, I will not trouble you any further with reference to the several matters on which I see there are differences of view point. I cannot help mentioning my regret that I have failed to carry conviction in the matter of salt and Khadi.² The position regarding milk is certainly extraordinary. There is no question here of even carrying conviction. It is typical. The answer you have been instructed to give reveals to me the official mind in India, which refuses to admit even obvious mistakes. Hence we have called the Civil Service "heaven born" and the late Mr. Montagu called it "wooden". Some day, if you and Mrs. and I meet without your being trammelled by cares of office, we shall laugh heartily over the many tragedies of Bengal which, let us hope, will have been things of the past and the ludicrous mistakes lying at the bottom of these tragedies.

I understand what you have said about the release of prisoners.

I hope that the Red Cross work will shape itself for the benefit of the millions.

1. See letter Nos. 193, 199 and 203.

2. See letter Nos. 191-93 and 197-99.

I enclose for your information the statement I have made with reference to "man-made famine".¹ I hope that I have correctly recalled our conversation.

I thank you for the Australian wool you have been good enough to send to the Rajkumari for turning into blankets. I hope to report to you how the blankets look when they come from the weavers and tell you whether Australian wool makes better blankets than the Tibetan.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

196

Government House,
Calcutta,
13th February 1946.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

You will recall that in my letter of the 18th January 1946, I promised to investigate some of the outstanding matters which were mentioned in your letter of the 8th January. I state below the position as I now find it in respect of each of these matters :—

(1) *Application of Babu Shridhar Chandra Goswami for return of articles seized.*

The Articles in question were seized in execution of an attachment order and were sold by public auction in 1943. The sale proceeds were credited to the Treasury. Nobody appears to have put in any claim for the articles before the date of the auction sale. Long after the sale, Babu Shridhar Chandra Goswami filed a claim-petition and it was ordered

1. On being asked by a Press representative whether he had admitted, as was reported in the Press, to the Governor of Bengal, that the Bengal famine of 1943 was not man-made, Gandhiji made the following statement: "I never made such admission. What I did say and what I believe is that the Bengal famine of 1943, which is claimed in certain quarters to be 'man-made', was certainly due to hopeless mismanagement passed current like other things under military necessity. It was certainly not an act of God."

that the articles should be restored to him. As the articles had already been sold by public auction, the applicant was asked to withdraw the sale proceeds which were deposited in the Treasury. The applicant however declined to do so as in his opinion the attachment and sale of the articles were illegal and the property had been sold for an inadequately small amount of Rs. 32/4/-.

You will appreciate that it is not possible to return the articles which were sold a long time ago by public auction. But if the claimant submits an application to the District Magistrate claiming fair compensation it would be considered. (I return the enclosure No. 1).

(2) *Abhoy Ashram, Comilla.*

The Abhoy Ashrams at Comilla and Barakanta and the Kanya Shikshaloy in Comilla town were declared to be illegal associations and the premises were occupied by Government in 1942. The question of lifting the bans on these institutions did not therefore come up automatically for consideration in connection with the lifting of bans imposed on Congress Committees and other associations in connection with the 1942 disturbances. The bans on these institutions therefore still operate, but I am having the question of removal examined. The question of payment of compensation for any damage done to the properties will be considered when the bans are cancelled. (I return the enclosure No. 3).

(3) *Other Khadi Centres.*

(i) *Barakanta Centre* — The movable properties seized at this centre were forfeited to Government by an order issued by the District Magistrate under section 17 (b) of the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Act and legally no claim is admissible for them. Excepting some clothes which were disbursed in connection with cyclone relief, these properties were however returned when the bans on the Congress organisations were cancelled last year. The Association's solicitors have served a notice for compensation which will be decided according to the legal merits. The premises have not yet been restored as it has not been possible to find alternative accommodation for the office of a Court of Wards Estate which is at present housed there. I am

instructing those concerned to make another search for alternative accommodation and to release the premises as early as possible.

(ii) *Bistupur Centre* — Orders have been issued to return the premises. The claim for any damage to the premises will be considered, if made.

(iii) *Sonamukhi Centre* — The articles seized at this centre were returned to the A. I. S. A. according to a claim preferred by it. An ex-gratia payment of Rs. 2,500/- was also sanctioned by way of compensation for the value of goods damaged. The amount of compensation was calculated on the rates prevailing at the time of seizure in 1942 and in some cases on the prices noted on the label attached to the cloth pieces. The solicitors of the Association later preferred a total claim of Rs. 36,150/-. This is now under investigation. I do not know the details of this.

(iv) *Bhowanipur Centre* — After the seizure of the articles in this Centre the District Magistrate issued a notice inviting claims. In the absence of any claim within the prescribed time the properties were ordered to be sold in auction. The solicitors of the A. I. S. A. assert that a claim was made to the District Magistrate within the specified period. The matter is now under investigation.

(v) *Bank Money* — The money at the credit of the College Street branch of the A. I. S. A. in the Bengal Central Bank and also a sum of Rs. 74/- in the Bengal Bank Ltd. at Nadia were declared to be forfeited to Government. Although I am little doubtful that these moneys can be returned I am seeing what can be done. It is believed that small amounts were lying at the credit of the Association in certain Banks in the districts of Midnapore and Birbhum and reports in this regard have been asked for from the District Officers. (I return the enclosure No. 4).

(4) *Feni.*

I agree that the people of Feni Subdivision have had a hard time of it from causes outside our control. As regards requisitioned villages, the present position is that parts of 40 villages remain to be released. Of them 8 will have to be permanently acquired because they have been converted

into air-fields etc. (making habitation and cultivation impossible), while 14 were requisitioned mainly for brick-field projects which therefore raise the problem of removing the bricks before return of the land. The Army have called for tenders from contractors to get the bricks removed. Legally speaking the war is to terminate, I believe, on April 1st, but I entirely agree that every endeavour should be made to get the villagers back on their land — we are making every effort to restore all possible lands in time for cultivation before the monsoon.

In requisitioned areas there was no question of preventing the people from removing their movables, goods and merchandise: on the contrary they were asked in the requisitioning order to remove all their belongings and help was given to them with carts and motor vehicles.

