

# FAMOUS LETTERS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

COMPILED & EDITED  
BY

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## INTRODUCTION

**M**AHATMA Gandhi's life has been a persistent struggle against the powerful forces of British Imperialism which have held India in bondage for more than a century and a half. During a period of about fifty years of his political career he has been off and on writing letters of the nature of advisory notes, "petitions", and ultimatums to the Viceroys of India and other British statesmen. In these pages have been collected some of the most important letters of the Mahatma.

With the exception of those written to the inmates of Sabarmati Ashram, which are rather personal in nature, all others are of immense significance to a student of Indian politics. They afford us a peep into the mind of the Great Mahatma. He is considered to be one of the most outspoken, fearless and 'seditious' writers of India, but a spirit of humanity and fellow-feeling permeates through all his letters. In spite of a marked sense of revolt against the British Government, his letters indicate a strong desire to maintain peace at all costs. The Mahatma does not hate the British people; he only desires British Imperialism to go.

Besides giving us an insight into the mind of the Mahatma these letters also constitute a gradual chronological survey of the political events in India and in this respect they are also of historical importance to readers interested in the political history of India.

Not only that these letters besides being informative in content and historical in nature are also exhortative in tone. When you read them, your heart throbs with emotion and you feel one with the Mahatma in condemning British Diplomacy in India. They can serve as emotional stimulants to many a weary youth of India.

This golden sheaf of the letters of Mahatma Gandhi combines in itself the elements of a biography, political history and patriotic exhortation. As such they are sure to catch the interest of all who want to have a recollection of India's freedom movement at its various stages, and others who are interested in the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi and still others who just need a mental pill to stimulate patriotic sentiments.

In the end I am grateful to Mr. Shanti Parkash Kohli who gave me all possible help in the compilation of these documents and also in getting the manuscript typed.

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71, Royal Park,  
Lahore

23rd February, 1947.

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## MAHATMA GANDHI.

(A short biographical sketch.)

Mohanlal Karamchand Gandhi, now famous as Mahatma Gandhi, was born in the year 1869 in an orthodox Gujerati family known for their loyalty to the various Kathiawar States. His father was the Prime Minister of Rajkot and his grand father was the Prime Minister of Porbander. The story goes that on one occasion, consequent to some intrigues, his grand father was required to take refuge in a neighbouring State, where he saluted the Ruler with his left hand. On being questioned about it he replied that his right hand was pledged to Porbander.

Mahatma Gandhi seems to have inherited his deep rooted religious sense from his mother, who was known to be a lady of simple and pious habits and of deep devotional mind, and was renowned for her regularity in visiting the temple almost daily.

Mahatma Gandhi was married at the early age of 12 years to Kasturba and seven years after their marriage, at the age of 19 years, he left for England for higher studies in Law. After finishing his studies

in Law he was required to go to South Africa to fight a law suit on behalf of a very big firm of traders. It was there, in South Africa, that the seeds of his political career were sown. There were, at that time, about 1,50,000 Indians in that country, whom Gandhiji found living virtually in a state of semi-slavery, subjected to a pernicious colour bar with many political and social barriers. His struggle in South Africa for the emancipation of Indians in that country was one of his earliest, encounters with 'White Imperialism'. Many a time even his life was in danger but nothing could deter the dauntless Indian Barrister from the path of justice and truth. He fought a valourous campaign of non-violent passive resistance in S. Africa with such a spirit of consistency and sacrifice that the haughty General Smuts had to come round to a settlement with the non-violent Indian resister.

From S. Africa, Gandhiji returned to India with his faith in British justice greatly shaken. After the lapse of sometime the Great War I began. In spite of her great sacrifices India was not given the promised Home Rule, and instead of that big crowds of Indian patriots were subjected to indiscriminate machine-gunning—that was the reward for loyalty to British cause! Consequently a wave of indignation ran across the country; Hindus and

Muslims joined hands together in their determination to weed out the foreign rule from India. Gandhiji was sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment.

Ten years later he started another campaign for India's freedom, resulting ultimately in a pact between him and the then Viceroy—known as Gandhi-Irwin pact. Soon after in response to an invitation from the British diplomats he went to England to present India's case in the Round Table Conference held there at that time. He was, however, once again disillusioned by false British pretences. Everything ended in smoke and the 'lathi' and the bullet, and Martial Law ruled, India for the next two years.

In 1942 he was in a way the initiator of the August Movement which although put down by British bayonets, will nevertheless go in the annals of Indian political history as a great uprising of a brave people for their own liberation.

Besides politics, social and religious reform are the other interests of Gandhiji's life. He has been taking special pains to alleviate the sufferings of women and untouchables and has endeavoured his utmost in the direction of bringing about a new

philosophy in a new world. Education too engages enough of his attention and he is literally the father of the Wardha Scheme of Education. Gandhiji in short is a politician, a saint, a social reformer and a constructive philosopher all combined in a frail little person.

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## LETTER TO LORD CHELMSFORD.

(During the period of Great War I a War Conference was called at Delhi by the British Diplomats to which Mahatma Gandhi was invited. The Mahatma however declined to join the conference. One of the reasons for his refusal to join it was that Lokamanya Tilak, Mrs. Annie Besant and Ali Brothers whom he considered to be very powerful leaders of the country, were not invited. After a personal interview with he then Viceroy of India, Gandhiji came round to join the conference. During that period the Mahatma addressed the following letter to Lord Chelmsford, wherein he showed his willingness to support the cause of the Allies by manpower but regretted that he could not exhort his countrymen for financial assistance as India had already contributed more than her due. He also appealed to the British to give definite assurances for the protection of the rights of Mohammedan States.)

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## I LOVE THE ENGLISH NATION.

Sir,— As you are aware, after careful consideration I felt constrained to convey to Your Excellency that I could not attend the Conference for reasons stated in the letter of the 26th instant (April) but after the interview you were good enough to grant me, I persuaded myself to join it, if for no other cause than certainly out of my great regard for yourself. One of my reasons for absentation and perhaps the strongest was that Lokamanya Tilak, Mrs. Besant and the Ali Brother, whom I regard as among the most powerful leaders of public opinion were not invited to the Conference. I still feel that it was a grave blunder not to have asked them, and I respectfully suggest that that blunder might be possibly repaired if these leaders were invited to assist the Government by giving it the benefit of their advice at the Provincial Conferences, which, I understand are to follow. I venture to submit that no Government can afford to disregard the leaders, who represent the large masses of the people as these do, even though they may hold views fundamentally different. At the same time it gives me pleasure to be able to say that the views of all parties were permitted to be freely expressed at the

Committees of the Conference. For my part, I purposely refrained from stating my views at the Committee at which I had the honour of serving, or at the Conference itself. I felt that I could best serve the objects of the Conference by simply tendering my support to the resolutions submitted to it and this I have done without any reservation. I hope to translate the spoken word into action as early as the Government can see its way to accept my offer which I am submitting simultaneously herewith in a separate letter.

