



of the 'untouchables' in India. It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever.

"I do not mind the 'untouchables' being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are these two divisions set up in every village. Those who speak of political rights of 'untouchables' do not know India and do not know how Indian society is today constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing, I will resist it with my life."

GANDHI-HOARE-MACDONALD CORRESPONDENCE

GANDHI'S LETTER TO SIR SAMUEL HOARE

Yeravada Central Prison.

March 11, 1932.

"Dear Sir Samuel,

You will perhaps recollect that at the end of my speech at the Round Table Conference when the minorities' claim was presented, I had said that I should resist with my life the grant of separate electorate to the depressed classes. This was not said in the heat of the moment nor by way of rhetoric. It was meant to be a serious statement. In pursuance of that statement I had hoped on my return to India to mobilize public opinion against separate electorate, at any rate for depressed classes. But it was not to be.

"From the newspapers I am permitted to read, I observe that any moment His Majesty's Government may declare their decision. At first I had thought, if the decision was found to create separate electorate for the depressed classes, I should take such steps as I might then consider necessary to give effect to my vow. But I feel it would be unfair to the British Government for me to act without giving previous notice. Naturally, they could not attach the significance I give to my statement.

SEPARATE ELECTORATES HARMFUL

"I need hardly reiterate all the objections I have to the creation of separate electorates for the depressed classes. I feel as if I was one of them. Their case stands on a wholly different footing from that of others. I am not against their representation in the legislatures. I should favour every one of their adults, male and female, being registered as voters irrespective of education or property qualification, even though the franchise may be stricter for others. But I hold that separate electorate is harmful for them and for Hinduism, whatever it may be from the purely political standpoint. To appreciate the harm that separate electorates would do them, one has to know how they are distributed amongst the so-called caste Hindus and how dependent they are on the latter. So far as Hinduism is concerned, separate electorates would simply vivisect and disrupt it.

"For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue.

"You will have to appreciate my feelings in this matter by remembering that I have been interested in the condition of these classes from my boyhood and have more than once staked my all for their sake. I say this not to pride myself in any way. Now I feel that no penance that the Hindu may do can in any way compensate for the calculated degradation to which they have consigned the depressed classes for centuries.

'SHALL FAST UNTO DEATH'

"But I know that separate electorate is neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the depressed classes, I must fast unto death.

"I am painfully conscious of the fact that such a step, whilst I am a prisoner, must cause grave embarrassment to His Majesty's Government, and it will be regarded by many as highly improper on the part of one holding my position to introduce into the political field methods which they would describe as hysterical if not much worse. All I can urge in defence is that for me the contemplated step is not a method, it is part of my being. It is the call of conscience which I dare not disobey, even though it may cost whatever reputation for sanity I may possess. So far as I can see now, my discharge from imprisonment would not make the duty of fasting any the less imperative. I am hoping, however, all my fears are wholly unjustified and the British Government have no intention whatever of creating separate electorate for the depressed classes.

GOVERNMENT TERRORISM

"It is, perhaps, as well for me to refer to another matter that is agitating me and may also enforce a similar fast. It is the way that repression is going. I have no notion when I may receive a shock that would compel the sacrifice. Repression appears to me to be crossing what might be called legitimate bounds. A governmental terrorism is spreading through the land. Both English and Indian officials are being brutalized. The latter, high and low, are becoming demoralized by reason of Government regarding as meritorious disloyalty to the people and inhuman conduct towards their own kith and kin. The latter are becoming cowed down. Free speech has been stifled. Goondaism is being practised in the name of Law and Order. Women, who have come out for public service, stand in fear of their honour being insulted.

"And all this, as it seems to me, is being done in order to crush the spirit of freedom which the Congress represents. Repression is not confined to punishing civil breaches of common law. It goads people to break newly made orders of autocracy designed for the most part to humiliate them.



"In all these doings, as I read them, I see no spirit of democracy. Indeed, my recent visit to England has confirmed my opinion that your democracy is a superficial, circumscribed thing. In the weightiest matters decisions are taken by individuals or groups without any reference to Parliament, and these have been ratified by members having but a vague notion of what they were doing. Such was the case with Egypt, the war of 1914, and such is the case with India. My whole being rebels against the idea that, in a system called democratic, one man should have unfettered power of affecting the destiny of an ancient people numbering over three hundred millions and that his decisions can be enforced by mobilizing the most terrible forces of destruction. To me this is a negation of democracy.

AN ARTICLE OF FAITH

"And this repression cannot be prolonged without further embittering the already bitter relations between the two peoples. In so far as I am responsible and can help it, how am I to arrest the process? Not by stopping Civil Disobedience. For me it is an article of faith. I regard myself by nature a democrat. The democracy of my conception is wholly inconsistent with the use of physical force for enforcing its will. Civil resistance, therefore, has been conceived to be a proper substitute for physical force, to be used wherever generally the latter is held to be necessary or justifiable. It is a process of self-suffering, and part of the plan is that in given circumstances a civil resister must sacrifice himself even by fasting to a finish. That moment has not yet arrived for me. I have no undeniable call from within for such a step. But events happening outside are alarming enough to agitate my fundamental being. Therefore, in writing to you about the possibility of a fast regarding the depressed classes, I felt I would be untrue to you if I did not tell you that there was another possibility, not remote, of such a fast.

"Needless to say, from my side absolute secrecy has been maintained about all the correspondence I have carried on with you. Of course, Sirdar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai, who have just been sent to join us, know all about it. But you will no doubt make whatever use you wish of this letter.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi."

SIR SAMUEL HOARE'S REPLY

India Office, Whitehall,
April 13, 1932.

"Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I write this in answer to your letter of 11th March, and I say at once I realize fully the strength of your feeling upon the question of separate electorates for the depressed classes. I can only say that we intend to give any decision that may be necessary solely and only

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upon the merits of the case. As you are aware, Lord Lothian's Committee has not yet completed its tour and it must be some weeks before we can receive any conclusions at which it may have arrived. When we receive that report we shall have to give most careful consideration to its recommendations, and we shall not give a decision until we have taken into account, in addition to the view expressed by the Committee, the views that you and those who think with you have so forcibly expressed. I feel sure if you were in our position you would be taking exactly the same action we intend to take. You would await the Committee's report, you would then give it your fullest consideration, and before arriving at a final decision you would take into account the views that have been expressed on both sides of the controversy. More than this I cannot say. Indeed I do not imagine you would expect me to say more.

TERRORISM NECESSARY

"As to the Ordinances, I can only repeat what I have already said both publicly and privately. I am convinced that it was essential to impose them in the face of the deliberate attack upon the very foundations of ordered Government. I am also convinced that both the Government of India and the Local Governments are not abusing their extensive powers and are doing everything possible to prevent excessive or vindictive action. We shall not keep the emergency measures in force any longer than we are obliged to, for the purpose of maintaining the essentials of Law and Order and protecting our officials and other classes of the community against terrorist outrages.

Yours truly,
(Sd.) Samuel Hoare"

GANDHI'S LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER

Yeravada Central Prison,
August 18, 1932

"Dear Friend,

There can be no doubt that Sir Samuel Hoare has showed you and the Cabinet my letter to him of 11th March on the question of the representation of the depressed classes. That letter should be treated as part of this letter and be read together with this.

DECISION TO FAST

"I have read the British Government's decision on the representation of minorities and have slept over it. In pursuance of my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare and my declaration at the meeting of the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference on 13th November, 1931, at St. James' Palace, I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind, save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision



and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the depressed classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise, no matter how wide it is.

"The proposed fast will come into operation in the ordinary course from the noon of 20th September next, unless the said decision is meanwhile revised in the manner suggested above.

"I am asking the authorities here to cable the text of this letter to you so as to give you ample notice. But, in any case, I am leaving sufficient time for this letter to reach you in time by the slowest route.

"I also ask that this letter and my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, already referred to, be published at the earliest possible moment. On my part, I have scrupulously observed the rules of the jail and have communicated my desire or the contents of the two letters to no one, save my two companions, Sirdar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mr. Mahadev Desai. But I want, if you make it possible, public opinion to be affected by my letters. Hence my request for their early publication.

"NOT TO COMPASS RELEASE"

"I regret the decision I have taken. But as a man of religion that I hold myself to be, I have no other course left open to me. As I have said in my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, even if His Majesty's Government decided to release me in order to save themselves embarrassment, my fast will have to continue. For, I cannot now hope to resist the decision by any other means. And I have no desire whatsoever to compass my release by any means other than honourable.

"It may be that my judgment is warped and that I am wholly in error regarding separate electorates for the depressed classes as harmful to them or to Hinduism. If so, I am not likely to be in the right with reference to other part of my philosophy of life. In that case my death by fasting will be at once a penance for my error and a lifting of a weight from off those numberless men and women who have children's faith in my wisdom. Whereas, if my judgment is right, as I have little doubt it is, the contemplated step is but due to the fulfilment of the scheme of life which I have tried for more than a quarter of a century, apparently not without considerable success.

I remain,
Your faithful friend,
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi"

PREMIER'S REPLY

10, Downing Street.
September 8, 1932.

"Dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have received your letter with much surprise and, let me add, with very sincere regret. Moreover, I cannot help thinking that you have written it under a misunderstanding as to what the decision of His Majesty's Government as regards the depressed classes really

implies. We have always understood you were irrevocably opposed to the permanent segregation of the depressed classes from the Hindu community. You made your position very clear in the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference and you expressed it again in the letter you wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare on 11th March. We also know your view was shared by the great body of Hindu opinion, and we, therefore, took it into most careful account when we were considering the question of representation of the depressed classes.

'GOVERNMENT DECISION EXPLAINED'

"Whilst, in view of the numerous appeals we have received from depressed class organisations and the generally admitted social disabilities under which they labour and which you have often recognised, we feel it our duty to safeguard what we believed to be the right of the depressed classes to a fair proportion of representation in the Legislatures, we were equally careful to do nothing that would split off their community from the Hindu world. You yourself stated in your letter of March 11, that you were not against their representation in the Legislatures.

"Under the Government scheme the depressed classes will remain part of the Hindu community and will vote with the Hindu electorate on an equal footing, but for the first twenty years, while still remaining electorally part of the Hindu community, they will receive, through a limited number of special constituencies, means of safeguarding their rights and interests that, we are convinced, is necessary under present conditions.

"Where these constituencies are created, members of the depressed classes will not be deprived of their votes in the general Hindu constituencies, but will have two votes in order that their membership of the Hindu community should remain unimpaired.

"We have deliberately decided against the creation of what you describe as a communal electorate for the depressed class voters in the general or Hindu constituencies so that the higher caste candidates should have to solicit their votes and they of the higher castes at elections. Thus in every way was the unity of Hindu society preserved.

'SAFEGUARDS TEMPORARY'

"We felt, however that during the early period of Responsible Government when power in the Provinces would pass to whoever possessed a majority in the Legislatures, it was essential that the depressed classes, whom you have yourself described in your letter to Sir Samuel Hoare as having been consigned by caste Hindus to calculated degradation, for centuries, should return a certain number of members of their own choosing to Legislatures of seven of the nine Provinces, to voice their grievances and their ideals and prevent decisions going against them without the Legislature and the Government listening to their case, in a word, to place them in a position to speak for themselves, which every fair-minded person must agree to be necessary. We did not consider the method of electing special re-



representatives, by reservation of seats in the existing conditions under any system of franchise which is practicable, of members who could genuinely represent them and be responsible for them, because, in practically all cases, such members would be elected by a majority consisting of higher caste Hindus.

"The special advantage initially given under our scheme to the depressed classes, by means of a limited number of special constituencies in addition to their normal electoral rights in the general Hindu constituencies, is wholly different in conception and effect from the method of representation adopted for a minority such as the Muslims by means of separate communal electorates. For example, a Muslim cannot vote or be a candidate in a general constituency, whereas any electorally qualified member of the depressed classes can vote in and stand for the general constituency.