As regards air-raids referred to in the enclosure sent with your letter (No. 5 — which I now return) I agree that there seems to be some reason for complaint. I am asking the local officers to investigate any remaining cases of particular hardship with a view to giving those afflicted some further gratuitous relief. Incidentally, after the raid referred to in the enclosure the sum of Rs. 5000/- (not Rs. 500/-) was distributed as gratuitous relief among the poorer people who would not have been in a position to repair their houses without help. This amount was distributed after a careful enquiry among 154 persons. Also after that air-raid the only order issued prohibiting the removal of merchandise was one prohibiting the removal of foodstuffs from the town — this order was presumably necessary to preserve the life of the town at that time.

As regards injury compensation and pensions to dependents of those killed or disabled, grants were made in accordance with the Government of India's War Injuries Scheme — by which we are bound. I would agree that the rates prescribed are somewhat small particularly in relation to the present cost of living and I am having it examined where some temporary increases in the monthly grants made could not temporarily be given. I cannot however promise that such increases will be agreed to — because Bengal is not the only Province concerned.

Returning to the subject of the people evacuated after requisitioning of their homes and lands, I find that the sum of Rs. 1½ crores has so far been paid out in compensation. I have reason to believe that the compensation has on the whole been generously assessed, — in fact many over-payments have been discovered. So long as these people's land is under requisition they will get recurring compensation for each crop lost. But as I have said above, we are trying hard to get them back on to their lands as quickly as possible.

I would have liked to have had more time to go into these affairs but I hope that you will agree that the Government of Bengal have not adopted an "oppressive" or capricious attitude in these several matters. I would agree that in some directions more could have been done, but the last few years have put a great strain on the administration of this Province and not only on its people.

Just as I had finished the above I received your letter of February 8th. I thank you very much for it.

I must admit that I was rather cast down by what you say — as I have gone to considerable lengths as regards the many matters that we discussed. I do not want our many meetings here to end on the note that your letter implies. For this reason, I venture, at the risk of some reiteration, to speak again of some of the matters that we discussed — and about which I believe there is still some misapprehension in your mind.

Firstly — as regards salt. I believed that the state of affairs that I had described to you as existing in this Province as regards salt was precisely what you had asked me to try to bring about. After my discussions with the salt excise officer here, and after he had described the existing practice to me in greater detail than before, I ended my discussion with him by saying that I believed that it was not necessary to pursue the matter further, as what you wanted was already in existence.

As regards Khadi — by the large increase in the price of Khadi below which the Sales Tax will not be attracted, I believe we have freed the great majority of Khadi (I would guess about 95%) from the incidence of the Sales Tax.

I think I must point out that I have not been "instructed" in the replies that I have given to you by anybody. I have consulted my officers and have had their advice, which in several directions I have gone much beyond.

With regard to your reference to milk — I take it that you refer to the fact that I have not myself been able to agree to the removal of the Sales Tax from *dahi*. The reason for this is that I am advised that it is not, in this Province at least, a matter of common consumption by the poor. At the same time, if the Sales Tax on *dahi* were to be removed, we would have no logical reason to stop there. We would be pressed to remove the Sales Tax from a whole series of other analogous products. I have had a good deal to do with Sales Tax, particularly in Australia, and I am very conscious of the fact that exemptions from a Sales Tax tend, if one is not careful, to be like a pack of cards — in that if one makes one exemption, one had to be careful to see that one is not inevitably led into a whole chain of other exemptions to the grievous detriment of the revenue.

With regard to the 1943 famine, in Bengal. For your confidential information, I may say that I did not tell the British Parliamentary Mission that I had "convinced" you that this was not a man-made famine. I gave them a copy of the graph of total annual crop tonnages since 1931, copy of which I gave to you, and I told them of my explanation of the matter to you. They asked what you had replied, and I said that the matter was not pursued any further. They evidently interpreted this as meaning that I had "convinced" you and so, quite wrongly, they appear to have made this public.

However, I would not like to leave Bengal and to leave you without reiterating (at the risk of boring you) that the rice crop of 1942-43 (through crop failure, pests and natural calamities) were 2½ million tons less than the minimum that is regarded as necessary to feed this Province, even at the present meagre level. The 1942-43 crops were the lowest for a great many years — with the exception of 1940-41 when rice could enter Bengal freely from Burma and South-East Asia. I believe that the facts of the situation are such that one can say with truth that 90% of the cause of the 1943

famine was a phenomenal shortage of rice, not more than a fraction of which could be made good from sources outside Bengal. I do not see how anyone can say that, in the circumstances, the 1943 Bengal Famine was man-made.

I am now in my last week in Bengal. It is a matter of great personal sorrow to me that the deplorable events now taking place in Calcutta¹ should strike the last note — they bid fair to arouse much bitterness. I cannot believe that these riots — and the inflaming of the passions that have gone to make them — are a good augury for India's future, or that those responsible for them are not grievously short-sighted. But I will not dilate on this unhappy subject; rather I would wish you health and good fortune — and that all will come right in the end.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Sevagram,
Wardhaganj, C. P.

(H) ABOUT SALT TAX

197

Government House,
Calcutta,
15th January 1946.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

I write about the matter of the Salt Tax, about which you spoke to me. I had the Government of India's salt excise officer send me a written account of how the salt tax is collected in his area (Bengal, Assam and Orissa). I have also had him in to see me and have discussed the matter with him at some length — with the following result.

I find that the "humanitarian clause"² (or the "Gandhi-

1. There was an outcrop of strikes and demonstrations accompanied by violence in Calcutta in February 1946 which paralysed all organised life in the city for three days.

2. The following is the operative part of the "humanitarian clause" in para 20 of Gandhi-Irwin Pact : " For the sake however of giving relief

Irwin Pact") is being implemented generously in this part of India — at the expense, so I am told, of some lakhs of rupees a year in revenue.