I recognise that in the hour of its danger we must give, as we have decided to give, ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire of which we aspire in the near future to be partners in the same sense as the Dominions Overseas. But it is the simple truth that our response is due to the expectation that our goal will be reached all the more speedily. On that account, even as performance or duty automatically confer a corresponding right, people are entitled to believe that the imminent reforms alluded to in your speech will embody the main general principles of the Congress-League Scheme, and I am sure that it is this faith which has enabled many members of the conference to tender to the Government their full hearted co-

operation. If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions and not whisper "Home Rule" or "Responsible Government" during the pendency of the War. I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment and I know that India, by this very act, would become the most favoured partner in the Empire and racial distinctions would become a thing of the past. But practically the whole of educated India has decided to take a less effective course, and it is no longer possible to say that educated India does not exercise any influence on the masses. I have been coming into most intimate touch with the raiyats ever since my return from South Africa to India, and I wish to assure you that the desire for Home Rule has widely penetrated them. I was present at the sessions of the last Congress and I was a party to the resolution that full Responsible Government should be granted to British India within a period to be fixed definitely by a Parliamentary Statute. I admit that it is a bold step to take, but I feel sure that nothing less than a definite vision of Home Rule to be realised in the shortest possible time will satisfy the Indian people. I know that there are many in India who consider no sacrifice is too great in order to achieve the end,

and they are wakeful enough to realise that they must be equally prepared to sacrifice themselves for the Empire in which they hope and desire to reach their final status. It follows then that we can but accelerate our journey to the goal by silently and simply devoting ourselves heart and soul to the work of delivering the Empire from the threatening danger. It will be a national suicide not to recognise this elementary truth. We much perceive that if we serve to save the Empire, we have in that very act secured Home Rule.

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

The conference means for me, and I believe for many of us, a definite step in the consecration of our lives to the common cause, but ours is a peculiar position. We are today outside the partnership. Ours is a consecration based on hope of better future. I should be untrue to you and to my country if I

did not clearly and unequivocally tell you what that hope is. I do not bargain for its fulfilment, but you should know that disappointment of hope means disillusion. There is one thing I may not omit. You have appealed to us to sink domestic differences. If appeal involves the toleration of tyranny and wrongdoings on the part of officials, I am powerless to respond. I shall resist organised tyranny to the uttermost. The appeal must be to the officials that they do not ill-treat a single soul and that they consult and respect popular opinion as never before. In Champaran by resisting an age-long tyranny I have shown the ultimate sovereignty of British Justice. In Kaira, a population that was cursing the Government now feels that it, and not the Government, is the power when it is prepared to suffer for the truth it represents. It is, therefore, losing its bitterness and is saying to itself that the Government must be a Government for people, for it tolerates orderly and respectful disobedience where injustice is felt. Thus Champaran and Kaira affairs are my direct, definite and special contribution to the War. Ask me to suspend my activities in that direction and you ask me to suspend my life. If I could popularise the use of soul force which is but another name for love force in place of brute force, I know that I could present you with an India that

could defy the whole world to its worst. In season and out of season, therefore, I shall discipline myself to express in my life this eternal law of suffering and present it for acceptance to those who care and if I take part in any other activity, the motive is to show the matchless superiority of that law.

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

*I write this, because I love the English Nation, and I wish to evoke in every Indian the loyalty of Englishmen.*

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## **ULTIMATUM TO LORD CHELMSFORD.**

(When the Great War I was over, a Turkish Peace Treaty was signed at Paris, whereby Turkey was to be dismembered and only Constantinople with a fringe of territory for defence purposes was conceded to the Sultan. During the course of the War, Lloyd George the then British Prime Minister had assured the Muslim world that Turkey would not be deprived of the rich lands of Asia Minor and Thrace, and the above treaty was a cruel violation of these assurances and promises. The Mussalmans of India were therefore enraged at this 'twist' of the British diplomacy. Mahatama Gandhi at that time gave his full support to the Muslim cause and advised the Mussalmans of India to withdraw their support from the Viceroy's Government. Protesting against the cruel violence that had been done to the Muslim sentiments he sent the following letter to Lord Chelmsford advising him to represent the Muslim cause to the Allies and in default thereof he told the Viceroy, *that non-co-operation was the only course for the Indians.*)

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## WE HAVE LOST FAITH IN BRITISH JUSTICE!

" Your Excellency,—As one who has enjoyed a certain measure of Your Excellency's confidence and as one who claims to be a devoted well wisher of the British Empire, I owe it to Your Excellency and through Your Excellency to His Majesty's ministers to explain my connection with and my conduct in the Khilafat question.

At the very earliest stage of the War, even while I was in London organising the Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps, I began to interest myself in the Khilafat question. I perceived how deeply moved the Mussalman world in London was when Turkey decided to throw in her lot with Germany. On my arrival in January of 1915 I found the same anxiousness and earnestness among the Mussalmans with whom I came in contact. Their anxiety became intense when the information about the secret treaties leaked out. Distrust of British intentions filled their minds and despair took possession of them. Even at that moment I advised my Mussalman friends not to give way to despair but to express their fears and their hopes in a disciplined manner

It will be admitted that the whole of the Musselman India has behaved in a singularly restrained manner during the past five years and that the leaders have been able to keep the turbulent sections of their community under complete control.

The peace terms and Your Excellency's defence of them have given the Mussalmans of India a shock from which it will be difficult for them to recover. The terms violate the ministerial pledges and utterly disregard Musselman's sentiments. I consider that, as a staunch Hindu wishing to live on terms of the closest friendship with my Musselman countrymen, I should be an unworthy son of India if I did not stand by them in their hour of trial. In my humble opinion their cause is just. They claim that Turkey must not be punished if their sentiment is to be respected. Muslim soldier did not fight to inflict punishment on their own Khalifa or to deprive him of his territories. The Musselman attitude has been consistent throughout these five years.

*My duty to the Empire, to which I owe my loyalty, requires me to resist the cruel violence that has been done to the Musselman sentiment so far as I am aware. Mussalmans and Hindus have, as a whole, lost faith in British justice and honour.*

The report of the majority of the Hunter Committee, Your Excellency's despatch thereon and Mr. Montagu's reply have only aggravated the distrust.

In these circumstances, the only course open to one like me is either in despair to sever all connections with British rule or, if I still retained faith in the inherent superiority of the British constitution to all others at present in vogue, to adopt such means as will rectify the wrong done and thus restore confidence. I have not lost faith in such superiority and I am not without hope that somehow or other justice will yet be rendered if we show the requisite capacity for suffering. Indeed, my conception of that constitution is that it helps only those who are ready to help themselves. I do not believe that it protects the weak. It gives free scope to the strong to maintain their strength and develop it. The weak under it go to the wall.