'RESERVATION MINIMUM'

"The number of territorial seats allotted to Muslims is naturally conditioned by the fact that it is impossible for them to gain any further territorial seats, and in most Provinces they enjoy weightage in excess of their population ratio; the number of special seats to be filled from special depressed class constituencies will be seen to be small, and has been fixed not to provide a quota numerically appropriate for the total representation of the whole of the depressed class population, but solely to secure a minimum number of spokesmen for the depressed classes in the Legislature who are chosen exclusively by the depressed classes. The proportion of their special seats is everywhere much below the population percentage of the depressed classes.

"As I understand your attitude, you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the depressed classes should have joint electorates with other Hindus, because that is already provided, nor to maintain the unity of Hindus, which is also provided, but solely to prevent the depressed classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities to-day, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the Legislatures which will have a dominating influence over their future.

"In the light of these very fair and cautious proposals, I am quite unable to understand the reason of the decision you have taken and can only think you have made it under a misapprehension of the actual facts.

'GOVERNMENT DECISION STANDS'

"In response to a very general request from Indians, after they had failed to produce a settlement themselves, the Government, much against its will, undertook to give a decision on the minorities question. They have now given it, and they cannot be expected to alter it except on the conditions they have stated. I am afraid, therefore, that my answer to you must be that the Government's decision stands

and that only agreement of the communities themselves can substitute other electoral arrangements for those that Government have devised in a sincere endeavour to weigh the conflicting claims on their just merits.

"You ask that this correspondence, including your letter to Sir Samuel Hoare of March 11th, should be published. As it would seem to be unfair if your present internment were to deprive you of the opportunity of explaining to the public the reason why you intend to fast, I readily accede to the request if, on reconsideration, you repeat it. Let me, however, once again urge you to consider the actual details of Government's decision and ask yourself seriously the question whether it really justifies you in taking the action you contemplate.

I am,

Yours very sincerely,

(Sd.) J. Ramsay MacDonald."

FINAL REPLY OF GANDHIJI

Yeravada Central Prison,
September 9th, 1932.

"Dear Friend,

I have to thank you for your frank and full letter telegraphed and received this day. I am sorry, however, that you put upon the contemplated step an interpretation that never crossed my mind. I have claimed to speak on behalf of the very class, to sacrifice whose interests you impute to me a desire to fast myself to death. I had hoped that the extreme step itself would effectively prevent any such selfish interpretation. Without arguing, I affirm that for me this matter is one of pure religion. The mere fact of the depressed classes having double votes does not protect them or Hindu society in general from being disrupted. In the establishment of the separate electorate at all for the depressed classes, I sense the injection of a poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the depressed classes. You will please permit me to say that, no matter how sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to a correct decision on a matter of such vital and religious importance to the parties concerned.

"I should not be against even over-representation of the depressed classes. What I am against is their statutory separation, even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it. Do you realise that if your decision stands and the Constitution comes into being, you arrest the marvellous growth of the work of Hindu reformers who have dedicated themselves to the uplift of their suppressed brethren in every walk of life?

'DECISION UNCHANGED'

"I have, therefore, been compelled reluctantly to adhere to the decision conveyed to you.



As your letter may give rise to a misunderstanding, I wish to state that the fact of my having isolated for special treatment the depressed classes question from other parts of your decision does not in any way mean that I approve of or am reconciled to other parts of the decision. In my opinion, many other parts are open to very grave objection. Only, I do not consider them to be any warrant for calling from me such self-immolation as my conscience has prompted me to in the matter of the depressed classes.

I remain,

Your faithful friend,
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi."

GANDHI'S LETTER TO BOMBAY GOVERNMENT

The following is the statement that Gandhiji sent to the Bombay Government on September 15th regarding his decision to fast in connection with the depressed classes problem. The statement was released to the Press on September 21:—

"The fast which I am approaching was resolved upon in the name of God, for His work, and, as I believe in all humility, at His call. Friends have urged me to postpone the date for the sake of giving the public a chance to organise itself. I am sorry it is not open to me to change even the hour except for the reason stated in my letter to the Prime Minister.

"The impending fast is against those who have faith in me, whether Indians or foreigners, and for those who have it not. Therefore, it is not against the English official world, but it is against those Englishmen and women, who, in spite of the contrary teaching of the official world, believe in me and the justice of the cause I represent. Nor is it against those of my countrymen who have no faith in me, whether they be Hindus or others, but it is against those countless Hindus (no matter to what persuasion they belong) who believe that I represent a just cause. Above all, it is intended to sting Hindu conscience into right religious action.

"The contemplated fast is no appeal to mere emotion. By the fast I want to throw the whole of my weight (such as it is) in the scales of justice pure and simple. Therefore there need be no undue haste in the feverish anxiety to save my life. I implicitly believe in the truth of the saying that not a blade of grass moves but by His will. He will save it if He needs it for further service in this body. None can save it against His will. Humanly speaking, I believe it will stand the strain for some time.

"The separate electorate is merely the last straw. No patched-up agreement between the caste Hindu leaders and rival depressed class leaders will answer the purpose. The agreement, to be valid, is to be real. If the Hindu mass mind is not yet prepared to banish untouchability, root and branch, it must sacrifice me without the slightest hesitation.

"There should be no coercion of those who are opposed to joint electorates. I have no difficulty in understanding their bitter oppo-

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sition. They have every right to distrust me. Do I not belong to that Hindu section, miscalled superior class or caste Hindus, who have ground down to powder the so-called untouchables? The marvel is that the latter have nevertheless remained in the Hindu fold. But whilst I can justify this opposition, I believe that they are in error. They will, if they can, separate depressed classes entirely from Hindu society and form them into a separate class—a standing and living reproach to Hinduism. I should not mind if thereby their interest could be really served. But my intimate acquaintance with every shade of untouchability convinces me that their lives, such as they are, are so intimately mixed with those of the caste Hindus in whose midst and for whom they live that it is impossible to separate them. They are part of an indivisible family. Their revolt against the Hindus with whom they live, and their apostasy from Hinduism, I should understand. But this, so far as I can see, they will not do. There is a subtle something quite indefinable in Hinduism which keeps them in it even in spite of themselves. And this fact makes it imperative for a man like me, with a living experience of it, to resist the contemplated separation even though the effort should cost life itself.

“The implications of this resistance are tremendous. No compromise which does not ensure fullest freedom for the depressed classes inside the Hindu fold can be an adequate substitute for the contemplated separation. Any betrayal of the trust can merely postpone the day of immolation for me and henceforth those who think with me. The problem before responsible Hindus is to consider whether, in the event of social, civic or political persecution of the depressed classes, they are prepared to face the Satyagraha, in the shape of perpetual fast not of one reformer like me but an increasing army of reformers whom I believe to exist to-day in India, and who will count their lives of no cost to achieve the liberation of these classes, and there-through of Hinduism, from an age-long superstition.

“Let fellow reformers who have worked with me also appreciate the implications of the fast.

“It is either a hallucination of mine or an illumination. If it is the former, I must be allowed to do my penance in peace. It will be the lifting of the deadweight on Hinduism. If it is an illumination, may my agony purify Hinduism and even melt the hearts of those who are at present disposed to distrust me! Since there appears to be a misunderstanding as to the application of my fast, I may repeat that it is aimed at a statutory separate electorate, in any shape or form, for the depressed classes. Immediately that threat is removed once for all, my fast will end. I hold strong views about reservation of seats as also about the most proper method of dealing with the whole question. But I consider myself unfit, as a prisoner, to set forth my proposals. I should, however, abide by an agreement on the basis of joint electorates that may be arrived at between the responsible leaders of caste Hindus and depressed classes and which has been accepted by mass meetings of all Hindus.



"One thing I must make clear. The satisfactory ending of the depressed classes question, if it is to come, should in no way mean that I would be committed to the acceptance of His Majesty's Government's decision on the other parts of the communal question. I am personally opposed to many other parts of it which, to my mind, make the working of any free and democratic Constitution well-nigh impossible, nor would a satisfactory solution of this question in any way bind me to accept the Constitution that may be framed. These are political questions for the National Congress to consider and determine. They are utterly outside my province in my individual capacity. Nor may I, as a prisoner, air my individual views on these questions.

"My fast has a narrow application. The depressed classes' question being predominantly a religious matter, I regard as specially my own by reason of life-long concentration on it. It is a sacred personal trust which I may not shirk.

"Fasting for light and penance is a hoary institution. I have observed it in Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is replete with instances of fasting for purification and penance. But if it is a privilege, it is also a duty. Moreover, to the best of my light, I have reduced it to a science. As an expert, therefore, I would warn friends and sympathisers against copying me blindly or out of false or hysterical sympathy. Let all such qualify themselves by hard work and selfless service of 'untouchables', and they would have independent light if their time for fasting has come.

"Lastly, in so far as I know myself, this fast is being undertaken with the purest of motives and without malice or anger against any single soul. For me it is an expression of, and the last seal on, non-violence. Those, therefore, who would use violence in this controversy against those whom they may consider to be inimical to me, or the cause I represent, will simply hasten my end. Perfect courtesy and consideration towards opponents is an absolute essential of success in this case at least, if not in all cases."

'A FIGHT FOR HUMANITY'

On September 20, Press representatives were allowed to interview Gandhi in jail. The following account of the talk appeared in *The Times of India* of 21st September:—

For the first time in nine months, journalists were permitted to see Mahatma Gandhi in Yeravada Jail this evening at 5-30, when they were treated to one of the most easily delivered and seriously thoughtful interviews to whom it has ever been my fortune to listen. No journalist could see Mahatma Gandhi to-day and discuss the position with him five hours after he had commenced a "fast unto death" without being immensely impressed.

We were ushered into a long narrow room surrounded by shelves in which were piled jail-made *durries*, blankets and other articles, the labour of a thousand convicts and Swadeshi to the last thread. There, sitting in a chair smiling a welcome, was the man upon whom the attention of all India, and of the entire Western

world, as well as a very large proportion of the Orient, has been focussed for several days.

When asked if he was hopeful about a happy ending to the affair, he said, "I am an irrepressible optimist. Unless God has forsaken me, I hope that it will not be a fast unto death."

Mahatma Gandhi said that he had had many telegrams from people who had decided or wished to enter upon a fast in sympathy with him. "I urge everybody not to fast in sympathy. I have undertaken it at God's call, and therefore, unless there is a similar definite call to these people, they have no business to fast. For one day, for the sake of purification or identification with the cause, it is a good thing; but that is all. Such a fast is both a privilege and a duty, and the privilege accrues only to those who have disciplined themselves for it."

The interview then turned to the question of the day, the representation of the depressed classes, or as Mahatma Gandhi calls them, the suppressed classes. First of all he expressed surprise that the statement given to the Government of Bombay had not been released. That had been given five days ago. Had he to redraft it to-day, it would be rather different in the light of happenings since then, and he said at the end of the interview that his new statement was supplementary to the other, but not dependent on it.

"My cards are on the table," he said, "but, so far as the present instance is concerned, I could say nothing behind prison bars. Now that the restrictions are removed, I have answered the first call of the Press. My fast is only against separate electorates, and not against statutory reservations of seats. To say that I am damaging the cause by uncompromising opposition to statutory reservation of seats is only partly true. Opposed I was, and am even now, but there was never put before me for my acceptance or rejection a scheme for statutory reservation of seats. Therefore, there is no question of my having to decide upon that point. When I developed my own ideas about that point, I certainly expressed disappointment, and in my humble opinion, such statutory reservation, short of doing service, may do harm in the sense that it will stop natural evolution. Statutory reservation is like a support to a man. Relying on such support to any extent, he weakens himself."