Certain areas are proclaimed as "scheduled areas" — the saline areas in the districts of Midnapore, 24-Parganas, Khulna, Noakhali and Chittagong. In these scheduled areas, the villagers are allowed to manufacture salt for their own use free of tax and license. Since 1943, villagers have actually been encouraged to manufacture as much as they can — provided that they sell the surplus (over and above their own requirement) to the Bengal Government's contractors.

There have been some cases of villagers transporting more than the allowed amount (one maund per head) from the scheduled areas to the non-scheduled areas. However, I am told that it is very unusual for anything to be done about this — other than warning the individuals concerned that they are breaking the law, and that they must stop. This is why I use the term "implemented generously".

After my discussion with the salt excise officer, I am convinced that the poor man is not being oppressed in any way in respect of the salt position.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Sodepur Ashram,
Sodepur.

to certain of the poorer classes, they are prepared to extend their administrative provisions, on lines already prevailing in certain places, in order to permit local residents in villages, to immediately adjoining areas where salt can be collected or made, to collect or make salt for domestic consumption or sale within such villages, but not for sale to, or trading with, individuals living outside them."

Sodepur
16th January 1946.

Dear Friend,

I have your two kind letters. I shall have great pleasure in calling on you, perhaps for the last time, (though I shall hope not) on the 18th at 7.30 p.m.

I am glad you have taken proper and energetic action on the two terrible tragedies.

On the question of salt I see that I have failed to make my point clear. But I must not inflict written argument on you. According to the exigencies of the time I shall discuss the matter with you on Friday.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

Government House,
Calcutta,
20th January 1946.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

You will remember that we discussed the subject of salt on two occasions — and that I wrote to you on the subject on January 15th. I have since gone into the subject again — and I venture to write you again about it.

I find that the quantity of salt made by individuals in Bengal is estimated (the figures are only estimates) at about 5 lakhs maunds in 1944-45 (the latest period for which figures are available). The amount of salt sold by individuals to the Government contractors in the "scheduled areas" in Bengal in 1944-45 was roughly 60,000 maunds. The balance (the great bulk of the production) was consumed by the population of the scheduled areas and of areas close by — and so paid no tax or excise.

I think I may unconsciously have misled you by saying (in my letter of 15th January to you) "since 1943, villagers have actually been encouraged to manufacture as much as they can, provided that they sell the surplus (over and above their own requirements) to the Bengal Government's contractors". I should have said "over and above the requirements of their own villages".

This is in accordance with paragraph 3 of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, which says :— "There should be no sale of salt for purposes of trade outside the villages."

I still believe, as I think I said to you, that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact is being administered in a fair — and even generous — way in this part of the world.

I have a number of other matters that we discussed still in course of investigation and consideration — and I will write to you about them as they mature.

With all good wishes to you,

I am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

(1) ABOUT SECURITY PRISONERS

200

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
16th December 1945.

Dear Friend,

Literature about your prisoners is pouring in on me. According to the papers in my possession, you have over twenty-five pre-Reform prisoners, all of them having undergone sentences above ten and most of them above fifteen years.

Then you have untried detenus, detained only on one-sided secret evidence which they have not seen, and some convicts — all of them political.

Among these prisoners are two women cooped up in a small cell.

I am told that there is no terrorism to be feared. The prisoners are all likely to be public-spirited. But that can be no reason for keeping them behind prison bars.

I submit that they should all be discharged without the slightest ado.

I plead for a little grace before, as you and I hope, the transference of power comes.

I have offered, and still do, to see these prisoners, if it is thought desirable.

I leave for Santiniketan on 18th instant, returning here on the 20th evening.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi,

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

201

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
24th December 1945.

Dear Friend,

I promised on 22nd, when we met, that I would send you for your kind acceptance a copy of my reply to the Tottenham pamphlet. This I do now with great pleasure and hope that you will find time to read it and, if possible, to share it with Mrs. Casey.

I forgot, when we met, to ask you about the salt tax.¹ I trust you have not forgotten this humanitarian matter.

The first question that was put to me yesterday at the meeting with some friends was about prisoners. It was addressed by a woman. I do feel that your Government will be wholly wrong if they persist now in keeping in jail these prisoners, some of whom have broken down in health.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

1. See letters No. 197, 198 and 199.

Khadi Pratisthan,
Sodepur,
5th January 1946.

Dear Friend,

I have to thank you for the arrangements made by the officials for my travel to and stay in the Midnapore District.

The Superintendent of the Presidency Jail writes to me to say that Shri S. Bakshi would like to see me. I am therefore bound to see him. This will be only after my return from Assam. I wonder whether I could see at the same time the other prisoners who are there.

Shri Sudhir Ghosh tells me you would like to see me on Monday'next; I shall give myself the pleasure of doing so at 7.30 p.m. that day.

I must thank you too for the relief to the E. C. employees.¹

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

Government House,
Calcutta,
1st February 1946.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

I am sorry to add to your burdens by bombarding you with letters, but in the stress of cleaning up the office here, I am writing to you about the several matters that we have discussed as they mature.

This is just a note to say that I authorised the release during January of 41 of the security prisoners. About another 50 will be released during February. The process of release of all those that it is any way safe to release will be continued hereafter.

1. Reference is to some dismissed workers of Calcutta Electric Supply Company

The 25 lbs. weight of fine scoured Australian Merino wool arrived by air from Australia a few days ago—and I had it packed more securely and despatched straightaway to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur at her address in Simla.

Australia has given me 200 bales of wool (worth about a lakh of rupees) for the Indian Red Cross in Bengal. I believe this large quantity of wool is now on the water between Australia and here. It will be sold at cost price and distributed so far as possible to hand-spinners and weavers in this province—and the proceeds will go to the Indian Red Cross, which will concern itself in the future almost entirely (and after June 1946, entirely) with the big task of civil relief in Bengal.

I venture to enclose copy of a short broadcast that I made last night in this connection.

With best wishes to you,

• I'am,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Hindustani Nagar,
Madras.

204

Nature Cure Clinic,
6, Todiwala Road, Poona,
10th March 1946.

Dear Friend.

Your predecessor Mr. Casey purposely left for you a legacy and told me that you would have to deal yourself with the remaining political prisoners or detenus of Bengal.