It is then because I believe in the British constitution that I have advised my Mussalman friends to withdraw their support from Your Excellency's Government and the Hindus to join them should the peace terms not be revised in accordance with the solemn pledges of ministers and the Muslim sentiment. Three courses were open to the Mohammedans in order to mark their emphatic

disapproval of the utter injustice to which His Majesty's ministers have become a party if they have not actually been the prime perpetrators of it. They are

1. To resort to violence.
2. To advise emigration on a wholesale scale.
3. Not to be a party to the injustice by ceasing to co-operate with the Government.

Your Excellency must be aware that there was a time when the boldest, though also the most thoughtless among the Mussalmans favoured violence and that Hijrat (emigration) has not yet ceased to be a battle-cry. I venture to claim that I have succeeded by patient reasoning in weaning the party of violence from its ways. I confess that I did not—I did not attempt to—succeed in weaning them from violence on moral grounds but purely on utilitarian grounds. The result for the time being at any rate has, however, been to stop violence. The school of Hijrat has received a check if it has not stopped its activity entirely. I hold that no repression could have prevented a violent eruption if the people had

not presented to them a form of direct action involving considerable sacrifice and ensuing success if such direct action was largely taken up by the public. Non-co-operation was the only dignified and constitutional form of such direct action, for it is the right recognised from times immemorial of the subject to refuse to assist a ruler who misrules.

At the same time I admit the non-co-operation practised by the mass of people is attended with grave risks. But in a crisis such as has overtaken the Mussalmans of India no step that is unattended with large risks can possibly bring about the desired change. Not to run some risks will be to court much greater risks if not virtual destruction of law and order.

But there is yet an escape from non-co-operation. The Mussalman representation has requested Your Excellency to lead the agitation yourself as did your distinguished predecessor at the time of the South African trouble. But if you cannot see your way to do so, non-co-operation becomes a dire necessity. I hope Your Excellency will give those who have accepted my advice and myself the credit for being actuated by nothing less than a stern sense of duty.

I have the honour to remain,  
Your Excellency's obdt. servant.

(Sd.) M. K. GANDHI.

Laburnum Road,  
Gamdevi, Bombay.  
22nd June, 1920.

## TO EVERY ENGLISHMAN LIVING IN INDIA.

(During the fateful period of the non-co-operation movement of the years 1920 and 1921 Mahatma Gandhi addressed two soul-stirring letters to the Englishmen residing in India. These letters will go as most important documents in the annals of Indian History. The coming generations will read these letters with immense interest and would bow their heads with reverence to the memory of a great soul—Mahatma Gandhi.

In these letters the Mahatma laid bare his sincerest feelings before the Englishmen. The lines speak of the inestimably deep sense of love which the Mahatma has for humanity at large. He made it plain to every Englishman in India that he had no grudge against individuals. He did not hate the British nation. It was the vicious system of British Imperialism he was fighting and he, in good faith, invited even the Englishmen to join hands with him in the above referred fight against the system.)

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## JOIN ME IN DESTROYING THIS SYSTEM.

Dear Friend,—I wish that every Englishman will see this appeal and give thoughtful attention to it.

Let me introduce myself to you. In my humble opinion no Indian has co-operated with the British Government more than I have for an unbroken period of twenty-nine years of public life in the face of circumstances that might well have turned any other man into a rebel. I ask you to believe me when I tell you that my co-operation was not based on the fear of the punishments provided by your laws or any other selfish motives. It was free and voluntary co-operation based on the belief that the sumtotal of the British Government was for the benefit of India; I put my life in peril four times for the sake of the Empire—at the time of the Boer War when I was in charge of the Ambulance Corps whose work was mentioned in General Buller's despatches; at the time of the Zulu revolt in Natal when I was in charge of a similar corps; at the time of the commencement of the late War when I raised an Ambulance Corps and as a result of the strenuous training had a severe attack of peurish; and, lastly,

in fulfilment of my promise to Lord Chelmsford at the War Conference in Delhi, I threw myself in such an active recruiting campaign in Kaira District involving long and trying marches that I had an attack of dysentery which proved almost fatal. I did all this in the full belief that acts such as mine must gain for my country an equal status in the Empire. So last December I pleaded hard for a trustful co-operation. I fully believed that Mr. Lloyd George would redeem his promise to the Mussalmans and that the revelations of the official atrocities in the Punjab would secure full reparation for the Punjabis. But the treachery of Mr. Lloyd George and its appreciation by you, and the condonation of the Punjab atrocities have completely shattered my faith in the good intentions of the Government and the nation which is supporting it.

But though my faith in your good intentions is gone I recognise your bravery and I know that what you will not yield to justice and reason, you will gladly yield to bravery.

See what this Empire means to India.

Exploitation of India's resources for the benefit of Great Britain.

An ever-increasing military expenditure and a Civil Service, the most expensive in the world.

Extravagant working of every department in utter disregard of India's poverty.

Disarmament and consequent emasculation of a whole nation, lest an armed nation might imperil the lives of a handful of you in our midst.

Traffic in intoxicating liquors and drugs for the purpose of sustaining a top heavy administration.

Progressively representative legislation in order to suppress an ever-growing agitation, seeking to give expression to a nation's agony.

Degrading treatment of Indians residing in your Dominions, and

You have shown total disregard of our feelings by glorifying the Punjab administration and flouting the Mussalman sentiment.

I know you would not mind if we could fight and wrest the sceptre from your hands. You know that we are powerless to do that, for you have ensured our incapacity to fight in open and honourable battle. Bravery on the battle-field is thus impossible for us. Bravery of the soul still remains open to us. I know you will respond to that also. I am engaged in evoking that bravery. Non-co-operation means

nothing less than training in self-sacrifice. Why should we co-operate with you when we know that, by your administration of this great country we are being daily enslaved in an increasing degree. This response of the people to my appeal is not due to my personality. I would like you to dismiss me, and for that matter the Ali Brothers too, from your consideration. My personality will fail to evoke any response to anti-Muslim cry if I were foolish enough to raise it, as the magic name of the Ali Brothers would fail to inspire the Mussalmans with enthusiasm if they were madly to raise an anti-Hindu cry. People flock in their thousands to listen to us, because we today represent the voice of a nation groaning under iron heels. The Ali Brother were your friends as I was, and still am. My religion forbids me to bear any ill-will towards you. I would not raise my hand against you even if I had the power. I expect to conquer you only by my suffering. The Ali Brothers will certainly draw the sword if they could, in defence of their religion and their country. But they and I have made common cause with the people of India in their attempt to voice their feelings and to find a remedy for their distress.