"If people won't laugh at me, I would gently put forward a claim which I have always asserted, that I am a 'touchable' by birth, but an 'untouchable' by choice; and I have endeavoured to qualify myself to represent, not the upper ten even among the 'untouchables', because be it said to their shame there are castes and classes among them, but my ambition is to represent and identify myself with, as far as possible, the lowest strata of 'untouchables', namely, the 'invisibles' and the 'unapproachables,' whom I have always before my mind's eye wherever I go; for, they have indeed drunk deep of the poisoned cup. I have met them in Malabar and in Orissa, and am convinced that if they are ever to rise, it will not be by reservation of seats but will be by the strenuous work of Hindu reformers in their midst, and it is because I feel that this separation



would have killed all prospect of reform that my whole soul has rebelled against it; and, let me make it plain, that the withdrawal of separate electorates will satisfy the letter of my vow but will never satisfy the spirit behind it, and in my capacity of being a self-chosen 'untouchable', I am not going to rest content with a patched-up pact between the 'touchables' and the 'untouchables'.

'THE DREAM OF MY LIFE'

"What I want, what I am living for, and what I should delight in dying for, is the eradication of untouchability, root and branch. I want, therefore, a living pact whose life-giving effect should be felt not in the distant to-morrow but to-day, and therefore, that pact should be sealed by an all-India demonstration of 'touchables' and 'untouchables' meeting together, not by way of a theatrical show, but in real brotherly embrace. It is in order to achieve this, the dream of my life for the past fifty years, that I have entered to-day the fiery gates. The British Government's decision was the last straw. It was a decisive symptom, and with the unerring eye of the physician that I claim to be in such matters, I detected the symptom. Therefore, for me, the abolition of separate electorates would be but the beginning of the end, and I would warn all those leaders assembled at Bombay and others against coming to any hasty decision.

'A CRY FOR JUSTICE'

"My life I count of no consequence. One hundred lives given for this noble cause, would, in my opinion, be poor penance done by Hindus for the atrocious wrongs they have heaped upon helpless men and women of their own faith. I, therefore, would urge them not to swerve an inch from the path of strictest justice. My fast I want to throw in the scales of justice. And if it wakes up caste Hindus from their slumber, and if they are roused to a sense of their duty, it will have served its purpose. Whereas, if out of blind affection for me, they would somehow or other come to a rough and ready agreement so as to secure the abrogation and then go off to sleep, they will commit a grievous blunder and will have made my life a misery. For, while the abrogation of separate electorates would result in my breaking the fast, it would be a living death for me if the vital pact for which I am striving is not arrived at. It would simply mean that, as soon as I call off the fast, I would have to give notice of another in order to achieve the spirit of the vow to the fullest extent.

"This may look childish to the onlooker but not so to me. If I had anything more to give, I would throw that in also to remove this curse but I have nothing more than my life.

'A FIGHT FOR HUMANITY'

"I believe that if untouchability is really rooted out, it will not only purge Hinduism of a terrible blot but its repercussion will be world-wide. My fight against untouchability is a fight against the

impure in humanity, and, therefore, when I penned my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare I did so in the full faith that the very best in the human family will come to my assistance, if I have embarked on this thing with a heart, so far as it is possible for a human being to achieve, free of impurity, free of all malice and all anger. You will, therefore, see that my fast is based on faith first of all in the cause, faith in the Hindu community, faith in human nature itself, and faith even in the official world.

'ISSUE SURPASSING SWARAJ'

"In attacking untouchability I have gone to the very root of the matter, and, therefore, it is an issue of transcendental value, far surpassing Swaraj in terms of political constitutions, and I would say that such a Constitution would be a dead-weight if it was not backed by a moral basis, in the shape of the present hope engendered in the breasts of the down-trodden millions that that weight is going to be lifted from their shoulders. It is only because the English officials cannot possibly see this living side of the picture that, in their ignorance and self-satisfaction, they dare to sit as judges upon questions that affect the fundamental being of millions of people, and here I mean both caste Hindus and 'untouchables', that is, suppressor and suppressed; and it was in order to wake up even officialdom from its gross ignorance, if I may make use of such an expression without being guilty of offence, that I felt impelled by a voice from within to offer resistance with the whole of my being."

He stated that he had made definite suggestions to the deputation from the Emergency Committee whom he received yesterday, and he presumed that these would have been communicated to the Press to-day in Bombay.

Referring to a possible photograph Mahatma Gandhi made a jocular remark concerning his funeral rites, whereupon I asked him if he had made any preparations for such rites when visited by his son Devadas yesterday, if the very worst happened; and I received a dramatic reply: "I have asked my son to say in my name at the Bombay Conference that he, as his father's son, was prepared to forfeit his father's life rather than see any injury being done to the suppressed classes in mad haste."

What did he really think about the possibilities of his fast lasting? He replied: "I am as anxious as anyone to live. Water has an infinite capacity for prolonging life, and I will take water whenever I feel I require it. You can depend upon me to make a supreme effort to hold myself together, so that the Hindu conscience may be quickened as also the British conscience and this agony may end. My cry will rise to the throne of the Almighty God."

THE YERAVADA PACT

The following is the text of the agreement which has been arrived at between the leaders acting on behalf of the depressed classes and of the rest of the Hindu community regarding the representation of the depressed classes in Legislatures and certain other matters affecting their welfare.



1. There shall be seats reserved for the depressed classes out of general electorates. Seats in Provincial Legislatures shall be as follows:

Madras	..	30
Bombay with Sind	..	15
Punjab	..	8
Bihar and Orissa	..	18
Central Provinces	..	20
Assam	..	7
Bengal	..	30
United Provinces	..	20
Total	..	148

These figures are based on the total strength of the Provincial Councils announced in the Prime Minister's decision.

2. Election to these seats shall be by joint electorates subject, however, to the following procedure:

All members of the depressed classes registered in the general electoral roll of a constituency, will form an electoral college which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the depressed classes, for each of such reserved seats, by the method of single vote and four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election shall be the candidates for election by the general electorate.

3. Representation of the depressed classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in clause 2 above for their representation in Provincial Legislatures.

4. In the Central Legislature eighteen per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said Legislature shall be reserved for the depressed classes.

5. The system of primary election to panel of candidates for election to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, as herein before mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years, unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement under the provision of clause 6 below.

6. The system of representation of the depressed classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislatures, as provided for in clauses 1 and 4, shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in this settlement.

7. The franchise for the Central and Provincial Legislatures for the depressed classes shall be as indicated in the Lothian Committee Report.

8. There shall be no disabilities attaching to anyone on the ground of his being a member of the depressed classes in regard to any elections to local bodies or appointment to public service.

Every endeavour shall be made to secure a fair representation of the depressed classes in these respects, subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down for appointment to public service.

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9. In every Province, out of the educational grant, an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to members of the depressed classes.

Madan Mohan Malaviya
Tej Bahadur Sapru
M. R. Jayakar
B. R. Ambedkar
Srinivasan
M. C. Rajah
C. V. Mehta
C. Rajagopalachari
Rajendra Prasad
G. D. Birla
Rameswar Das Birla
Shankarlal Banker

B. S. Kamat
G. K. Devadhar
A. V. Thakkar
R. K. Bhakale
P. G. Solanki
P. Baloo
Govind Malaviya
Devadas Gandhi
Biswas
B. N. Rajbhoj
Gavai

The following signatures were added in Bombay at the final sitting of the Hindu Conference on September 25:—

Lallubhai Samaldas
Hansa Mehta
K. Natarajan
Kamakoti Natarajan
Purushottamdas Thakurdas
Mathuradas Vassanji
Walchand Hirachand
H. N. Kunzru
K. G. Limaye

P. Kodanda Rao
G. K. Gadgil
Manu Subedar
Avantikabai Gokhale
K. J. Chitalia
Radhakant Malaviya
A. R. Bhatt
Colum
Pradhan

Before closing the subject of the first great fast, and the Poona Pact, we have to refer to another connected event which attracted wide attention. Mr. Kelappan, who had been doing public work in Malabar, particularly in the cause of Harijans, felt the force of a call from within and decided upon a fast to death almost simultaneously with Gandhi's epic fast.

His object was to persuade the Trustees to open the Guruvayoor temple to 'untouchables'. Gandhi studied the facts of the case and thought that sufficient notice was not given to the Trustees. It was borne in upon him that success was almost in sight, but Gandhi held that it was not the immediate prospect of success that should matter, but the pure ethics of the position. Here are the two relevant telegrams sent to Kelappan:

Yeravada, Sept. 29.

"The Zamorin wires asking me to appeal to you to suspend the fast for some months. He says the present entry of 'untouchables' would wound orthodox conscience and such wounding would amount to coercion. Ask yourself whether there is any room for you on this relevant ground to postpone the fast, and whether, in terms of the Zamorin's telegram, you had given sufficient notice of the extreme step."



Yeravada, Oct. 2.

"Your wire. Immediate prospective result must not affect decision. On pure ethics I must reiterate the opinion that you should suspend the fast, giving notice as per my telegram. God helping. I shall bear my share of the burden. Wire compliance."

Gandhi specifically promised to share the next fast with Kelappan if that became necessary and referred to it in his statements. When Gandhi discovered a flaw (namely, want of due notice) and intimated the same to Kelappan, the latter agreed to give up his fast.

At this stage, we may appropriately refer to a sympathetic fast by Gandhi on 2nd December, 1932, for S. P. Patwardhan of Ratnagiri. Syt. Patwardhan had asked for scavenger's work in jail but it was refused by the authorities. Gandhiji wrote to the Bombay Government in the matter but to no effect. Consequently Syt. S. P. Patwardhan started a starvation fast by reducing his diet. Gandhi had agreed, in the truce period, to go on fast with Syt. Appasaheb Patwardhan if his demand was not granted, and so Gandhi in sympathy with him commenced his fast. But within two days the authorities gave assurance to consider the demand and the fast was given up. Within about a week, the Secretary of State made the necessary amendments in jail rules and the bar against giving scavenging work to caste Hindus was removed and the Satyagraha thus became successful.

We have described the development of the Civil Disobedience movement in the year 1932, as well as the episode of the Poona Pact. The public response to Gandhi's call for the removal of untouchability did doubtless affect the progress of the Civil Disobedience movement.

In spite of that, the Congress programme was carried out. There was another reason for the slackening of the Civil Disobedience campaign. As things stood and as already stated, it could be conducted mainly by practising methods of secrecy which are not only abhorrent, but even opposed to and subversive of the fundamental principles of Satyagraha. The meeting of friends at Poona in connection with Gandhi's fast must have given an opportunity for exchange of thoughts on the subject amongst leading Congressmen who were then free, and accordingly two circulars were issued. The first pointed out the supreme claims on Congressmen of Civil Disobedience, work in connection with the removal of untouchability being primarily entrusted to nationalist non-Congressmen and such Congressmen as, for some reason or other, were unable to court imprisonment. The second insisted on the desirability of terminating secret methods which had crept in during the progress of the Civil Disobedience campaign.

The 4th January was the day on which the Government offensive had started in 1932, and the Acting President, Rajendra Prasad, who had succeeded Rajagopalachari, issued instructions to all Provincial offices that the anniversary should be observed on that day by reading a special statement which had been sent out and which gave in a short compass the progress of the movement and a survey of the problems holding the foremost place in the thoughts of the country at the time. Meetings were held at numerous places and the statement was read in the midst of arrests and

lathi-charges followed by the arrest of the President himself on the 6th January, 1933. Thereafter, Mr. Aney became the Acting President.

When the fight commenced in January, 1932, Vallabhbhai Patel was the President of the Congress. The Working Committee had decided that, unlike in 1930, vacancies in the Working Committee should not be filled up and Vallabhbhai drew up a list of persons who were to succeed him and act as President one after another during his absence. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Ansari, Sirdar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Gangadhararao Deshpande, Dr. Kitchlew, Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad and Aney acted between January, 1932, and July, 1933, when the Congress organisation ceased to function. Amongst those who acted as Secretaries during this period and on whom fell the burden of carrying on the office work in the midst of indescribable difficulties may be mentioned the names of Jaya Prakash Narayan, Lalji Mehrotra, Girdhari Kripalani, Annada Choudhary and Jugul Kishor Agarwala.