I have no desire to worry you in the beginning stage of your career but the letter I have just received from important prisoners or detenus in Dum Dum Jail encourages me to do so. The letter speaks for itself.¹ I simply say by way of comment that it is a tragedy or, may I say, even a disgrace to keep these people in jail without trial, even on

1. See Appendix X.

suspicion however strong that may be. I plead for courageous wholesale release.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. Sir Frederick Burrows,
Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

205

Government House,
Calcutta,
16th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

This is just a short note to convey to you my respects and sincere good wishes. I have this morning had an interview with Sudhir Ghosh and I have explained to him in some detail the answers to some of the points raised by you in your letters to Mr. Casey arising out of your discussions.

I will write you shortly giving the up-to-date position in respect of the security prisoners, in answer to your letter to me.

* Sudhir will give you the position up to the end of March.

Yours very sincerely,
F. Burrows

206

Government House,
Calcutta,
19th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have explained verbally to Sudhir Ghosh, who saw me on Saturday, how the other matters are proceeding which you raised in your discussions with Mr. Casey, but as I feel that your chief interest lies in the matter which forms the subject of your letter to me of the 10th March I am writing to you about that.

In the matter of the detenus, to which your letter refers, I am pursuing the policy of my predecessor though I think I may fairly claim to have speeded things up especially when

account is taken of the fact that the persons still detained are those who have been regarded as the most dangerous. In the first fortnight of March, 61 detenus were released and the number still held in detention on the 15th March was 115: this figure will be substantially reduced by the end of the month.

Yours sincerely,
F. Burrows

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

207

Nature Cure Clinic,
6, Todiwala Road, Poona,
22nd March 1946.

Dear Friend,

I was delighted to receive your letter through Shri Sudhir Ghosh. He takes this letter to you and he will tell you all my thoughts about prisoners, salt, employees of Electric Corporation and Khadi.

With my regards to you and Lady Burrows,

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Governor of Bengal,
Calcutta.

(J) ABOUT DEMONSTRATION AT KRISHNAGAR COLLEGE

208

Government House,
Calcutta,
24th January 1946.

My dear Rajkumari,

Many thanks for your letter of January 19th with attached typed note signed by Mr. Smarajit Banerjee about Krishnagar.¹

The matters about which Mr. Banerjee writes are entirely unknown to me. My point is that my visit to the Krishnagar

1. Not to be found among Gandhiji's office records.

College was entirely quiet and was not attended by any demonstrations of any sort of which I was aware — other than a few shouts by small boys in the distance.

I drove into the college grounds by the normal route — and not by some side entrance as the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* said. The *shamiana*, so far as I could see, was entirely full. My impression was that about half of the seats were occupied by students.

As I told you, I do not regard the matter as of any importance at all — but, as a matter of fact, the report in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was completely misleading — but this is so frequently the case that it is not worth mentioning.¹

My wife and I were delighted at the opportunity of meeting you here in Calcutta — and also, I need hardly say, at the opportunity of meeting and having long talks with Mr. M. K. Gandhi. I feel that I have got to know him on a personal and friendly basis. I am still pursuing several of the matters that we discussed together while he was here.

The 25 lbs. weight of fine Australian Merino wool is on the way from Australia by air and I will send it on to your address at Simla as soon as it arrives.²

With good wishes to you from us both. Believe me,
Yours sincerely,
R. G. Casey

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

1. An acknowledgement for this letter was sent from Sevagram by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur on 9th February 1946. It ran: "All right, if you are satisfied."

2. See letters No. 195 and 203.

VI
CORRESPONDENCE WITH LORD WAVELL
& GOVERNOR OF BOMBAY ON FOOD
CRISIS : 1946

209

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
9th February 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

My Private Secretary has talked to Mr. Ghosh about the food situation, and Mr. Ghosh will explain it to you. I have just returned from a tour in the south of India, and in my view a great many lives may depend on the attitude of the political parties to such administrative steps as we may take to economise in foodgrains and make the necessary food available for the people in the drought affected areas.

If you can make the journey to Delhi I should very much like to talk to you about the whole question.

Time is important in this matter, and if you can make the journey at once I shall be most grateful.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

210

Sevagram,
10th February 1946.

Dear Friend,

Shri Sudhir Ghosh has handed me your kind note of 9th instant. You will believe me when I say that I would have responded to your invitation at once if I could have. But I have explained to our mutual friend physical and moral reasons for my inability. He will explain them fully to you and will also put before you my proposition. Of course I

shall be glad to meet any representative you may send.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Viceroy.

211

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
10th February 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I am sorry you are unwell after your Madras tour and hope a little rest will soon put you right.

You suggested that as you could not come to Delhi yourself I might send someone to you to discuss the food situation. I welcome the suggestion and am sending Abell. He knows my mind and will tell you what I would have said if we had had the opportunity of a discussion together.

I am asking Mr. Jinnah to see me here on the same subject as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

212

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
15th February 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

Thank you for your letter of 13th February.¹ H. E. was glad to see the good advice about the food situation contained in Mr. Gandhi's statement to the Press² and is most grateful. He is broadcasting himself tomorrow night.

2. Thank you also for the copy of the telegram about prohibition of export etc. We are already looking into all these points and if anything that can be used for food is being exported it seems probable that the export will be stopped at once, though I cannot be categorical on this point.

3. I am afraid I did not make my meaning quite clear over the telephone. What had been put out to the Press was

1. Not to be found among Gandhiji's office records.

2. See Appendix XI.

an official communique from New Delhi which had issued before I returned and had actually been broadcast at 6.30. That was why I rang you up. My telephone message to say nothing except that I had gone to Wardha to apprise Mr. Gandhi of the situation had been received but the reason for it had not been appreciated and rather more had been said than I expected. I think however that Mr. Gandhi will agree that no great harm was done. We managed to get something into the morning's papers simultaneously with the communique to show that Mr. Gandhi's health was satisfactory, but the communique itself could not be changed in view of the 6.30 broadcast.¹

4. I do hope that Mr. Gandhi will feel able to continue his efforts to further our common cause in regard to the food situation.