You are in search of a remedy to suppress this rising ebullition of national feeling. I venture to

suggest to you that the only way to suppress it is to remove the causes. You have yet the power. You can repent of the wrongs done to Indians.

You can compel Mr. Lloyd George to redeem his promises. I assure you he has kept many escape doors. You can compel the Viceroy to retire in favour of a better one; you can revise your ideas about Sir Michael O'Dwyer and General Dyer. You can compel the Government to summon a conference of the recognised leaders of the people duly elected by them and representing all shades of opinion so as to devise means for granting Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India.

But this you cannot do unless you consider every Indian to be in reality your equal and brother. I ask for no patronage. I merely point out to you, as a friend, an honourable solution of a grave problem. The other solution, namely repression, is open to you. I prophesy that it will fail. It has begun already. The Government has already imprisoned two brave men of Panipat for holding and expressing their opinions freely. Another is on his trial in Lahore for having expressed similar opinions. One in the Oudh District is already imprisoned. Another awaits judgment. You should know what is going on in your midst. Propaganda is being

carried on in anticipation of repression. I invite you respectfully to choose the better way and make common cause with the people of India whose salt you are eating. To seek to thwart their aspirations is disloyalty to the country.

I am,  
Your faithful friend,  
M. K. GANDHI.

---

TO EVERY ENGLISHMAN LIVING IN INDIA.  
SECOND LETTER.

' You are as much slaves—as we.'

Dear friend,

This is the second time I venture to address you. I know that most of you detest non-co-operation. But I would invite you to isolate two of my activities from the rest if you can give me credit for honestly.

I cannot prove my honesty if you do not feel it. Some of my Indian friends charge me with camouflage when I say we need not hate Englishmen whilst we may hate the system they have established. I am trying to show them that one may detest the wickedness of a brother without hating him. Jesus denounced the wickedness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, but he did not hate them. He did not enunciate this law of love for the man and hate for the evil in him for himself only, but he taught the doctrine for universal practice. Indeed I find it in all the scriptures of the world.

I claim to be a fairly accurate student of human nature and vivisector of my own failings. I have discovered that man is superior to the system he

propounds. And so I feel that you as an individual are infinitely better than the system you have evolved as a corporation. Each one of my countrymen in Amritsar on that fateful 10th of April was better than the crowd of which he was a member. He as a man would have declined to kill those innocent English bank managers. But in that crowd, many a man forgot himself. Hence it is that an Englishman in office is different from an Englishman outside. Similarly an Englishman in India is different from an Englishman in England. Here in India you belong to a system that is vile beyond description. It is possible therefore for me to condemn the system in the strongest terms without considering you to be bad and without imputing bad motives to every Englishman. You are as much slaves of the system as we are. I want you therefore to reciprocate and not impute to me motives which you cannot read in the written word. I give you the whole of my motive when I tell you that I am impatient to end or mend a system which has made India subservient to a handful of you and which has made Englishmen feel secure only in the shadow of the forts and the guns that obtrude themselves on one's notice in India. It is a degrading spectacle for you and for us. Our corporate life is based on mutual distrust and fear. This you will admit, i-

unmanly. A system that is responsible for such a state of things is necessarily satanic. You should be able to live in India as an integral part of its people and not always as foreign exploiters. One thousand Indian lives against one English life is a doctrine of dark despair and yet believe me, it was enunciated in 1919 by the highest of you in the land.

I almost feel tempted to invite you to join me in destroying a system that has dragged both you and us down. But I feel I cannot as yet do so. We have not shown ourselves earnest, self-sacrificing and self-restrained enough for that consummation.

But I do ask you to help us in the boycott of foreign cloth and in the anti-drink campaign.

The Lancashire cloth, as English historians have shown, was forced upon India and her own world-famed manufactures were deliberately and systematically ruined. India is therefore at the mercy not only of Lancashire but also of Japan, France and America. Just see what this has meant to India. We send out of India every year sixty crores (more or less) of rupees for cloth. We grow enough cotton for our own cloth. Is it not madness to send cotton outside India and have it manufactured into cloth there and shipped to us? Was it right to reduce India to such a helpless state?

A hundred and fifty years ago we manufactured all our cloth. Our women spun fine yarn in their own cottages and supplemented the earnings of their husbands. The village weavers wove that yarn. It was an indispensable part of national economy in a vast agricultural country like ours. It enabled us in a most natural manner to utilise our leisure. Today our women have lost the cunning of their hands and the enforced idleness of millions has impoverished the land. Many weavers have become sweepers. Some have taken to the profession of hired soldiers. Half the race of artistic weavers has died out, and the other half is weaving imported foreign yarn for want of finer handspun yarn.

You will perhaps now understand what boycott of foreign cloth means to India. It is not devised as a punishment. If the Government were today to redress the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs and consent to India attaining immediate Swaraj the boycott movement must still continue. Swaraj means at least the power to conserve Indian industries that are vital to the economic existence of the nation and to prohibit such imports as may interfere with such existence. Agriculture and hand-spinning are the two lungs of the national body. They must be protected against consumption at any cost.

This matter does not admit of any waiting. The interests of the foreign manufacturers and the Indian importers cannot be considered when the whole nation is starving for want of a large productive occupation ancillary to agriculture.

You will not mistake this for a movement of general boycott of foreign goods. India does not wish to shut herself out of international commerce. Things other than cloth which can be better made outside India, she must gracefully receive upon terms advantageous to the contracting parties. Nothing can be forced upon her. But I do not wish to peep into the future. I am certainly hoping that before long it would be possible for India to co-operate with England on equal terms. Then will be the time for examining trade relations. For the time being I beseech your help in bringing about a boycott of foreign cloth.

Of similar and equal importance is the campaign against drink. The liquor shops are an insufferable curse imposed on society. There never was so much awakening among the people as now upon this question. I admit that here it is the Indian Ministers who can help more than you can. But I would like you to speak out your mind clearly on the question.

Under every system of Government, total prohibition so far as I can see will be insisted upon by the nation. You can assist the growth of the ever-rising agitation by throwing in the weight of your influence on the side of the nation.

I am,  
Your faithful friend,  
M. K. GANDHI.

## TO THE YOUNGMEN OF BENGAL.

When the Non-co-operation Movement of the years 1920, 1921 was in full swing, India needed the services of her youngmen more than ever before. Congress leaders and Ali Brothers made a joint appeal to the students to leave their studies and to join the volunteer corps in their thousands. The response from the Bengal youth was profoundly heartening. In other parts of India too students joined the Non-co-operation Movement in large numbers. The following appeal was addressed by Mahatma Gandhi to the youngmen of Bengal in January 1921.