The events of 1933 are briefly told. The Calcutta Session of the Congress was the most outstanding one. An account of this session and of the rest of the events up to the middle of September are succinctly given in the Report for 1933-34, presented by the General Secretaries of the Congress, and we have extracted the following paragraphs therefrom:—

THE CALCUTTA CONGRESS

The Calcutta Session of the Congress, like the preceding Delhi Session of April, 1932, was also held under a ban. Though it was organised when the Civil Disobedience movement was on the decline, the enthusiasm and spirit of resistance manifested were greater than at Delhi. Several Provinces sent their full quota of delegates. In all, about 2,200 delegates were elected from different parts of the country. The fact that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had consented to preside at the session heightened the enthusiasm of the Nation. The decision of Mrs. Motilal Nehru to attend the Congress despite age and infirmity was an inspiration to the coming delegates. The session met at Calcutta on March 31st, in an electric atmosphere. Dr. Prafulla Ghosh was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The Government spared no effort to prevent the holding of the Congress. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was not allowed to reach Calcutta. He was arrested at Asansol, an intermediate station. With him were arrested Mrs. Motilal Nehru, Dr. Syed Mahmud and others who formed the Presidential party. All were removed to Asansol Jail. Syt. M. S. Aney, the Acting President of the Congress, was also arrested and imprisoned while on his way to Calcutta. The office-bearers of the Reception Committee were put under arrest and several Congress leaders served with restraint orders at Calcutta. Chief among the latter were Mrs. Sen-Gupta and Dr. Mohammad Alam. Nearly a thousand delegates were arrested before their start or while on their way to Calcutta. The remaining delegates succeeded in reaching the city. In the face of the ban, about eleven hundred delegates met at the place selected for the session. The Police were soon upon the scene and *lathis* rained on the peaceful



assembly of the Congressmen. Many of the delegates were seriously injured and Mrs. Sen-Gupta and other leading Congressmen were arrested. The Police attempt to prevent the session by force, however, failed, for despite the continuance of the *lathi* blows the inner group of the delegates maintained their seats until all the seven resolutions which were to be submitted for adoption, were read out and passed. Most of those arrested in connection with the Calcutta Session of the Congress were, however, released as soon as the Congress was over. Others were tried and convicted. Mrs. Sen-Gupta also received a sentence of six months. On release from prison on 3rd April, Pandit Malaviya proceeded to Calcutta and soon placed before the country unimpeachable testimony as to the brutal manner in which the Police had tried to break up the Congress. He challenged the Government to hold an enquiry, but the challenge has never been taken up. We give below the resolutions of the Calcutta Session:

Resolutions passed at the 47th session of the Indian National Congress, Calcutta, March 31st, 1933.

"This Congress re-affirms the resolution passed at its 44th session at Lahore, in 1929, declaring Complete Independence as its goal."

"This Congress holds Civil Disobedience to be a perfectly legitimate means for the protection of the rights of the people, for the vindication of national self-respect, and for the attainment of the national goal."

"This Congress re-affirms the decision of the Working Committee arrived at on 1st January, 1932. On a careful survey of all that has happened during the past fifteen months, the Congress is firmly of opinion that, in the situation in which the country is placed, the Civil Disobedience movement should be strengthened and extended, and the Congress, therefore, calls upon the people to pursue the movement with greater vigour on the lines laid down by the Working Committee in its aforesaid resolution."

"This Congress calls upon all classes and sections of the people in the country to completely eschew foreign cloth, to give preference to khaddar and to boycott British goods."

"This Congress holds that no Constitution framed by the British Government, while it is engaged in conducting a campaign of ruthless repression, involving the imprisonment and internment of the most trusted leaders of the Nation and thousands of their followers, suppression of the fundamental rights of free speech and association, stringent restraint on the liberty of the Press and replacement of the normal Civil Law by virtual Martial Law, deliberately initiated by it on the eve of Mahatma Gandhi's return from England with a view to crush the national spirit, can be worthy of consideration by or acceptable to the people of India."

"The Congress is confident that the public will not be duped by the scheme outlined in the recently published White Paper which is inimical to the vital interests of India and is devised to perpetuate foreign domination in this country."

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"This Congress offers its congratulations to the country on the successful termination of Mahatma Gandhi's fast of September, 1932, and hopes that untouchability will before long become a thing of the past."

"This Congress is of opinion that, to enable the masses to appreciate what 'Swaraj', as conceived by the Congress, will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understood by them. With this object in view it reiterates resolution No. 14 of the Karachi Session of the Congress of 1931." (Resolution on Fundamental Rights).

GANDHIJI'S FAST

The Calcutta Congress was soon followed by an unexpected event in the country. With a view to help the increasing number of workers in the Harijan movement to fulfil their task with a purer and truer spirit of service, Mahatma Gandhi had started, on 8th May, 1933, a self-purificatory fast of 21 days. In his words, it was "a heart prayer for purification of myself and my associates for greater vigilance and watchfulness in connection with the Harijan cause."

"I therefore asked friends in India and all the world over to pray for me and with me that I may safely pass through the ordeal and that whether I live or die the cause for which the fact is to be taken may prosper. May I ask my Sanatanist friends to pray that, whatever be the result of the fast for me, the golden lid that hides truth may be removed?" He added in a Press interview: "A religious movement does not depend for its success on the intellectual or material resources of its sponsors; but it depends solely upon the spiritual resources, and fasting is a most known method of adding to these resources."

The Government issued a *Communique* on the same day stating that, in view of the nature of the object of the fast and the attitude of mind which it disclosed, the Government of India had decided that he (Gandhiji) should be set at liberty. Accordingly, Mahatma Gandhi was released on the evening of 8th May. Immediately on release, Gandhiji issued the following statement recommending the suspension of the C. D. campaign for six weeks.

Gandhiji said:

"I cannot regard this release with any degree of pleasure, and as Sirdar Vallabhbhai rightly remarked to me yesterday, how can I take advantage of this release in order to prosecute the Civil Disobedience campaign or to guide it?

"This release, therefore, puts upon me, as a seeker after truth and a man of honour, a tremendous burden and a strain. This fast has to continue. I had hoped and I still hope not to excite myself over anything, nor to take part in any discussions of any nature whatsoever. The whole purpose of the fast will be frustrated if I allowed my brain to be occupied by any extraneous matter, that is, any matter outside the Harijan work.



"At the same time, having been released, I should be bound to give a little of my energies to a study of the Civil Disobedience movement.

"Of course, for the movement I can only say that my views about Civil Disobedience have undergone no change whatsoever. I have nothing but praise for the bravery and self-sacrifice of the numerous civil resisters. Having said that, I cannot help saying that the secrecy that has attended the movement is fatal to its success. If, therefore, the movement must be continued I would urge those who are guiding the movement in different parts of the country to discard all secrecy. I do not care if thereby it becomes difficult to secure a single civil resister.

"There can be no doubt that fear has seized the common mass. The Ordinances have cowed them down and I am inclined to think that the secret methods are largely responsible for the demoralisation.

"The movement of Civil Disobedience does not depend so much upon the quantity as on the quality of men and women taking part in it, and if I was leading the movement I should sacrifice quantity and insist on quality. If this could be done, it would immediately raise the level of the movement. Mass instructions on any other term is an impossibility. I can say nothing as to the actual campaign. The reflections I have given I had bottled up all these many months and I can say Sirdar Vallabhbhai is at one with me in what I have said.

"One word I would say whether I like it or not—during these three weeks all civil resisters will be in a state of terrible suspense. It would be better if the President of the Congress, Bapuji Madhavrao Aney, were to officially declare suspension for one full month or even six weeks.

"Now I would make an appeal to the Government. If they want real peace in the land and if they feel there is no real peace, if they feel that ordinance rule is no rule, they should take advantage of this suspension and unconditionally discharge all the civil resisters.

"If I survive the ordeal, it will give me time to survey the situation and to tender advice both to the Congress leaders and, if I may venture to do so, to the Government. I would like to take up the thread at the point where I was interrupted on my return from England.

"If no understanding is arrived at between the Government and the Congress as a result of my effort and Civil Disobedience is resumed, it will be open to the Government, if they so choose, to revive the Ordinance rule. If there is the will on the part of the Government I have no doubt that a *modus operandi* can be found. Of this, so far as I am concerned, I am absolutely certain.

"Civil Disobedience cannot be withdrawn so long as so many civil resisters are imprisoned and no settlement can be arrived at so long as Sirdar Vallabhbhai, Khan Saheb Abdul Gaffar Khan and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others are buried alive.

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"Indeed to call off the civil resistance is not within the power of any of the men who are out of prison. It is possible for the then Working Committee to do so. I refer to the Working Committee that was in existence at the time I was arrested. I shall say no more on the Civil Disobedience movement. Perhaps I have already said too much, but if I was to say anything I could say so only whilst I have strength left in me.

"I would urge pressmen not to worry me any more. I would urge also would-be visitors once more to restrain themselves. Let them regard me as being still in prison. I shall be unfit for holding political discussions or any other discussions.

"I would like to be left in perfect peace and I would like to tell the Government that I shall not abuse the release, and if I come safely through the ordeal and I find the political atmosphere as murky as it is to-day, without taking a single step secretly or openly in furtherance of the Civil Disobedience, I shall invite them to take me back to Yeravada to join the companions whom I almost seem to have deserted.

"It was a great privilege for me to have been with Sirdar Vallabhbhai. I was well aware of his matchless bravery and his burning love of the country, but I have never lived with him as I have had the good fortune during the 16 months. The affection with which he covered me, recalls to me that of my own dear mother. I never knew him to possess motherly qualities. If the slightest thing happened to me, he would be out of his bed. He superintended every little detail in connection with my comforts. He and my other associates had conspired to let me do nothing, and I hope that Government will believe me when I say that he always showed a remarkable comprehension of the difficulties of the Government whenever we discussed any political problem. His solicitude for the farmers of Bardoli and Kaira I can never forget."

Close upon Gandhi's announcement, the Acting President of the Congress, Mr. M. S. Aney, made a like announcement suspending Civil Disobedience for six weeks. Government were not slow either in publishing their reply.

A Government *Communique* announced that mere suspension of the Civil Disobedience did not fulfil the conditions laid down for the release of prisoners. The Government were not prepared to negotiate with the Congress in the matter.

The official *Communique* of the Government of India dated Simla, May 9th, said:

"The release of Mr. Gandhi consequent on his undertaking a prolonged fast which, as he has stated, is wholly unconnected with the Government and solely connected with the Harijan movement, indicates no change whatever in the Government's general policy towards the release of the Civil Disobedience prisoners or towards those who openly or conditionally support the Civil Disobedience movement.



"The position of the Government in regard to the release of the Civil Disobedience prisoners was stated by the Home Member in the Legislative Assembly on April 1 last.

In the course of his speech, he said: "If, in fact, the Congress does not mean to revive the struggle, why should that not be made plain? Is there a mental reservation that, if the policy of the Government is not to their liking, they will hold over the head of the Government the threat of revival of the Civil Disobedience movement? There can be no co-operation under a menace of renewal of the Civil Disobedience."

"We have no wish to keep these prisoners longer than the circumstances require but equally are we determined not to let them out when their release might lead to a renewal of the Civil Disobedience. We must not risk re-starting of trouble by premature action.

"Our position has been summed up in the words used by the Secretary of State in the Commons.

"He said:—'We must have convincing reasons to believe that their release would not be followed by a revival of the Civil Disobedience.'