5. The cuts in consumption of wheat and rice and their products here are so drastic that I feel hungry most of the day!

With good wishes from us both,

Yours sincerely,
George Abell

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

213

Nature Cure Clinic,
6, Todiwala Road, Poona,
21st February 1946.

Dear Mr. Abell,

Here are a few more suggestions to meet the food situation which have been sent me by friends.

The Indian Army should be given this unique opportunity of doing constructive work. They can be moved about easily. They could therefore be sent to all such places where wells need to be dug most urgently.

1. The official communique was to the effect that Gandhiji was "Unfortunately not well enough to travel" and so the Private Secretary to the Viceroy went to see him at Sevagram. But in the para in the Press containing the communique in question, Mr. Abell was at the same time reported to have said on his return that Gandhiji "is in good health but is a bit tired due to strain of his recent long tour of the country."

Regarding additional foods, fish has been mentioned. Fish abounds in the seas around the coast of India. The war is over, there are innumerable small and medium-sized vessels which were used for doing patrol and guard duties along our shores for the last five years. The R. I. N. could arrange about staffing these, with the Department of Fisheries giving all assistance. If everything and anything can be done during a war — why not a peace time war effort? Dry fish does even now form part of the normal diet of a great number of people who are very poor — that is when it is available and they can afford to buy it.

All public gardens should immediately by law be made to start growing vegetables. Squads of army personnel should be put to work here too. People requiring extra labour to transform their ground or garden should also be able to obtain free help through this channel.

The distribution of food should be through Cooperative Societies or similar organizations.

All food parcels to friends or relatives in Britain or elsewhere abroad should be stopped as also the export of ground-nuts, oils, oilcakes, etc.

All stocks of foodstuffs in the hands of the military should be released forthwith and no distinction should be made between military and civil ranks. In this connection I draw His Excellency's attention to the following A. P. I. message published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 11-2-'46:—

It is learnt that huge quantities of decomposed *atta* are being destroyed for the last few days by throwing them into the river Shitalaksha at Narayanganj.

The campaign against despondency and for growing more food will avail nothing, unless bribery which is going on as never before is stopped and honesty and straight dealing begin to pervade the Government ranks and the public.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.,
Private Secretary to H. E. the Viceroy,
The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
26th February 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter of the 21st February making suggestions to meet the food situation. His Excellency, to whom I have shown your letter, is grateful to you for writing, and will have the various proposals examined where this has not been done already.

2. Only a day or two ago His Excellency suggested to the Commander-in-Chief that it might be possible for the R. I. N. to assist with fishing. Recent events may make this difficult,¹ but meanwhile His Excellency has initiated enquiries about the possibility of importing dried fish, from Canada and Newfoundland, and also about the securing of suitable vessels and equipment so as to make a start with developing on modern lines the fisheries industry. Already the Army is doing a good deal in the Grow More Food campaign and is releasing machinery for digging wells, levelling ground, etc.

3. In Delhi a considerable part of the Central Vista is to be ploughed up and the gardens of bungalows are to be used for growing vegetables on a larger scale. The sending of food parcels to friends or relatives outside India has been ordered to be stopped and an urgent examination is being undertaken of the question of exporting groundnuts, oilcakes etc.

4. Bribery and corruption is admitted to be one of the worst enemies of efficient food administration. This is also one of the most difficult to defeat. The detailed implementing of the controls is mainly in the hands of Provincial Governments, and perhaps the new Ministries may be able to achieve results in this direction.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

1. This refers to the mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy. See *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase*, Vol. I, pages 172-74.

215

TELEGRAM

Poona,
4th March 1946.

P. S. V.
New Delhi.

Thanks letter. May I publish mine and your reply?
Gandhi

216

TELEGRAM

New Delhi,
5th March 1946.

Mr. Gandhi,
Nature Cure Clinic,
6 Todiwala Road, Poona.

No objection to publication of your letter of 21st February and my reply of 26th February.

P. S. V.

217

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
24th April 1946.

My Dear Sudhir,

Many thanks for your note of today.¹ My wife and I much look forward to having supper with you on Friday.

The answer to Gandhiji's query about the land ploughed up on either side of Kingsway is that it is advisable after

1. Not to be found among Gandhiji's office records. The facts relating to this incident however are as follows. On his arrival in Delhi to meet the members of the Cabinet Mission in April, 1946, Gandhiji, while returning from his visit to one of the members of the Mission, noticed that while the grounds on either side of Kingsway had been ploughed up apparently a considerable time before, nothing further had been done. Apprehending that this might be the result of the usual departmental tardiness, he asked Sudhir Ghosh, who was walking along with him, to draw the attention of the Viceroy's Private Secretary to what they had seen. This Sudhir Ghosh did in the note in question.

ploughing grassland to turn up the roots and let them dry out and rot. I do not know for certain but I expect that it is intended to grow maize on the Vista, and it is certainly wise to leave the ground in its present stage for another month or so. The same is being done in my garden.

Yours sincerely,
George Abell

Sudhir Ghosh, Esq.

218

Poona,
22nd February 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

In continuation of his letter to you of yesterday's date,¹ Gandhiji wishes me to bring to your notice the following information which has been given him:

- (a) The Managing Director of the New Dholera Steamships Ltd., Bombay, says that one of their boats went out last week with 2951 sacks of a pulse called "moong".
- (b) The steamers "Begam" and "Jalajyoti" last month carried to Colombo 35,000 bags of pulses; "moong", "tur" and "lang" *dals* on the "Begam" were 1,612, 3,011 and 26,053 bags respectively. The writer says this is done monthly.
- (c) The attached cutting refers to the very large quantities of rice exported as late as September last.²

Thanks for yours of the 15th instant.³ Gandhiji quite understood about the Government communique to the Press.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.

1. See letter No. 213.

2. The report was to the effect that during the month of July, August, and September, 1945, 22,504 tons of rice valued at over Rs. 94 lakhs was exported from Calcutta port by one single firm.

3. See letter No. 212.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
25th February 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

Thank you for your letter of the 22nd February. I am sending on to the Food Department the cutting about the alleged export of rice in July, August and September 1945. I do not know what the facts are about this.