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**The Message of Self-sacrifice, Courage and Hope.**

Dear Young Friend—, I have just read an account of your response to the Nation's call. It does credit to you and to Bengal. I had expected no less. I certainly expect still more. Bengal has great intelligence. It has a greater heart, it has more than its share of the spiritual heritage for which our country is specially noted. You have more imagination, more faith and more emotion than the rest of India. You have falsified the calumny of cowardice on more occasions than one. There is, therefore, no reason why Bengal should not lead now as it had done before now.

You have taken the step, you will not recede. You had ample time to think. You have paused, you have considered. You held the Congress that delivered to the Nation the message of Non-Co-operation, i.e., of self-purification, self-sacrifice, courage and hope. The Nagpur Congress ratified, clarified and amplified the first declaration. It was re-delivered in the midst of strife, doubt, and disunion. It was redelivered in the midst of joy, acclamation, and practically perfect unanimity. It was open to you to refuse, or to hesitate, or to respond. You have chosen the better, though from

a wordly wise standpoint less cautious way. You dare not go back without hurting yourselves and the cause.

But for the evil spell that the existing system of Government and, most of all, this Western education has cast upon us, the question will not be considered as open to argument. Can the brave Arabs retain their independence and yet be schooled under the aegis of those who would hold them under bondage? They will laugh at a person who dared to ask them to go to schools that may be established by their invaders. Is the case different, or if it is different, is it not stronger in our case when we are called upon to give up schools conducted under the aegis of a Government, which, rightly or wrongly, we were to bend to our will or destroy?

We can not get Swaraj if not one class in the country is prepared to work and sacrifice for it. The Government will yield not to the logic of words. It knows no logic but that of brave and true deeds.

Bravery of the sword they know. And they have made themselves proof against its use by us. Many of them will welcome violence on our part. They are unconquerable in the art of meeting and

suppressing violence. We propose, therefore, to sterilize their power of inflicting violence by our non-violence. Violence dies when it ceases to evoke response from its object. Non-violence is the cornerstone of the edifice of Non-co-operation. You will, therefore, not be hasty or over-zealous in your dealings with those who may not see eye to eye with you. Intolerance is a species of violence and therefore against our creed. Non-violent Non-co-operation is an object lesson in democracy. The moment we are able to ensure non-violence, even under circumstances the most provoking that moment we have achieved our end, because that is the moment when we can offer complete Non-co-operation.

Non-co-operation deals first with those sensitive classes upon whom the Government has acted so successfully and who have been lured into the trap consciously or unconsciously as the school going youths have been.

When we come to think about it, the sacrifice required is infinitesimal for individuals because the whole is distributed among so many of us. For what is your sacrifice. To suspend your library studies for one year or till Swaraj is established. If I could infect the whole of the student world with my faith, I know that suspension of studies need not extend even to a year.

And in the place of your suspended studies, I would urge you to study the methods of bringing about Swaraj as quietly as possible even within the year of grace. I present you with the SPINNING WHEEL and suggest to you that on it depends India's economic salvation.

But you are at liberty to reject it if you wish and go to the college that has been promised to you by Mr. Das. Most of your fellow students in the National College at Gujrat have undertaken to give at least four hours to spinning every day. It is no sacrifice to learn a beautiful art and to be able to clothe the naked at the same time.

You have done your duty by withdrawing from Government Colleges. I have only showed you the easiest and the most profitable way of devoting the time at your disposal.

May God give you strength and courage to sustain you in your determination.

Your well wisher,

M. K. GANDHI,

TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS,  
THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT.

(Mahatma Gandhi addressed the following letter to  
H. R. H. the Duke of Connaught in the first week of  
February 1921 :—

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## **WE ARE DETERMINED TO BATTLE WITH O'DWYERISM AND DYERISM.**

Sir,

Your Royal Highness must have heard a great deal about Non-co-operation, Non-co-operationists and their methods and incidentally of me, its humble author. I fear that the information given to your Royal Highness must have been in its nature one-sided. I owe it to you, to my friends and myself that I should place before you what I conceive to be the scope of Non-co-operation as followed not only by me but my closest associates such as Messrs. Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali.

For me it is no joy and pleasure to be actively associated in the boycott of Your Royal Highness, visit. I have tendered loyal, voluntary assistance to Government for an unbroken period of nearly 30 years in the full belief that through that lay the path of freedom for my country. It was therefore no slight thing for me to suggest to my countrymen

that we should take no part in welcoming Your Royal Highness. Not one among us has anything against you as an English gentleman. We hold your person as sacred as that of a dearest friend. I do not know any of my friends who would not guard it with his life if he found it in danger.

We are not at war with individual Englishmen. We seek not to destroy English life. We do not desire to destroy the system that has emasculated our country in body, mind and soul. We are determined to battle with all our might against that in English nature which has made O'Dwyerism and Dyersim possible in the Punjab and has resulted in a wanton affront upon Islam, a faith professed by seven crores of your country men. We consider it inconsistent with our self respect any longer to brook the spirit of superiority and dominance, which has systematically ignored and disregarded the sentiments of thirty crores of innocent people of India on many a vital matter. It is humiliating to us. It cannot be a matter of pride to you that thirty crores of Indians should live day in and day out in fear of their lives from one hundred thousand Englishmen and, therefore, be under subjection to them.

Your Royal Highness has come, not to end the system I described, but to sustain it by upholding its prestige. Your first pronouncement was a laudation of Lord Willingdon. I have the privilege of knowing him. I believe him to be an honest, amiable gentleman, who will not willingly hurt even a fly, but he certainly failed as a ruler. He allowed himself to be guided by those whose interest it was to support their power. He is not reading the mind of the Dravidian province. Here in Bengal you are issuing a certificate of merit to a Governor who is again, from all I have heard, an estimable gentleman but he knows nothing of the heart of Bengal and its yearnings. Bengal is not Calcutta. Fort William and the palaces of Calcutta represent an insolent exploitation of the unmurmuring and highly cultured peasantry of this fair province.

The Non-co-operationists have come to the conclusion that they must not be deceived by the reforms that tinker with the problem of India's distress and humiliation, nor must they be impatient and angry. We must not in our impatient anger resort to stupid violence. We freely admit that we must take our due share of blame for the existing state. It is not so much British guns that are responsible for our subjection as our voluntary co-operation.

Our non-participation in a hearty welcome to Your Royal Highness is thus in no sense a demonstration against your high personage, but it is against the system you come to uphold. I know individual Englishmen cannot, even if they will, alter the English nature all of a sudden. If we would be the equals, of Englishmen, we must cast off fear. We must learn to be self-reliant and independent of schools, courts, protection and patronage of a Government ween to end if it will not mend.