"A mere temporary suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement intended to lead up to negotiations with the Congress leaders, in no way fulfils the conditions which would satisfy the Government of India that, in fact, the Civil Disobedience movement has been definitely abandoned. There is no intention of negotiating with the Congress for a withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement or of releasing prisoners with a view to arrive at any settlement with them in regard to these unlawful activities."

Simultaneously with this negative reply from Simla, there came a statement from Vienna signed by Syt. Vitthalbhai J. Patel and Syt. Subhash Chandra Bose. "The latest action of Mr. Gandhi in suspending Civil Disobedience is a confession of failure," declares the joint statement of Mr. V. J. Patel and Mr. Subhash Bose given exclusively to Reuter from Vienna.*

The statement further states that "we are clearly of the opinion that Mr. Gandhi as a political leader has failed. The time has therefore, come for a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle with a new method, for which a new leader is essential, as it is unfair to expect Mr. Gandhi to work the programme not consistent with his life-long principles."

"If the Congress as a whole," the statement proceeds, "can undergo this transformation, it will be the best course. Failing that, a new party will have to be formed within the Congress, composed of radical elements."

In the meantime, opinion in Congress circles began to crystallize that the opportunity afforded by Gandhiji's release should be utilized for informal consultation among Congressmen in regard to the situation in the country. In view of the necessity of holding such

* This is not, however, the first time that Gandhi met with adverse criticism from either of the distinguished signatories whose ill-health compelled their stay in a distant land during the campaign. Gandhi bore the world criticisms, even as he bore his own sufferings, with patience, faith and fortitude. His vow was fulfilled duly and he broke his fast on the 29th May, 1932.

a Conference when Gandhiji should be physically fit to participate in it, the period of suspension of the campaign was extended by the Acting President for a further span of six weeks. The length of the fast, and the uncertainty in the minds of many as to its future course, caused the Nation's eyes to centre on 'Parnakuti', the residence of Lady Thackersey in Poona where Gandhi abandoned his fast, and there was universal thanksgiving as the agony of the concluding days of the fast ended in the happy termination of the ordeal without any untoward incident.

THE POONA CONFERENCE:—The informal Conference of Congressmen summoned to review the political situation met in Poona on July 12th, 1933. Syt. Aney opened the proceedings with an introductory speech. Gandhiji placed his views on the situation in brief before the Conference. General discussion followed and at its conclusion the Conference adjourned to the next day. The second day's sitting opened with an exhaustive statement by Gandhiji dealing with the points raised by the members of the Conference and placing before them his suggestions. The Conference then proceeded to make its recommendations. It rejected a motion for the unconditional withdrawal of Civil Disobedience but also threw out a motion favouring Individual Civil Disobedience. In the end the Conference authorised Mahatma Gandhi to seek an interview with the Viceroy for arriving at a settlement with the Government. In accordance with that decision, Gandhiji wired to the Viceroy asking for an interview "with a view to explore the possibilities of peace." The Viceroy, in reply, however, referred in detail to misleading newspaper reports as to the trend of discussion at the Poona Conference, and, relying on such reports, he declined to grant the interview, unless the Congress first withdrew the Civil Disobedience movement. Gandhi sent a reply to the effect that Government had based its attitude on unauthorised publications of the confidential proceedings of the informal Conference and that, if an interview were granted, he could show that the proceedings taken as a whole were calculated to bring about an honourable peace. Gandhiji's efforts at peace failed to elicit response and forced the Nation, if it was to conserve national honour, to continue the struggle. Mass Civil Disobedience was, however, suspended and all who were able and willing were advised to offer Individual Civil Disobedience. Under the orders of the Acting President, all Congress organisations and war councils ceased to function in view of the suspension of mass Satyagraha.

INDIVIDUAL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE:—Gandhi inaugurated the campaign of Individual Civil Disobedience by taking the drastic action of sacrificing what was his most precious possession and thus trying to share the sufferings endured by thousands of villagers in the course of the movement. He disbanded the Sabarmati Ashram and invited his fellow workers in the Ashram to give up all the other activities and join the struggle. He vacated the whole Ashram transferring the moveable property to certain bodies for public use, and not wishing to make others a party to paying revenue dues, he



offered the land, building and crops to Government. All the response the Government made to his offer was a formal one-line acknowledgment of his letter.

When Government declined the offer, Gandhi made it over to the Harijan movement. In this connection we may recall a statement that Gandhi had made on the eve of his march to Dandi,—really it was a determination,—that he would never return to the Ashram until Swaraj was won. And true to his vow, he has not since the 12th of April, 1930, returned to the Ashram except on a casual visit to see an ailing friend. By this final act of transfer of the Ashram to the Harijan Sangh, he divested himself of any little germs of attachment to things mundane, which might possibly take root in his breast.

On 1st August, 1933, Gandhiji was to commence his march to the village of Rañ, so famous throughout India ever since Sirdar Vallabhbhai's arrest there in February, 1930. But in the dead of the previous night Mahatma Gandhi and 34 other inmates of his Ashram were arrested and sent to prison. He was, however, released on the morning of the 4th, and served with an order to leave the limits of Yeravada village and reside in Poona. The order was, of course, not obeyed, and, within half an hour of release, Gandhiji was arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

Following his arrest and imprisonment, the campaign of Individual Civil Disobedience started in all Provinces, hundreds of workers courting imprisonment in the very first week. The Acting President, Syt. Aney, with thirteen companions, was arrested on August 14, while starting on a march from Akola. His successor as Acting President, Sirdar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, soon followed him to prison. Before imprisonment, however, he issued orders terminating the office of the Acting President and the line of Dictators in various Provinces and Districts, with a view to facilitate the campaign becoming truly one of Individual Civil Disobedience. From all over the country, Congress workers followed the lead given by Gandhiji, and from August, 1933, to March, 1934, a regular stream of civil resisters maintained the campaign. It will not be possible without fuller material from provincial centres to report adequately on the campaign with due justice to all Provinces. The Provincial quotas of imprisoned civil resisters during this last stage of the movement have not all been recorded. It must here suffice to say that thousands responded to the call and every Province did the very best it could, under the circumstances, in serving the cause of freedom.

GANDHIJI'S RELEASE:—The Government's refusal to continue the facilities granted to him before his release in May again forced Mahatma Gandhi to commence a fast, i.e., within a few days of his re-arrest. The Government remained adamant. Gandhiji's condition, however, rapidly grew worse and on 20th August, the fifth day of the fast, he had to be removed to Sassoon Hospital, Poona, still a prisoner. By 23rd August, however, it had become clear to Government that there was imminent danger to his life, and he was, therefore, released unconditionally on that date. This unexpected

development placed him in a most embarrassing position. In view, however, of the circumstances of his discharge from jail, and as he did not wish to be a willing party to the undignified 'cat and mouse game' of arrest, fast, and release, he came to the conclusion that he must regard himself still not a free man, that he must impose on himself a limited self-restraint in regard to his activities up to the termination of the period of his sentence, that is, up to August 3rd, 1934, and that he must not court imprisonment by offering aggressive civil resistance. He made it clear, however, that while he would refrain from aggressive Civil Disobedience, he could not help guiding those who would ask his advice and preventing the national movement from running into wrong channels. He further decided to devote the intervening period largely to the furtherance of the Harijan movement.

JAWAHARLAL'S RELEASE:—Mrs. Motilal Nehru's health had been latterly worsening and about this time it had begun to cause widespread anxiety. The U.P. Government, therefore, decided to release Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru a few days before the expiry of his sentence so as to enable him to be with his mother in her serious illness. He was accordingly released on August 30th. As soon as Mrs. Motilal's health improved, Pandit Jawaharlal repaired to Poona where Mahatma Gandhi was recuperating and the two met for the first time since they separated on the occasion of Gandhiji's departure for the R.T.C. in 1931. There naturally followed friendly discussions as to the situation in the country and the programme before the people. The discussion eventually led to exchange of letters containing a statement of their views on the programme for the Nation. This correspondence was published for the information and guidance of Congressmen and the general public.

HARIJAN TOUR:—In accordance with his decision to devote to the Harijan cause the period of his forced inactivity in the purely political field, Gandhiji commenced a Harijan tour in the country in November, 1933. He covered, in about ten months, every Province of India and each day of those long months was a day of an intensive study of the problem of untouchability and the best methods of solving it. The tour had an extraordinary propagandist value. The response evoked at the gatherings in each Province and the attendance at the meetings organized were only less than those witnessed in the country in the days of 1930. The collections made by Gandhi in the course of the tour for the cause of the removal of untouchability totalled about eight lakhs of rupees which, in view of the trade depression and previously made calls on the public purse, was certainly an unexpectedly generous response to his appeal. The otherwise wholly successful tour was marred by two regrettable incidents. Gandhiji narrowly escaped at Poona, on 25th June, 1934, from what might have proved a great calamity for the Nation. An unknown and yet untraced person attempted to throw a bomb at him at a public function where he was to receive an address of welcome from the Poona Municipality. The perpetrator of the attempted crime, believed to be one who had been enraged at Gandhiji's cam-

paign against untouchability, mistook for Gandhi's car another which reached the scene a few minutes earlier. His mis-aimed bomb, nevertheless, wounded seven innocent persons, none of whom, fortunately, received very serious injuries. The other incident took place at Ajmer only about a fortnight later, and this time it was an irate reformer who lost his balance and cut open with a *lathi* the head of Pandit Lalnath of Benares, a determined opponent of the Harijan movement. This latter happening led to a seven days' fast by Gandhiji as a penance against the intolerance shown by opponents towards each other in public controversies.

He had undertaken an all-India tour for Harijan work, but the month of December was the month of his test. Three months' notice being given by Mr. Kelappan to the Trustees in regard to the Guruvayoor temple, a final decision was to be reached on the 1st of January, 1934. And it might mean a fast unto death both for Kelappan and Gandhiji. So it was resolved to take a referendum at Guruvayoor amongst the temple worshippers, and the first experiment made in this behalf was a highly educative as well as successful experiment. [In the meantime, Dr. Subbaroyan had given notice of a Temple Entry Bill for the Madras Presidency and Government's decision was being awaited.] In the Guruvayoor referendum, 77 per cent of the voters voted in favour of Temple Entry and the following report would be found interesting:—

"Out of 20,163 opinions actually given and recorded, excluding refusals to vote, the following is an analysis of the voting:—

In favour	..	15,563 or 77 per cent.
Against,	..	2,579 or 13 per cent.
Neutral	..	2,016 or 10 per cent.

"A remarkable feature of the referendum was that more than 8,000 women recorded in favour of Temple-Entry by Harijans."

The new year opened auspiciously enough, as the apprehended fast of Gandhi over the Guruvayoor temple was averted. But the progress of events in the line of Civil Disobedience was none too satisfactory. The prisoners who were released were fagged. The provincial leaders who had promised to lead their Provinces at Poona, if Mass Civil Disobedience were given up and Individual Civil Disobedience continued, did not carry out their pledges except in a few cases. Those who were released from jails found themselves unable or unwilling to face another conviction. And those that were prepared to face it would not get it. Government had hit on the plan of *lathi*-charging or imprisoning and ill-treating in sub-jails, and releasing, re-arresting and releasing again, after an interval. The process was tiresome and the only rest that conviction would give was taken away. It was like a cat shaking the rat by the mouth and leaving it and then catching it again. It would neither kill nor release.

THE BIHAR EARTHQUAKE:—The whole of India staggered to its feet on 16th January, shocked at the news the morning papers brought to every home, of the unprecedented calamity that had overtaken Bihar on the previous afternoon. Within the space of a few minutes, the face of the Province was changed beyond recognition.