2. As regards pulses the position is that we have been exporting 3,000 tons of pulses per month to Ceylon. Ceylon is, as you know, extremely hard up for food and their ration for some time has been only 4 lbs. a week against our 7 lbs. until recently. The export of these pulses has now been stopped though the result will be a very serious situation for Ceylon.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

Poona,
3rd March 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

I am desired by Gandhiji to thank you for your letter of the 25th ultimo and for the information contained therein regarding the export of pulses.

May I also thank you for the enquiries regarding Miss Lester's passage.¹ I understand the difficulty and am writing to her.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.

1. The letter in question not to be found among Gandhiji's office records. Miss Muriel Lester of Kingsley Hall, East End, London; a friend of Gandhiji and of the Indian freedom struggle was having some difficulty in obtaining a passage to come to India. She was able to come later and visited Noakhali in East Bengal after the communal outbreak and sent Gandhiji an illuminating report about the conditions there. See *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase* (Vol. I, pages 296 and 317)

Nature Cure Clinic,
6, Todiwala Road, Poona,
25th February 1946.

My dear Mr. Abell,

A correspondent from Nellore writes:—

“Rationing is being conducted according to classes. “A” class will be given rice, “B” rice and wheat, “C” rice and ragi. “A” class includes all Government servants including peons and the higher gentry. “B” applies to the middle class and “C” is for labour.

“Since this is a purely rice growing area no one is used to eating anything but rice. Please advice abolition of classes and equal distribution of whatever is available to all. This question will be common to all the delta areas, — Bezwada, Rajamundry etc. There is great feeling about this and if an early settlement is not reached there may even be riots.”

If what the correspondent says is true, it would appear to be a just grievance needing immediate redress. If it is false, an authoritative contradiction should be published.

The message was sent to Gandhiji for publication but he preferred first to send it to His Excellency.

Kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
21st March 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

You wrote to me on the 25th of February about the food rationing system in Madras. I am sorry for the delay

in replying, but I have been finding out what the facts are. As I expected there is no preferential treatment by classes for rationing purposes. There was at one time a classification of persons as rice eaters, millet eaters and mixed diet eaters according to dietetic habits, but this system is in abeyance at present and all card holders can take their ration in rice, wheat or millets in any proportion they like.

2. I hope you will pass this on to Mr. Gandhi. There does not appear to be any widespread misunderstanding on this subject but if a contradiction seems to the Madras Government to be desirable one will be put out.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur,
Lady Irwin College,
New Delhi.

223

Government House,
Bombay,
13th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

The Viceroy's Private Secretary, Mr. Abell is flying to Bombay today with an important message to you from the Viceroy in connection with the food situation.

He would very much like to meet you today if possible, and failing that tomorrow morning. He will not arrive before this evening, and any time from 6 p.m. on would suit him for the meeting.

I am sending this letter through R. B. Desai. Would you very kindly send me a reply through him? Presumably the meeting will be at Birla House. Any place will suit Mr. Abell.¹

Yours sincerely,
J. S. Drewe

1. A reply was sent to the effect that Gandhiji would be glad to see Mr. Abell at 8 p. m.

224

Government House,
Bombay,
13th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you very much for your letter. When Mr. Abell arrives this evening I shall ask him to see you at 8 p.m. at Birla House.

Yours sincerely,
J. S. Drewe

225

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
13th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I am sending my Private Secretary, Mr. Abell, to discuss with you a proposal to deal with the food crisis, to which I hope you will give your most earnest consideration. We all have the same object, to prevent suffering from famine by the people of India; and I am sure you will agree that the closest collaboration on the part of leaders is essential.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

226

Bombay,
14th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Abell,

Although you said I need not put down anything in writing and I gladly accepted the dispensation, I thought when I had slept over the conversation, that I ought not to be lazy and should reduce to writing the propositions we discussed. Here is the Memo containing them which I hope I have correctly remembered.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

149

[ENCLOSURE TO THE ABOVE]

I understand H. E.'s proposal to be this: "He as President and Q. A. Jinnah, possibly Nawabsaheb of Bhopal and I should control and regulate food situation." I told you that the situation created by the acceptance of the proposal would be unreal and therefore defeat the purpose in view. Then you asked whether I could see the possibility of Maulana A. K. Azad being invited to work with me assisting him. I said there might be a possibility in it, I being regarded as an expert in such matters. But I added that everything else without an executive of elected representatives was tinkering with the serious situation involving the fate of millions of hunger stricken villagers.

M. K. Gandhi

227

Government House,
Bombay,
14th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter which Mr. Pyarelal has handed to me.

I have explained to him that my own summary of what was said last night would differ a little from yours, and I have indicated roughly in what ways it would differ.

I feel sure however that H. E. would prefer that we should not commit ourselves to writing on this subject because of the danger of its leading at some stage or other to recriminations. As suggested last night, I believe H. E. would probably think "the less said the better". I will however report to him today, and though he will be disappointed I will make clear to him the reasons you gave for being unable to accept the proposal.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

Bombay,
14th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Abell,

Many thanks for your kind note. The reason for my putting in writing my impression of our talk was only to guard against any misunderstanding about the position. I would not like to put you or me in any false position and certainly not H. E. As it is you will agree with me that it was good I wrote out my own understanding of the message you had brought me. Of course I have no intention of publishing anything. I have to say something to the Working Committee in a general way, nothing to the Press.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

Government House,
Bombay,
14th March 1946.

Dear Sir,

I had a telephone conversation with the Rajkumari about getting a letter from Mr. Gandhi to Mr. Abell, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, by air.

I am afraid this is not possible as the Viceroy leaves Jaipur this evening for Alwar and there is no air service to Alwar. A letter sent off early this afternoon direct by you (marked "express" for safety) will reach Alwar on the 16th morning. It may be addressed to the Viceroy's Camp, Alwar, Rajputana.

Yours sincerely,
J. S. Drewe

Government House,
Bombay,
15th March 1946.

Dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

Thank you for your letter of the 14th of March, enclosing a letter from Mr. Gandhi for Mr. Abell,¹ which seems to have crossed my letter informing you that there is no Air Mail service to Alwar.