Hence this Non-violent Non-co-operation. I know we have not all yet become non-violent in speech and deed, but the results so far achieved have, I assure Your Royal Highness been amazing. The people have understood the secret and value of non-violence as they have never done before. He who will may see that this is a religious, purifying movement. We are leaving off drink. We are trying to rid India of the curse of untouchability. We are trying to throw off foreign tinsel splendour and, by reverting to the spinning wheel, reviving the ancient and poetic simplicity of life. We hope thereby to sterilize the existing harmful institutions.

I ask Your Royal Highness as an Englishman to study this movement and its possibilities for the Empire and the world. We are at war with nothing

that is good in the world. In protecting Islam in the manner we are, we are protecting all religions; in protecting the honour of India, we are protecting the honour of humanity, for our means are hurtful to none. We desire to live on terms of friendship of equals both in theory and in practice, and we must continue to non-co-operate, i.e., to purify ourselves till the goal is achieved. I ask Your Royal Highness and through you every Englishman, to appreciate the view-point of Non-co-operation.

I beg to remain,  
Your Royal Highness' faithful servant,  
M. K. GANDHI.

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## ULTIMATUM TO LORD READING

In early 1922 when the country was agog with excitement from one end to the other and the situation was tense and explosive, Mahatma Gandhi addressed the following letter to the then Viceroy of India—Lord Reading. This letter was as a matter of fact a kind of ultimatum to the Viceroy asking him to restore the elementary rights of civic life to the people and to free the press from all restrictions by a declaration within seven days of the receipt of this letter or in default thereof, the Viceroy was warned, a huge campaign of mass Civil Disobedience, on unprecedently large scale would be launched. The Mahatma's counsel of wisdom, however, fell on deaf ears and the Viceroy instead of reciprocating with toleration and goodwill started a campaign of repression of a still more virulent type. Following was the Mahatma's letter.

## **MAKE DECLARATION WITHIN SEVEN DAYS.**

To His Excellency the Viceroy, Delhi.

Sir, Bardoli is a small Tehsil in the Surat district in the Bombay Presidency, having a population of about 87,000 all told.

On the 29th ultimo, it decided under the presidency of Mr. Vithalbhai Patel to embark on mass Civil Disobedience, having proved its fitness for it in terms of the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee which met at Delhi during the first week of November last. But as I am perhaps chiefly responsible for Bardoli's decision, I owe it to Your Excellency and the Public to explain the situation under which the decision has been taken.

It was intended under the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee before referred to, to make Bardoli the first unit for mass Civil Disobedience in order to mark the national revolt against the Government for its consistently criminal refusal to appreciate India's resolve regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj.

Then followed the unfortunate and regrettable riots on the 17th November last in Bombay resulting in the postponement of the step contemplated by Bardoli.

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

Intimidation by non-co-operators or their sympathisers to a certain extent in connection with hartals and picketing may be admitted, but in no case can it be held to justify the wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering or equally peaceful public meetings under a distorted use of an extraordinary law which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action, nor is it possible to designate as otherwise than repression, action taken against innocent people under, what has appeared to many

of us, as an illegal use of the ordinary law nor again can the administrative interference with the liberty of the Press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression.

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

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

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

In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands, including het

elementary rights of free speech, free association, and free Press. In my humble opinion, the recent events are a clear departure from the civilised policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditional apology of the Ali Brothers, *viz.*, that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of non-co-operation so long as they remained non-violent in word and deed. Had the Government policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents. But the lawless repression (in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country) has made immediate adoption of mass Civil Disobedience an imperative duty....

But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as the head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy—and set free all the non-co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities and declare in clear terms the policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country whether

they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs, or Swaraj or any other purpose and even though they fall within the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the Press from all administrative control and restore all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging I am asking Your Excellency to do what is today being done in every country which is deemed to be under civilized Government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advise postponement of Civil Disobedience of an aggressive character till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole situation and considered the position *de novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion and shall therefore have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding the public opinion without violent restraint from either side and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive Civil Disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality or refuses to yield to the clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India.

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## LETTERS TO LORD IRWIN.

(Just as Mahatma Gandhi started his mass Non-co-operation Movement in the year 1922 giving a timely warning to Lord Reading in the form of an appeal, sometimes termed as ultimatum similarly in March 1930 before embarking on his Civil Disobedience Campaign Gandhiji sent a letter—again of the nature of an appeal and an ultimatum, combined in one—to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India at that time. Gandhiji wrote two letters to Lord Irwin,—one at the time of launching the Civil Disobedience Campaign and the other sometime before his arrest.)

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*The first letter;*

## WHY I REGARD THE BRITISH RULE AS A CURSE !

Dear Friend,—Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out. My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt any thing that lives, much less fellow-human beings even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. *Whilst therefore I hold British rule to be a curse, I do not intend to harm a single Englishman or any legitimate interest he may have in India.*

I must not be misunderstood. Though I hold the British rule in India to be a curse, I do not therefore consider Englishmen in general to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of claiming many Englishmen as dearest friends. Indeed much that I have learnt of the evil of British rule is due to the writings of frank and courageous Englishmen who have not hesitated to tell the unpalatable truth about that rule.

And why do I regard the British rule as a curse?

It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford.

It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture, and, by the policy of disarmament, it has degraded us spiritually. Lacking inward strength, we have been reduced by all but universal disarmament to a state bordering on cowardly helplessness.

In common with many of my countrymen, I had hugged the fond hope that the proposed Round Table Conference might furnish a solution. But when you said plainly that you could not give any assurance that you or the British Cabinet would pledge yourselves to support a scheme of full Dominion Status, the Round Table Conference could not possibly furnish the solution for which vocal India is consciously, and the dumb millions unconsciously, thirsting. Needless to say there never was any question of Parliament's verdict being anticipated. Instances are not wanting of the British Cabinet, in anticipation of Parliamentary verdict, having pledged itself to a particular policy.

The Delhi interview having miscarried, there was no option for Pandit Motilal Nehru and me

but to take steps to carry out the solemn resolution of the Congress arrived at in Calcutta at its Session of 1928.

But the resolution of Independence should cause no alarm if the word "Dominion Status", mentioned in your announcement, has been used in its accepted sense. For, has it not been admitted by responsible British statesmen that Dominion Status is virtual Independence? What however, I fear, is that there never has been any intention of granting such Dominion Status to India in the immediate future.

But this is all past history. Since the announcement many events have happened which show unmistakably the trend of British policy.