Thousands of buildings fell into dust and buried within the bowels of the earth. From below ground, sand emerged to destroy extensive areas of rich crops. Water at a temperature of 110 degrees pushed its way to the surface from a depth of 1,500 feet. A sandy expanse stretched where, only a moment ago, river beds carried the life-endowing current which irrigated the land or where smiling fields bore the burden which fed and sustained the life of millions. Thousands of families were orphaned and widowed and their innocent babes crushed in death beneath falling debris within, almost literally, the twinkling of an eye. No cold figures can give a true picture of what Nature had miswrought in a few minutes in Bihar. Yet some may be quoted. The earthquake affected an area of 30,000 sq. miles and a population of about a crore and half. Nearly 20,000 persons are recorded to have lost their lives. Houses numbering over 10 lakhs were damaged or destroyed. 65,000 wells and tanks were destroyed or damaged. Nearly 10 lakhs of bighas of crops were covered with sand and damaged.

To meet a catastrophe of this magnitude, both Bihar and India rose to the occasion. Over a crore of rupees were subscribed to the various funds, the amount received by the Bihar Central Relief Committee up to the end of June being over Rs. 27 lakhs. Most leaders and workers sped from many parts of India to come to the rescue of the afflicted and to help to organise systematic relief. The excellent report of the Committee, will give to all a realistic idea of the extent of damage and the measures of relief which over 2,000 workers carried out at 258 centres.

Among the outside leaders who visited the devastated area was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The visit was not only a token of sympathy. It was a personal example of service. On one occasion, when reports reached that living men-lay buried under the debris of fallen houses, he put on a volunteer's badge, took a pick-axe on his shoulder, and, accompanied by a batch of volunteers with pick-axes, shovels and baskets, he marched to the place. He and others then plied their pick-axes and shovels, carrying the debris in baskets on their heads. The Bihar Earthquake also intervened to change Gandhiji's programme. Bihar and its workers had at that time to face numerous complicated problems arising out of the situation created by the earthquake and the impending floods, and Gandhiji devoted a month to give them his guidance and advice. In the result, a conference was held of representatives from all parts of the country at which the Bihar Central Relief Committee was set up to control the relief operations, and the ground cleared for one of the biggest schemes of distress relief ever organised by Congress in recent years. During his stay in Bihar, Gandhiji visited the afflicted towns and villages, acquainted himself personally with the miserable plight of the victims of the great calamity and helped the newly formed Committee to chalk out its plans of work. He rushed some of his own trained workers to the scene and placed them at the service of Bihar. The Province had yet to confront problems of a complexity and a magnitude of which probably those outside the Province had no adequate



conception. (An authoritative account of the relief operations is given in Appendix VIII).

On completion of his brief tour in Bihar, Pandit Jawaharlal found himself once again a prisoner of Government. During his visit to Calcutta, he had delivered two speeches on the situation in Bengal and the latest development in Midnapur District. The Bengal Government could brook no mention of the so-called terrorists of the Province except in terms of unqualified condemnation. Pandit Jawaharlal's frank speeches dealing with the psychology of terrorism, and the methods adopted by the authorities in meeting it, could not be tolerated by the Bengal bureaucracy. Decency prevented the Bengal Police from arresting him while he was on a mission of humanity in Bihar, but he had hardly reached his home in Allahabad when the prison gate again opened for him. He was tried for his two Calcutta speeches and given the heavy sentence of two years.

Ever since the Poona Conference of July, 1933, an increasing number of Congressmen were coming to form the view that, in the situation existing in the country as a result of Ordinance rule, a programme of entry into the Legislatures was necessary to find a way out of what was held to be a 'stalemate.' This view found an organised expression in a move to summon a Conference of Congress leaders sharing the above opinion for the purpose of giving concrete shape to the desire for a new line of action. This Conference met at Delhi on 31st March, 1933, under the Presidentship of Dr. Ansari. It resolved that the All-India Swaraj Party which had been in abeyance should be revived in order to enable Congressmen who were not offering Individual Civil Disobedience to undertake a thorough organisation of the electorate and carry out the Constructive Programme as contemplated in the Poona statement of Mahatma Gandhi (July 1933). The Conference also expressed the view that it was imperative for the Party to participate in the forthcoming elections to the Legislative Assembly. To that end it laid down that the elections should be fought on two main issues,—(1) to get all repressive laws repealed, and (2) to reject proposals contained in the White Paper and get them replaced by the National Demand on the lines indicated by Mahatma Gandhi at the R. T. C. The Conference, after coming to these tentative decisions, sent a deputation to Gandhiji consisting of Dr. Ansari, Syt. Bhulabhai Desai and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy with a view to discuss its resolution with him and ascertain his opinion before acting upon the decisions.

Gandhi was at the time touring in the earthquake-affected area of Bihar and happened to spend his silence day (the 2nd April, 1934) at an out-of-the-way place called Saharsa where, without any knowledge of what had happened at Delhi, he independently drew up a statement which he wanted to issue to the Press. But just when it was to be so issued, a message was received from Dr. Ansari intimating to him that the deputation appointed by the Delhi Conference on the previous day was coming to meet him at Patna. He held over the statement pending consultation with them, and it was issued later on the 7th after full discussion with



them. The publication of the statement was preceded by a letter to Dr. Ansari, and we give the letter and the statement below:—

GANDHIJI'S LETTER TO DR. ANSARI

PATNA, April 5, 1934.

“Dear Dr. Ansari,

It was good of you, Bhulabhai and Dr. Bidhan to come all the way to Patna to discuss the resolutions arrived at recently at an informal meeting of some Congressmen and to ascertain my opinion on them. I have no hesitation in welcoming the revival of the Swarajya Party and the decision of the meeting to take part in the forthcoming elections to the Assembly which you tell me is about to be dissolved.

“My views on the utility of the Legislatures in the present state are well known. They remain, on the whole, what they were in 1920. But I feel that it is not only the right but it is the duty of every Congressman who, for some reason or other, does not want to or cannot take part in civil resistance and who has faith in entry into the Legislatures, to seek entry and form combinations in order to prosecute the programme which he or they believe to be in the interest of the country. Consistently with my view above mentioned, I shall be at the disposal of the party at all times and render such assistance as it is in my power to give.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi”

GANDHI'S STATEMENT

(Dated, Patna, April 7, 1934)

“This statement was drafted by me on my day of silence at Saharsa, that is, Easter Monday, 2nd instant. I passed it on to Rajendra Babu and then it was circulated among the friends who were present. The original draft has undergone considerable revision. It is also abridged. But in essence it remains as it was on Monday. I regret that I have not been able to show it to all friends and colleagues with whom I would have been delighted to share it. But as I had no doubt whatsoever about the soundness of my decision and as I knew that the civil resistance of some friends was imminent, I was not prepared to take the risk of delaying publication by waiting for the opinion of friends. The decision and every word of the statement are in answer to intense introspection, searching of the heart, and waiting upon God. The decision carries with it reflection upon no single individual. It is a humble admission of my own limitations and a due sense of the tremendous responsibility that I have carried on my shoulders all these long years.

“This statement owes its inspiration to a personal chat with the inmates and associates of the Satyagraha Ashram who had just come out of prison and whom, at Rajendra Babu's instance, I had sent to Bihar. More especially is it due to a revealing information I got in the course of a conversation about a valued companion of long standing who was found reluctant to perform the full prison



task and preferring his private studies to the allotted task. This was undoubtedly contrary to the rules of Satyagraha. More than the imperfection of the friend, whom I love more than ever, it brought home to me my own imperfection. The friend said he had thought that I was aware of his weakness. I was blind. Blindness in a leader is unpardonable. I saw at once that I must for the time being remain the sole representative of a civil resistance in action.

"During the informal Conference week at Poona in July last, I had stated that, while many individual civil resisters would be welcome, even one was sufficient to keep alive the message of Satyagraha. Now, after much searching of the heart, I have arrived at the conclusion that in the present circumstances only one, and that myself, and no other should, for the time being, bear the responsibility of civil resistance, if it is to succeed as a means of achieving Purna Swaraj.

"I feel that the masses have not received the full message of Satyagraha owing to its adulteration in the process of transmission. It has become clear to me that spiritual instruments suffer in their potency when their use is taught through non-spiritual media. Spiritual messages are self-propagating. The reaction of the masses throughout the Harijan tour has been the latest forcible illustration of what I mean. The splendid response of the masses has been spontaneous. The workers themselves were amazed at the attendance and the fervour of vast masses whom they had never reached.

"Satyagraha is a purely spiritual weapon. It may be used for what appear to be mundane ends, and through men and women who do not understand it spiritually, provided the director knows that the weapon is spiritual. Every one cannot use surgical instruments. Many may use them if there is an expert behind them directing their use. I claim to be a Satyagraha expert in the making. I have need to be far more careful than the expert surgeon who is complete master of his science. I am still a humble searcher. The very nature of the science of Satyagraha precludes the student from seeing more than the step immediately in front of him.

"The introspection prompted by the conversation with the Ashram inmates has led me to the conclusion that I must advise all Congressmen to suspend civil resistance for Swaraj as distinguished from specific grievances. They should leave it to me alone. It should be resumed by others in my life-time only under my direction, unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence. I give this opinion as the author and initiator of Satyagraha. Henceforth, therefore, all who have been impelled to civil resistance for Swaraj under my advice, directly given or indirectly inferred, will please desist from civil resistance. I am quite convinced that this is the best course in the interests of India's fight for freedom.

"I am in deadly earnest about this greatest of weapons at the disposal of mankind. It is claimed for Satyagraha that it is a complete substitute for violence or war. It is designed, therefore, to reach the hearts both of the so-called 'terrorists' and the rulers who



seek to root out the 'terrorists' by emasculating the whole Nation. But the indifferent civil resistance of many, grand as it has been in its results, has not touched the hearts either of the 'terrorists' or the rulers as a class. Unadulterated Satyagraha must touch the hearts of both. To test the truth of the proposition, Satyagraha needs to be confined to one qualified person at a time. The trial has never been made. It must be made now.

"Let me caution the reader against mistaking Satyagraha for mere civil resistance. It covers much more than civil resistance. It means relentless search for Truth, and the power that such a search gives to the searcher can only be pursued by strictly non-violent means.

"What are the civil resisters, thus freed, to do? If they are to be ready for the call whenever it comes, they must learn the art and the beauty of self-denial and voluntary poverty. They must engage themselves in nation-building activities, the spread of khaddar through personal hand-spinning and hand-weaving, the spread of communal unity of hearts by irreproachable personal conduct towards one another in every walk of life, the banishing of untouchability in every shape or form in one's own person, the spread of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs by personal contact with individual addicts and, generally, by cultivating personal purity. These are services which provide maintenance on a poor man's scale. Those for whom the poor man's scale is not feasible should find place in small unorganised industries of national importance which give better wages. Let it be understood that civil resistance is for those who know and perform the duty of voluntary obedience to law and authority.

"It is hardly necessary to say that in issuing this statement I am in no way usurping the function of the Congress. Mine is mere advice to those who look to me for guidance in matters of Satyagraha."

Gandhi's statement was a result of "an intense introspection, searching of the heart, and waiting upon God." Adulteration of Satyagraha in the process of transmission, reaction of the masses manifested during Harijan tour,—all these impressed upon Gandhi the necessity of confining the movement to himself, an expert in Satyagraha, even as surgical instruments should be used only by expert surgeons. The result was the suspension of Civil Disobedience as a mass movement.

Dr. Ansari, in his statement issued at the same time, made it clear that the whole-hearted and spontaneous support of Mahatma Gandhi happily removed all chances of opposition and division in the Congress and that the dual programme, fight both within and without the Legislature, would remove political inertia and sullen discontent among the intelligentsia and the people.