To save time, I have sent on Mr. Gandhi's letter to Mr. Abell by express letter post. It should reach him tomorrow morning.

Yours sincerely,
J. S. Drewe

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur,
Birla House,
Bombay.

Nature Cure Clinic,
6, Todiwala Road, Poona,
1st March 1946.

The Private Secretary to the
Governor of Bombay,
Bombay.

Dear Sir,

A correspondent writing to *Harijan* suggests, among other things, that I should approach the Government of Bombay to use the vast grounds of Ganeshkhind for growing edibles and use the latter for the needy. I cannot help thinking that this is a wise suggestion and if adopted wholeheartedly by His Excellency, it is likely to be fruitful of astonishing results.

Yours truly,
M. K. Gandhi

1. See letter No. 228

Government House,
Bombay,
5th March 1946.

Dear Sir,

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter of the 1st with regard to the cultivation of the Government House grounds at Ganeshkhind. A reply will be sent to you shortly.

Yours truly,
J. S. Drewe

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

Government House,
Bombay,
9th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Your letter of the 1st with regard to cultivation of food crops in the grounds of Government House, Ganeshkhind.

A considerable area of the grounds has been brought under cultivation in the last few years, and a great deal of the remaining area grows grass for fodder. Some of the land is very poor in quality. His Excellency has recently asked the Agricultural Department to carry out a survey of the lands which are not being put under crops to see to what area cultivation can advantageously be extended.

His Excellency hopes that he will have the opportunity of taking you round the grounds when he is in residence at Ganeshkhind to show you what has been done.

Yours sincerely,
J. S. Drewe

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

Birla House,
Bombay,
13th March 1946.

Dear Mr. Drewe,

I am desired by Gandhiji to thank you for your letter of the 9th instant in reply to his of the 1st. He will look forward to the opportunity of seeing the grounds of Ganeshkhind one day with His Excellency.

Yours sincerely,
Amrit Kaur

J. S. Drewe, Esq., I.C.S.
Private Secretary to H. E. the Governor of Bombay,
Government House,
Bombay.

VII
CORRESPONDENCE WITH LORD WAVELL, LORD
PETHICK-LAWRENCE AND GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA ABOUT ABOLITION OF
SALT TAX : 1946-47

235

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
11th March 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

Thank you for your letter of the 6th March.¹ His Excellency will take advice on the proposal that the restrictions on the private manufacture and sale of salt should be removed, but he doubts whether it will be possible to accept the suggestion.

Yours sincerely,
George Abell

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

P.S. Penderel Moon² has been offered, and has accepted, a post in Planning and Development Department.

236

The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi,
1st April 1946.

My dear Rajkumari Sahiba,

I can now reply to your letter of the 6th March about salt.

2. Mr. Gandhi's suggestion that all restrictions on private manufacture should be removed has been examined,

1. Not to be found among Gandhiji's office records.

2. Penderel Moon, I. C. S., was the Deputy Commissioner of Simla in 1942. He was dismissed for expressing his disapproval over the arrest of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur in a private letter which was intercepted by the war-time censor.

and I am afraid that the doubt expressed in my intermediate reply of the 11th March has proved justified. I need not go into the arguments on either side, which have often been debated and are well known. Government do not find themselves able to accept the suggestion.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

237

Valmiki Mandir,
Reading Road, New Delhi,
2nd April 1946.

Dear Lord Lawrence,

Our mutual friend Sudhir Ghosh tells me that you would like me to reduce to writing the points I told him to discuss informally with you and Sir Stafford.

One is universal among all independence-minded people as distinguished from the dumb millions, whether Congressmen or other. It is the immediate release of *political* prisoners irrespective of the charge of violence or non-violence. They cannot be a danger to the State *now* that the necessity for independence has become common cause. It seems to be ridiculous to keep, say Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Lohia, both learned and cultured men of whom any society would be proud, nor is there any occasion for treating any person as an underground worker. To leave the question of discharge for disposal by the incoming national Government would be a step no one will understand or appreciate. Independence will lose its grace.

The other affects the masses. I refer to the salt tax. As a means of raising revenue, it is insignificant. As a means of harassing the masses, it is a measure of which the mischief is indescribable. The masses will hardly appreciate independence if the burden of the salt monopoly continues to afflict them. I must not weary you with argument. I mention the two measures as a preparation of the Indian mind for independence. They will produce a psychological effect.

I may mention that I discussed both the measures in a different setting with Mr. Casey¹ and I am now in correspondence with the present Governor of Bengal. I may add that I have today heard from Mr. Abell in regard to the salt tax that "the Government do not find themselves able to accept the suggestion."

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

The Rt. Hon'ble Lord Pethick Lawrence,
Secretary of State for India,
New Delhi.

238

Valmiki Mandir,
Reading Road, New Delhi,
6th April 1946.

Dear Friend,

I write this about two things that I discussed before the Cabinet Delegation on the 3rd instant.

Sir Archibald Rowlands was with me last night in order to have a talk with me about the salt tax. At the conclusion of our talk he was frank enough to tell me that had he met me three months ago the tax would have been abolished.² I omit the rest of our important conversation in order to make my letter as brief as possible. Regard being had to the admission I sent to Sir Archibald Rowlands, Shri Sudhir Ghosh whom he knows well to have further talks with him. He now contemplates abolition within three

1. See letter Nos. 197, 198 and 199.

2. Sir Archibald was the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. In the course of their conversation Sir Archibald Rowlands while admitting to Gandhiji that he had been converted to the proposition for the abolition of the salt tax, seemed to favour the retention of the salt monopoly by the Government even after the salt tax was abolished. Gandhiji felt that this would largely defeat the end in view. In compliance with Sir Archibald's request, he sent him a draft of a proclamation announcing the termination of the levying of the salt tax and a note on the proposed proclamation. See Appendix XII (a) and XII (b).

months or so. I know that nothing can be done by a single official, however strong or able he may be, unless he is supported by his superiors. And so I invoke your assistance in this humanitarian work. But more even than that is the consideration that I put before the Cabinet Delegation, viz. that independence should be ushered in with the greatest good grace which the poorest villager in the remotest village can at once realise. More of this you can glean from Sudhir Babu if you feel inclined and can spare the time. He is carrying this note.