It seems as clear as daylight that responsible British statesmen do not contemplate any alteration in British policy that might adversely affect Britain's commerce with India or require impartial and close scrutiny of Britain's transactions with India. If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation, India must be bled with an ever increasing speed. The Finance Member regards as a settled fact the 1s. 6d. ratio which, by a stroke of the pen, drains India of a few crores. And when a serious attempt

is being made through a civil form of direct action to unsettle this fact among many others, even you cannot help appealing to the wealthy landed classes to help you to crush that attempt in the name of an order that grinds India to atoms. Unless those who work in the name of the nation understand and keep before all concerned the motive that lies behind the craving for Independence, there is every danger of independence itself coming to us so charged as to be of no value to those toiling voiceless millions for whom it is sought and for whom it is worth taking. It is for that reason that I have been recently telling the public what independence should really mean.

Let me put before you some of the salient points. The terrific pressure of land revenue which furnishes a large part of the total revenue, must undergo considerable modification in Independent India. Even the much vaunted permanent settlement benefits a few rich Zamindars not the ryots. The ryot has remained as helpless as ever. He is a mere tenant at will. Not only then has land revenue to be considerably reduced, but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed

as to make the burden fall heaviest on him if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man both individually and collectively. The drink and drug revenue too is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals. It is defended under the false pleas of individual freedom, but in reality it is maintained for its own sake. The ingenuity of the authors of the Reforms of 1919 transferred this revenue to the so-called responsible part of dyarchy so as to throw the burden of prohibition on it, thus from the beginning rendering it powerless for good. If the unhappy Minister wipes out this revenue, he must starve education, since in the existing circumstances he has no new source of replacing that revenue. If the weight of taxation has crushed the poor from above, the destruction of the central supplementary industry, i.e., hand-spinning, has undermined their capacity for producing wealth.

The tale of India's ruination is not complete without a reference to the liabilities incurred in her name. Sufficient has been recently said about those in the public Press. It must be the duty of a free

India to subject all liabilities to the strictest investigation and repudiate those that may be adjudged by an impartial tribunal to be unjust and unfair. The iniquities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world. Take your own salary. It is over Rs. 21,000 per month besides many other indirect additions. The British Prime Minister gets 5,000 per year, i.e., over Rs. 5,400 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are getting over Rs. 700 per day against India's average income of less than annas 2 per day. The Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against Great Britain's average income of nearly Rs. 2 per day. Thus you are getting much over 5,000 times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only 90 times Britain's average income. On bended knee I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon. I have taken a personal illustration to drive home a painful truth. I have too great a regard for you as a man to wish to hurt your feelings. I know that you do not need the salary you get. Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the Viceregal salary is true generally of the whole administration.

A radical cutting down of the revenue, therefore, depends upon an equally radical reduction in expenses of administration. This means a transformation of the scheme of Government. This transformation is impossible without independence. Hence, in my opinion, the spontaneous demonstration of 26th January, in which hundreds of thousands of villagers instinctively participated. To them Independence means deliverance from the killing weight. Not one of the great British political parties, it seems to me, is prepared to give up the Indian spoils to which Great Britain helps herself from day to day, often in spite of the unanimous opposition of Indian opinion.

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

insignificant it may be, the party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt. Its end is the same as mine. But I am convinced that it cannot bring the desired relief to the dumb millions. And the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government. Many think that non-violence is not an active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force as well against the organised violence force of the British rule as the unorganised violence force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned. Having unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to wait any longer. This non-violence will be expressed through civil disobedience for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha Ashram, but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement with its obvious limitations.

I know that in embarking on non-violence, I shall be running what might fairly be termed a mad risk, but the victories of truth have never been won without risks, often of the gravest character. Conversion of a nation that has consciously or uncon-

sciously preyed upon another far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself is worth any amount of risk.

I have deliberately used the word conversion, for my ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own. I believe that I have always served them. I served them upto 1919 blindly. But when my eyes were opened, and I concieved non-co-operation the object still was to serve them. I employed the same weapon that I have in all humility successfully used against the dearest members of my family. If I have equal love for your people with mine, it will not long remain hidden. It will be acknowledged by them even as members of my family acknowledged it after they had tried me for several years. If people join me as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps, will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts.

The plan through civil disobedience will be to combat such evils as I have sampled out.

If we want to sever the British connection, it is because of such evils. When they are removed the path becomes easy. Then the way to friendly negotiation will be open. If the British commerce with India is purified of greed, you will have no difficulty in recognising our independence. I respectfully invite you then to pave the way for an immediate removal of those evils and thus open a way for a real conference between equals, interested only in promoting the common good of mankind through voluntary fellowship and in arranging terms of mutual help and commerce suited to both. You have unnecessarily laid stress upon the communal problems that unhappily affect this land. Important though they undoubtedly are for the consideration of any scheme of government, they have little bearing on the greater problems which are above communities and which affect them all equally. But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the 11th day of this month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take to disregard the provisions of Salt laws. I regard this tax to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint. As the Independence Movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil. The wonder is that we

have submitted to the cruel monopoly for so long. It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope there will be tens of thousands ready in a disciplined manner to take up the work after me, and in the act of disobeying the Salt Act lay themselves open to the penalties of a law that should never have disfigured the Statute-book.

I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment or any at all so far as I can help. If you think that there is any substance in my letter, and if you will care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you. You will however do me the favour not to deflect me from my course unless you can see your way to conform to the substance of this letter.

This letter is not in any way intended as a threat, but is a simple and sacred duty peremptory on a civil resister. Therefore I am aving it specially delivered by a young English friend, who believes in the Indian cause and is a full believer in non-violence and whom Providence seems to have sent to me as it were for the very purpose.

I remain,  
Your Sincere friend,  
M. K. GANDHI

## THE SECOND LETTER.

The following is the text of Gandhiji's second letter to Lord Irwin drafted on the eve of his arrest:

Dear Friend,

### I must Commence the March

God willing, it is my intention .....to set out for Dharsana and reach there with my companions .....,and demand possession of the Salt Works. The public have been told that Dharsana is private property. This is mere camouflage. It is effectively under Government control as the Viceroy's house. Not a pinch of salt can be removed without the previous sanction of the authorities.

It is possible for you to prevent this raid, as it has been playfully and mischievously called in three ways:—

by removing the salt tax;

by arresting me and my party unless the country can as I hope it will, replace every one taken away;

by sheer gondaim unless every head broken is replaced as I hope it will.