A Conference was convened at Ranchi on 2nd and 3rd May, 1934, primarily to take necessary steps for making the Swaraj Party a pulsating and living organisation. One of the essential aims was to seek the approval and support of the All-India Congress Committee, vouchsafed



to it by Gandhi. The first resolution was an approval of the Delhi Conference resolutions reviving the Swaraj Party and contesting of the Assembly elections on the issues of the rejection of the White Paper, the summoning of a Constituent Assembly for preparing the National Demand, and repealing the repressive laws. Then a revised Constitution of the Swaraj Party was adopted, according to which the Swaraj Party might not accept the Congress guidance in matters of internal administration and party finance. It was distinctly laid down that, on all broad policies, the Swaraj Party should be guided by the Congress organisation.

The programme of the Swaraj Party as laid down by the Ranchi Conference on 3rd May, 1934, provides for securing of the repeal of all acts and regulations that impede the healthy growth of the Nation and speedy attainment of Purna Swaraj, for securing the release of all political prisoners, for resisting all acts and proposals for legislative enactments which may be calculated to exploit the country, for organising villages, for effecting reform in matters such as labour, currency, exchange, agriculture, and finally for carrying out the Constructive Programme of the Congress.

All these subjects were finally discussed by the All-India Congress Committee at its meetings held in Patna on 18th and 19th May, 1934. It may be incidentally noted that the A.I.C.C. was the only body in the Congress organisation which had not come under the ban of Government. Civil Disobedience was suspended as per recommendation of Gandhi and the following resolution concerning the Swaraj Party was passed:—

“Inasmuch as there exists in the Congress a vast body of members who believe in the necessity of entry into the Legislatures as a step in the country's progress towards its goal, the All-India Congress Committee hereby appoints Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. M. A. Ansari to form a board, with Dr. Ansari, as President, called the Parliamentary Board consisting of not more than 25 Congressmen.

“The Board shall run and control elections of members to the Legislature on behalf of the Congress and shall have power to raise, possess and administer funds for carrying its duties.

“The Board shall be subject to the control of the All-India Congress Committee and shall have power to frame its Constitution and make rules and regulations from time to time for the managements of its affairs. The Constitution as well as the rules and regulations shall be placed before the Working Committee for approval, but shall be in force pending the approval or otherwise of the Working Committee.

“The Board shall select only such candidates as will be pledged to carry out in the Legislatures the Congress Policy as it will be determined from time to time.”



CHAPTER III MARKING TIME

There being a general desire for an early session of the Indian National Congress, it was decided that the next ordinary session be held at Bombay in the first week of October, 1934, which date, owing to the uncertainty of the monsoon, was later changed to the last week of October. In April, events took place which had led to vital changes and their character is indicated in the following correspondence.

(The correspondence in question appears on page 568).

The Working Committee of the Congress also held its sittings at Patna, just before and after the A.I.C.C., i.e., on 18th, 19th and 20th May, 1934. It made recommendations with regard to the suspension of civil resistance and the adoption of the Council-entry programme which were, as indicated above, accepted by the A.I.C.C. The Working Committee, in view of the decision of the A.I.C.C., suspending civil resistance, called upon all the Congressmen to abide by that decision. The Congressmen all over the country obeyed this direction and the civil resistance movement stood suspended on 20th May, 1934.

Simultaneously, the Working Committee, in modification of the instructions issued by the Acting President at Poona in July, 1933, called upon all Congressmen to reorganise all Congress Committees for the purpose of carrying on normal Congress activities. It appointed several leading Congressmen with full powers on behalf of the Working Committee, to help this reorganisation in different Provinces. In view of the suspension of civil resistance, the office of the Acting President naturally terminated and in the absence, in prison, of Sirdar Vallabhbhai Patel, the President of the Congress, Syt. Jamnalal Bajaj was nominated by the Working Committee to act as President of that Committee and to exercise all the powers of the President till the ensuing session of the Congress.

It was not without some ado that the Patna decisions were arrived at. On the one hand there was a large body of opinion still extant which plumped for a no-change programme and which did not conceal its antipathy to Council work. On the other there was the steadily growing Socialist Party which, without sharing Gandhian ideals with the Congress, nevertheless stood four-square against Council-entry. All opposition, however, vanished into thin air when Gandhi stood up, rather sat down, and spoke. He had been touring in Orissa in the Harijan cause on foot. He had been making a new experiment in touring on foot. His visit to Patna was to him a wrench from work which was dearest to his heart. It was doubtless true that the new method considerably restricted the range of his travel and incidentally it meant a large curtailment of collections. But Gandhi began to feel that tour by rail and motor would mean that he was a machine for collecting funds. To make matters worse, it was contemplated that Gandhi should tour the U.P. in aeroplane as well. All this was repugnant to his taste. He had started the new experiment and



must carry it on. But Patna disturbed him, nor did he resent it. He had invited the interruption by his famous statement of April 7th (1934). He must implement it. He must liquidate the Civil Disobedience movement, vesting all residual rights in himself. He had started it in a like fashion under a resolution of the Working Committee in February, 1930, authorising him to carry out Salt Satyagraha. The movement ended as it began, and Gandhi, in two remarkable speeches, poured out his whole soul before the A.I.C.C. once again in Patna.

The month of May, 1934, also saw the birth of the Socialist Party in India. It held its first All-India Conference at Patna on 17th May, 1934, under the Presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev. Besides dealing with the question of Council-entry and the textile strike, it resolved that the time had come for the setting up of an All-India organisation of the Socialists in the Congress, and to that end it appointed a drafting committee to prepare a draft programme and constitution for such an organisation for submission to the Bombay Session of the All-India Socialist Conference. Since the Patna meeting, branches of the Socialist Party were formed in several Provinces.

The Patna decisions were soon followed by a change in the centre of gravity of the Congress. The Civil Disobedience movement was switched off and the Council-entry programme was switched on. It was as if the belt in a workshop turning round the shaft was simply slipped off the fast on to the loose pulley. In the twinkling of an eye, faster than the fall of an object whose position is dislocated, quicker than the alternation of darkness with light when the current is off, more expeditiously than the stopping of moving piece of machinery brought about by the pushing of a bar did the Civil Disobedience movement yield place to Council-entry. Gandhi alone remained free to practise the former, not that the country had none others to keep him company, but at Patna that was the position created by the resolutions passed by the A.I.C.C. Gandhi resumed his Harijan tour in Utkal and followed it up by a tour in U.P. The time-limit was about to expire which he had placed upon himself in respect of participation in a political programme. August 4th was the day on which he would have been released if his fast had not compelled Government to release him. Speculation was rife as to what he would do thereafter. Would he precipitate a crisis by going to the Frontier against the refusal of permission by the Government of India? Else why did he reserve to himself the right to practise Individual Disobedience? But would he, having permitted the country to contest elections to the Assembly, plunge it into an abyss of sorrow and confusion, by seeking prison himself? That was unthinkable; that was not Gandhi-like. Whatever Gandhi might do or might not do, whosoever might contest or might not contest elections, there was enough to shake work for Congressmen throughout the country. Almost all the Congress and allied organisations had been declared unlawful bodies, with the exception of the All-India Congress Committee, early in 1932. Government took early steps to lift the ban on Congress organisations in the country and the ban was lifted on most of them on 12th June, 1934. Only those in the N.W.F. and in Bengal and some of the allied or affiliated organisations like the Hindustan Seva Dal in some Provinces continued to be under the ban. In some Provinces the Gov-

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ernment still retained possession of the premises used by organisations which, according to it, were directly or indirectly connected with the Civil Disobedience movement and some were not restored even till the middle of 1935. The Government also announced a general policy of expediting the release of the Civil Disobedience prisoners, but many of them, specially from Gujarat, remained still behind the prison bars. Several Congressmen in Gujarat, though life-long residents in British India, were not allowed to enter it and were for all practical purposes under internment in Indian States. Persons in different parts of the country who were connected with the Civil Disobedience movement were not given passports to leave India on legitimate business.

Immediately after the Patna decisions, however, Congressmen all over the country had already started re-organising the Congress. Committees and, by the month of June, most Congress Committees in the Provinces had resumed their normal functioning as before 1932. Accordingly, the Working Committee met at Wardha on June 12th and 13th, and again on June 17th and 18th at Bombay. It laid down for the newly organised Congress Committees a constructive programme, the main items of which were production of khaddar through self-spinning and spread therefore within the area of production, removal of untouchability, the promotion of inter-communal unity, the promotion of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs and advocacy of prohibition, promotion of education on national lines, promotion and development of useful small industries, organisation and reconstruction of village life in its economic, educational, social and hygienic aspects, spread of useful knowledge amongst the adult population in the villages, or organisation of industrial labour, and such other activities as are not inconsistent with the Congress objective or general policy and which will not involve any form of civil resistance. The Committee also decided to draw the attention of the Government to the discrepancy in the *Communique* withdrawing the ban on Congress organisations, which, though cancelling notifications against constituent parts of the Congress organisation, had retained the ban on the Khudai Khidmatgars, who were, since August, 1931, part of the Congress. The Government, however, while not denying the patent discrepancy, refused to withdraw their notification against the Khudai Khidmatgars as also the Afghan Jirga.

Another important question which came up before the Working Committee at its Bombay sitting was the one relating to the Congress policy in regard to the White Paper proposals and the Communal Award. The Congress Parliamentary Board having asked the Working Committee to enunciate this policy, the Committee passed its well-known resolution on the question. The resolution was preceded by discussions which disclosed a fundamental difference in the points of view of Pandit Malaviyaji and Syt. M. S. Aney on the one side, and the Working Committee on the other. The former felt that they could not, in view of this difference, retain their connection, respectively, with the Congress Parliamentary Board and the Working Committee and hence they tendered their resignations. As, however, it was felt that a fuller discussion might eventually prevent this development, they were persuaded by their colleagues to withdraw their resignations.



The Working Committee resolution dealing with the White Paper was as follows :—

“The White Paper in no way expresses the will of the people of India, has been more or less condemned by almost all the Indian Political parties, and falls far short of the Congress goal, if it does not retard the progress towards it. The only satisfactory alternative to the White Paper is a Constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage or as near it as possible, with the power, if necessary, to the important minorities, to have their representatives elected exclusively by the electors belonging to such minorities.

“The White Paper lapsing, the Communal Award must lapse automatically. Among other things, it will be the duty of the Constituent Assembly to determine the method of representation of important minorities and make provision for otherwise safeguarding their interests.

“Since, however, the different communities in the country are sharply divided on the question of the Communal Award, it is necessary to define the Congress attitude on it. The Congress claims to represent equally all the communities composing the Indian Nation and, therefore, in view of the division of opinion, can neither accept nor reject the Communal Award as long as the division of opinion lasts. At the same time, it is necessary to re-declare the policy of the Congress on the communal question.

“No solution that is not purely national can be propounded by the Congress. But the Congress is pledged to accept any solution, falling short of the national, which is agreed to by all the parties concerned, and, conversely, to reject any solution which is not agreed to by any of the said parties.

“Judged by the national standard, the Communal Award is wholly unsatisfactory, besides being open to serious objections on other grounds.

“It is, however, obvious that the only way to prevent the untoward consequences of the Communal Award is to explore ways and means of arriving at an agreed solution and not by any appeal on this essentially domestic question to the British Government or any other outside authority.”

While the suspension of the civil resistance campaign led to a grudgingly slow process of expediting the release of C. D. prisoners, it was clear that Government had made up their minds not to release Sirdar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Jawaharlal or Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. In the case of two of these, Sirdar Vallabhbhai and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, there was no fixed period of imprisonment. They were both imprisoned under the Regulations as early as 1932 and were State prisoners during the pleasure of the Government. Circumstances, however, soon developed which forced the hands of the Government. Sirdar Vallabhbhai had been suffering from serious nose trouble of a long standing nature, which grew worse and by the month of July had assumed a very serious aspect. The examination by a Medical Board appointed by Government disclosed the

urgent necessity of an operation which could be properly done only if he was a free man. Accordingly, the Government released him on 14th July, 1934.