About prisoners I will not say anything as I understand that their release is imminent.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Viceroy.

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Valmiki Mandir,
8th April 1946.

Dear Mr. Abell,

I feel that I have not got across to H. E. my innermost thoughts on the matter covered by my letter of day before yesterday's date. I would love to see him if he can spare me a few minutes from his busy time. Will you please let me know if H. E. can and if yes when?

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.

240

Chadwick,
Simla West,
3rd May 1946.

Dear Mr. Abell,

Salt is not off my brain. For the sake of English honour I say that there should not be a day's delay about the abolition of this monopoly.

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It is to impress upon H. E. what the monopoly has meant that I enclose herewith an additional note prepared by Shri Pyarelal.¹

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi.

G. E. B. Abell, Esq.,
Simla.

241

Viceroy's Camp, India,
Simla,
6th May 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter of the 3rd May about the salt tax, and for the note by Mr. Pyarelal.

2. H. E. has personally studied the problem since you first mentioned it to him, but is not in a position to anticipate the results of the enquiry which is taking place. He realises how deeply interested you are in the matter, but feels that he must make a full examination of the consequences which would follow any abolition of the tax, and might bear heavily on any new Government.

Yours sincerely,
G. E. B. Abell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

242

Viceroy's Camp, India,
(Simla),
10th May 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

The Finance Member reports to me that rumours about a possible reduction or abolition of the salt duty are almost certain to cause a salt famine in certain areas unless immediate steps are taken to prevent it. Merchants and wholesale dealers are abstaining from placing orders with the salt manufacturers lest they be caught with large stocks on

¹ See Appendix XIII.

which they have paid duty, but which they may be able to sell only at a lower duty-free rate. Strong representations have been received from the Bombay salt merchants and Shilotries Association on the subject.

2. To prevent a salt famine, which would of course be a serious matter for the poor, Government propose to put out a Press Note of which I enclose a copy.

3. I am sure you will appreciate that we cannot avoid taking this action.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

[ENCLOSURE TO THE ABOVE]

PRESS NOTE

Complaints have been received by Government that rumours to the effect that the salt duty may be reduced or abolished have sown doubt and uncertainty in the mind of traders and manufacturers to such an extent as to discourage the purchase of salt, thereby hampering trade and slowing down manufacture and, in view of the present chronic transport difficulties and of the further difficulty of transporting this commodity during the wet months, entailing serious risk of a salt famine in upcountry areas. To obviate these risks, Government desires to make clear that any change would only be made after a full and comprehensive investigation which would necessarily take considerable time, and that ample notice would be given in order to permit the disposal of duty-paid stocks.

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Chadwick,
Simla West,
11th May 1946.

Dear Friend,

I thank you for your letter of 10th instant about salt.

This is a fine instance of how the irresponsible mind works. You were good enough to tell me last Monday when I was silent that the British did not care for credit. When my silence was broken, the Cabinet Mission had come and we

plunged into high politics. The corollary to your dictum seems to be that the British would not mind the discredit of any action.

In my opinion the notice you have been good enough to send me is a discreditable affair. The only straight answer from my mind which thinks ever of the masses and is responsible and responsive to them, would be to abolish the hateful monopoly and tax especially in these days of famine. But according to you this simple act of justice must be left to be done by your successor, the independent Government of India, whenever it comes into being.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. the Viceroy.

244

Viceroy's Camp, India,
(Simla),
11th May 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Thank you for your letter about the salt tax. If you would care to discuss this matter I should be very glad to talk to you about it. I wonder if you are free at 7 o'clock this evening.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

245

Viceroy's Camp, India,
(Simla),
12th May 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

As a result of my talk with you I have arranged that the communique about the salt tax should be held up. The Finance Member will inform the trade organizations who have complained that there is no prospect of the salt tax

being immediately abolished, and that they will receive reasonable warning of any such action. He hopes that this may ensure that adequate stocks of salt will still be available.

Yours sincerely,
Wavell

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

246

Simla,
14th May 1946.

Dear Friend,

I have to thank you for your letter of 12th instant and for withholding the notice about salt.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. E. The Viceroy.

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Valmiki Mandir,
Reading Road, New Delhi,
25th September 1946.

Dear Mr. Greenfield,

Herewith is my proposal as promised. In it I have endeavoured to minimise all dislocation and loss to the Government save what abolition of the tax must involve. But while salt will no longer be a dutiable article, as a source of national instruction, refining a vital food adjunct of all dirt and increasing its output for man and beast will continue and make increasing progress from day to day. I hug the hope that loss of revenue as a burdensome tax will be more than made up by increase in the consumption of salt.

If you discover any flaw in this presentation, please tell me without the slightest hesitation.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

H. Greenfield, Esq., C. S. I., C. I. E.

[ENCLOSURE TO FOREGOING]

Salt monopoly shall cease as from the first day of October 1946, and the duty on salt as from the first day of January 1947, subject to the exceptions and conditions hereinafter set forth.

The humanitarian clause¹ on salt of the agreement popularly known as Irwin-Gandhi Pact shall be in full operation and all inspection of and interference with private manufacture of salt for evasion of duty shall forthwith cease.

Government control of salt works and factories hitherto maintained shall continue unabated till complete nationalisation of salt industry is attained. These factories and works unlike private manufacture for sale shall carry duty up to 31st December.

In order to give full effect to the foregoing notification, any change in the Salt Act or rules or notices issued thereunder and required in law shall be made as soon as practicable but without interference with full effect being given to the foregoing notification.

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Central Board of Revenue,
New Delhi,
25th September 1946.

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Very many thanks for your letter of today's date and its enclosure.

I have already been discussing this matter with the Hon'ble the Finance Member and you may be sure that we shall study your proposal with great care.

Yours sincerely,
H. Greenfield

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,
Valmiki Mandir,
Reading Road,
New Delhi.

1. See footnote No. 2 on page 129.