The discussions with Pandit Malaviya and Syt. Aney were renewed at the Benares meeting of the Working Committee held there from July 27th to 30th. Short of abandoning its fundamental attitude of non-acceptance and non-rejection of the Communal Award, the Working Committee explored all avenues for discovering a *via media* with a view to retain the co-operation of Pandit Malaviya and Syt. Aney. In view of the point made by them relating to 'the deep and long standing conviction of some leading Congressmen in regard to the question of electorates, Gandhi offered a compromise providing for exception being made in the case of those among otherwise eligible candidates who had a conscientious objection to the Working Committee's resolution on the Communal Award. Gandhi's formula was not found adequate by Pandit Malaviya and Syt. Aney. In view of this, the former resigned the Presidentship of the Congress Parliamentary Board and the latter the membership of the Working Committee and of the Congress Parliamentary Board. Bengal had a grievance too which related to the extra seats given to the Harijans, so that Bengal's opposition to the attitude of the Working Committee was based not merely on their hostility to the rest of the communal decision, but to the Poona Pact as well.

Doubts having arisen on the Congress policy in regard to Swadeshi, the Working Committee at this same meeting reaffirmed the Congress position on Swadeshi and laid down its policy, in unequivocal terms, as follows:

"Doubts having arisen on the Congress policy in regard to Swadeshi, it has become necessary to reaffirm the Congress position on it in unequivocal terms.

"Notwithstanding what was done during the civil resistance struggle, no competition is permissible on Congress platform and in Congress exhibitions between mill-made cloth and hand-spun and hand-woven khadi. Congressmen are expected to use and encourage the use of only hand-spun and hand-woven khadi, to the exclusion of any other cloth.

"In regard to articles other than cloth, the Working Committee adopts the following formula for the guidance of all Congress organisations:

"The Working Committee is of opinion that the activities of Congress organisations relating to Swadeshi shall be restricted to useful articles manufactured in India through cottage and other small industries which are in need of popular education for their support, and which will accept the guidance of the Congress organisations in regulating prices and in the matter of the wages and welfare of labour under their control."

"This formula must not be interpreted to mean any modification of the unbroken policy of the Congress to promote the Swadeshi spirit in the country and to encourage the personal use of only Swadeshi articles. The formula is a recognition of the fact that the large and organised industries which can or do command State aid



are in no need of the services of Congress organisations or any Congress effort in their behalf."

On the question of discipline among the office-bearers, the Working Committee was of opinion that,

"All Congressmen, whether they believe in the Congress programme and policies or not, are expected, and office-bearers and members of the Executive are in honour bound, to carry them out, and that office-bearers and members of the Executive who carry on propaganda or act against the Congress programme and policies are, in accordance with the rules made by the A.I.C.C. dated May 24, 1929, under Art. XXXI. of the Constitution, clearly guilty of breach of discipline and liable to disciplinary action."

The Working Committee having considered the resignation of Syt. M. S. Aney, recognised the high-minded motive that had prompted the resignation and regretfully accepted it. The Working Committee placed on record its sense of the great assistance rendered by him to the Committee. Dr. Mohammad Alam also had sent in his resignation, but for a different reason.

Consequent upon their resignations, Pandit Malaviya and Syt. Aney summoned a Conference of Congressmen and others which met at Calcutta on the 18th and 19th August under the Presidentship of Pandit Malaviya. The Conference decided that a separate Party should be constituted with the object of carrying on agitation against the Communal Award and the White Paper, in the Legislatures and outside, and of setting up candidates for election to the Legislative Assembly for the promotion of that object. After laying down the principles which would govern its selection of Party candidates, and passing resolutions condemning the White Paper and the Communal Award, the Conference requested the Working Committee of the Congress to call a meeting of the A.I.C.C. with a view to revising its resolution on the Award.

In the concluding week of August took place an event which partly eased the political tension kept up in the country by the spirit of repression which Government was maintaining even after the suspension of civil resistance. The continued detention of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan offended public opinion. The Frontier Province was one of those Provinces in the country which had borne the brunt of the fight, whether in 1930 or in 1932-34. The spirit of non-violence and patient suffering of the martial Pathans had been sorely tried, but—and that is the proud assertion of the Frontier's representatives—they never forsook the path of non-violence, despite provocations which only the medieval and autocratic tradition of the Province could make possible. There was, therefore, a widespread feeling that the detention in jail of the leader of the Province was unjust. Gandhi's mind was greatly exercised over the question of the Frontier and he was considering how to solve the problem of personally knowing the whole truth about that Province. The sudden release of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and his brother Dr. Khan Saheb in the last week of August was, therefore, a matter of general relief. But though free men, they were not free to visit their own Province and home. The Government, while releasing them, prohibited their entry into the



Frontier Province, which had implicitly obeyed instructions in regard to the suspension of civil resistance.

In the month of September, the Working Committee met on the 25th at Wardha and reiterated the Congress goal and the means of its attainment, in view of the misgivings that rose in the minds of some Congress men and others that the goal of Purna Swaraj was being watered down. It was virtually a repetition of the Karachi position. In respect of the 'coming elections', the Working Committee urged that all provincial and other subordinate Congress organisations should regard it as their duty to help the Congress Parliamentary Board in its election activities, and that it was not open to them to support any Party or candidate opposed to the official policy of the Congress, and it expected every Congressman, save on grounds of conscience, to support the Congress candidates in the forthcoming elections. The Zanzibar Indians and their grievances over the contemplated forcible expropriation of their just rights in land was the subject of another resolution. A delicate situation arose over the new Party formed by Syt. M. S. Aney. A resolution was passed by this Party to the effect that a meeting of the A.I.C.C. should be convened so as to have the resolution of the Working Committee on the communal decision reviewed by the A.I.C.C. The President invited Pandit Malaviyaji and Syt. Aney to attend the meeting and present their viewpoint in person. The Working Committee duly met and gave several hours to the consideration of the question of calling a meeting of the A.I.C.C. and finally came to the conclusion that inasmuch as the Working Committee had no doubt about the propriety of its action, and in view of the fact that new elections for the A.I.C.C. were going on, the Working Committee could not take the responsibility of calling the meeting. It was mentioned at the meeting that, if members of the A.I.C.C. had any grievance against the Working Committee in respect of its resolution, it was open to any 30 members of the A.I.C.C. to send a requisition which would have compelled the Working Committee to convene such a meeting.

The Working Committee also discussed the question of releasing on the grounds of conscience, candidates for election to the Assembly from the obligation to conform to the Working Committee resolution on the communal decision. The Working Committee came to the conclusion, in the absence of any such resolution on release by the Working Committee, that no exemption could be granted. Gandhi had made a proposal to Panditji, in answer to a message sent by the latter through Syt. Aney, that the way to avoid acrimony and conflict was to reach an agreement on the basis of examination of the prospects of success of rival candidates, the candidature of those who had less chance of success being withdrawn. But while on this no agreement could be reached, the Board decided not to contest seats where Pandit Malaviyaji and Syt. Aney stood as candidates. It was also decided not to enter into contest in Sind and in the city of Calcutta.

About this time another important development took place in the history of the Congress. It was widely rumoured that Gandhi would leave the Congress. This was not a mere rumour, as Gandhi had been freely mentioning it to the friends who had gone to see him while he pass-

ed through his 7 days' fast in the middle of July, and to several other friends from Bengal, Andhra, and elsewhere, who went to Wardha to meet him for one reason or another. The wonder was that a matter so widely known was kept so private till a journalistic scoop brought it out with a gusto. On this subject, however, Gandhi made an elaborate statement which we publish below in full. Gandhi's procedure in deciding to leave the Congress was variously understood and interpreted. Few thought that he would cease to be a four-anna member. Some freely indulged in the criticism that his withdrawal from the Congress just as the elections were approaching (in November, 1934) was as unfortunate as it was indiscreet. A few thought that if his amendments to the Constitution were accepted, he might still remain in the Congress. But the Bombay Session of the Congress, which was to meet towards the last week of October, would clear all doubts. There were some that went to the length of asking why he should attend the Congress session if he was pre-determined to leave the Congress itself, and still others who asked why he should seek to amend the Congress Constitution on his own lines and then leave the body, much to the embarrassment of those in whose hands it would be left in an altered form. All these were not views expressed but aspects of 'thinking aloud.' No one comes to a conclusion, or accepts a conclusion reached by others, without subjecting it to a close and careful analysis. Some decide by instinct. They are great men and true. Some are content to accept others' decisions,—they are *Bhaktas* who believe, and are saved. Some want to reason and decide. They are wise men. Some are overborne by the logic of facts or situations,—to them law and logic are greater than life,—they are cynics. Some hug their own biases and would not change their minds. They are men of prejudices and predilections. Some are convinced against their will, but continue to be of their opinion still. All these classes of men were bestirred by Gandhi's statement, but all shared the common feature, that they were helpless against the masterful personality and his unalterable decisions arrived at by the play of instinct and not reason, by the urge of the *Zameer* or inner voice in him.

GANDHI'S STATEMENT

WARDHAGANJ, Sept. 17.

Mahatma Gandhi issued the following statement to the Press:—

"The rumour that I had contemplated severing all physical connections with the Congress was true. However, for the considerations urged by my friends who had come to Wardha during the meetings of the Working Committee and Parliamentary Board last week, I agreed with them that it might be safer for me to leave the Congress, if at all, after the forthcoming session. There was an intermediate course, suggested by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and Mr. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, of remaining in the Congress without participating in active administration of the organisation, but both Sirdar Vallabhbhai Patel and Moulana Abul Kalam Azad strongly disapproved of that course. Sirdar Vallabhbhai had agreed with me that the time had arrived for me to retire from the Congress, but

many others would not endorse that view. After due consideration of all the pros and cons, I have adopted the safe and prudent course of postponing the final step at least till after the meeting of the Congress session in October. One attractive idea behind the insistence on postponement was that it would enable me to test the accuracy of my impression that a very large body of the Congress intelligentsia were tired of my method and views, and programme based upon them, that I was a hindrance rather than a help to the natural growth of the Congress, that, instead of remaining the most democratic and representative organisation, it was dominated by my personality, that in it there was no free play of reason.

"If I am to test the truth or otherwise of my impression, naturally, I must put before the public the reasons on which my impression is based, and my own proposals based thereon. Congressmen might vote on them and thus clearly register their opinion.

"I must try to do this as briefly as I can. It has appeared to me that there is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself. I seem to be going in a direction just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me. No leader can expect greater loyalty and devotion than I have received from intellectually-minded Congressmen, even when they have protested and signified their disapproval of the policies I have laid before the Congress. For me any more to draw upon this loyalty and devotion is to put undue strain upon them. Their loyalty cannot blind my eyes to what appear to me to be fundamental differences between the Congress intelligentsia and me.

"Let me state them. I put the spinning-wheel and khadi in the forefront. Hand-spinning by Congress intelligentsia has all but disappeared. The general body of them have no faith in it and yet, if I could carry their reason with me, I would substitute the four-anna franchise by personal, daily hand-spinning. The khadi clause of the Congress Constitution has been almost a dead letter from the beginning and Congressmen have not been wanting who have reminded me that I am responsible for the hypocrisy and evasion about the working of the khadi clause. I ought to have realized that it was not passed out of deep conviction, but largely out of personal loyalty to me. I must own that there is considerable force in the argument. Nevertheless my conviction is growing that if India is to win Complete Independence in terms of the toiling millions and through unadulterated non-violence, the spinning-wheel and khadi have to be as natural to the educated few as to the partially unemployed and semi-starved millions who, for not using their hands for the purpose for which nature has endowed man with them, have become almost like beasts of burden. The spinning-wheel is thus an emblem of human dignity and equality in the truest sense of the term. It is the handmaid of agriculture. It is the Nation's second lung. We are perishing because we are using only one lung, yet only a few Congressmen have a living faith in the India-wide potency of the wheel.