It is not without hesitation that the step has been decided upon. I had hoped that the Government would fight the civil resisters in a civilised manner. I could have had nothing to say if, in dealing with the civil resisters, the Government had satisfied itself with applying the ordinary processes of law. Instead, whilst the known leaders have been dealt with more or less according to the legal formality, the rank and file has been often savagely and in some cases even indecently assaulted. Had these been isolated cases, they might have been overlooked. But accounts have come to me from Bengal, Behar Utkal, U. P. Delhi and Bombay confirming the experiences of Gujerat of which I have ample evidence at my disposal. In Karachi, Peshawar and Madras the firing would appear to have been unprovoked and unnecessary. Bones have been broken, private parts have been squeezed for the purpose of making volunteers give up, to the Government valueless, to the volunteers precious, salt. At Muthra an assistant magistrate is said to have snatched the National Flag from a ten year old boy. The crowd demanding restoration of the Flag thus illegally seized is reported to have been mercilessly beaten back. That the Flag was subsequently restored betrayed a guilty conscience. In Bengal there seem to have been only a few prosec-

cutions and assaults about salt, but unthinkable cruelties are said to have been practised in the act of snatching flags from volunteers. Paddy fields are reported to have been burnt, eatables forcibly taken. A vegetable market in Gujarat has been raided, because the dealers would not sell vegetables to officials. These acts have taken place in front of crowds who, for the sake of Congress mandate, have submitted without retaliation. I ask you to believe the accounts given by men pledged to truth. Repudiation even by high officials has, as in the Bardoli case, often proved false. The officials I regret to have to say, have not hesitated to publish falsehoods to the people even during the last five weeks. I take the following samples from Government notices issued from Collector's offices in Gujarat:—

1. Adults use five pounds of salt per year, therefore pay three annas per year as tax. If Government removed the monopoly, people will have to pay higher prices and in addition make good to the Government the loss sustained by the removal of the monopoly. The salt you take from the sea-shore is not eatable, therefore the Government destroys it.

2. Mr. Gandhi says that Government has destroyed hand spinning in this country, whereas everybody knows that this is not true, because throughout the country there is not a village where hand-spinning of cotton is not going on. Moreover in every province cotton spinners are shown superior methods and are provided with better instruments at less prices and are thus helped by Government.
3. Out of every five rupees of the debt that the Government has incurred, rupees four have been beneficially spent.

I have taken these three sets of statements from three different leaflets. I venture to suggest that everyone of these statements is demonstrably false. The daily consumption of salt by an adult is three times the amount stated and therefore the poll tax and the salt tax undoubtedly is at least 9 as. per head per year. And this tax is levied from man, woman, child and domestic cattle irrespective of age and health.

It is a wicked falsehood to say that every village has a spinning wheel and that the spinning

movement is in any shape or form encouraged or supported by the Government. Financiers can better dispose of the falsehood that four out of every five rupees of the public debt is used for the benefit of the public. But those falsehoods are mere samples of what people know is going on in every day contact with the Government. Only the other day a Gujerati poet, a brave man, was convicted on prejudged official evidence in spite of his emphatic statement that at the time mentioned he was sleeping soundly in another place.

Now for instances of official inactivities. Liquor dealers have assaulted pickets admitted by officials to have been peaceful and sold liquor in contravention of regulations. The officials have taken no notice either of the assaults or the illegal sales of liquor. As to the assault though they are known to everybody, they may take shelter under the plea that they have received no complaints.

And now you have sprung upon the country a Press Ordinance surpassing any hither to known in India. You have found a short cut through the law's delay in the matter of the trial of Bhagat Singh and others by doing away with the ordinary procedure. Is it any wonder if I call all these official activities and inactivities a veiled form of

Martial Law? Yet this is only the fifth week of the struggle.

Before then the reign of terrorism that has just begun overwhelms India, I feel that I must take a bolder step and if possible divert your wrath in a cleaner if more drastic channel. You may not know the things that I have described. You may not even now believe in them. I can but invite your serious attention to them.

Anyway I feel that it would be cowardly on my part not to invite you to disclose to the full the leonine paws of authority, so that the people who are suffering tortures and destruction of their property may not feel that I, who had perhaps been the chief party inspiring them to action that has brought to right light the Government in its true colours, had left any stone unturned to work out the Satyagraha programme as fully as it was possible under given circumstances.

According to the science of Satyagraha, the greater the repression and lawlessness on the part of authority, the greater should be the suffering courted by the victims. Success is the certain result of suffering of the extremest character voluntarily undergone.

I know the dangers attendant upon the methods adopted by me. But the country is not likely to mistake my meaning. I say what I mean and think—And I have been saying for the last fifteen years in India, and outside for twenty years more, and repeat now that the only way to conquer violence is through non-violence pure and undefiled. I have said also that every violent act, word and even thought interferes with the progress of non-violent action. If in spite of such repeated warnings, people will resort to violence, I must down responsibility save such as inevitably attaches to every human being for the acts of every other human being. But the question of responsibility apart, I dare not postpone action on any cause whatsoever if non-violence is the force the seers of the world have claimed it to be and if I am not to belie my own extensive experience of its working.

But I would fain avoid the further step. I would therefore ask you to remove the tax which many of your illustrious countrymen have condemned in unmeasured terms and which, as you could not have failed to observe, has evoked universal protest and resentment expressed in civil disobedience. You may condemn civil disobedience as much as you like. Will you prefer violent revolt to civil disobedience?

If you say, as you have said, that the civil disobedience must end in violence, history will pronounce the verdict that the British Government not bearing because not understanding non-violence, goaded human nature to violence, which it could understand and deal with. But in spite of the goading, I shall hope that God will give the people of India wisdom and strength to withstand every temptation and provocation to violence.

If, therefore, you cannot see your way to remove the Salt Tax and remove the prohibitions on private salt-making I must reluctantly commence the march adumbrated in the opening paragraph of my letter.

I am,  
Your sincere friend,  
M. K. GANDHI.

## TO THE INMATES OF SABARMATI ASHRAM.

(Mahatma Gandhi is known to be one of the most courageous, even 'seditious' writers who ever dared to challenge the mighty British Empire in India, and yet his pen has written some of the sweetest letters—letters bubbling with love and human sympathy—. In the year 1930 when he was in Yervada Jail the inmates of Yervada Jail received very affectionate letters from him, some of which are reproduced below :)

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## I—TO MIRA BAI.

Yours is the first letter I take up to write from the Jail and that on the silence day.

I have been quite happy and have been making up for arrears of rest. The nights here are cool and, as I am permitted to sleep at night under the sky, I have refreshing sleep. About the change made in the manner of taking the diet, you will learn from my general letter.

It was a great treat to receive the wheel so thoughtfully sent and with things so carefully packed in it. The carding bow, the superintendent tells me, was lost on the way by the friends who brought it \*. I am in no hurry for it as you have sent me a liberal quantity of slivers.

I do not know who sent me the books. They were not the ones I wanted—however this mistake does not matter much as I do not miss the books just now. I am giving as much time as I can to the takli. I find that I have no speed on it at all. I hardly get thirty rounds in one hour. For the first day I gave nearly seven hours to nearly reach 160 rounds. I was washed out at the end of the performance. I must learn the trick of getting more speed. I am, therefore, in no hurry to the books—

The prison officials are all kind and attentive,  
Love BAPU.

\* It has since been found by the friends and posted to the Jail.

## II—GENERAL LETTER TO ALL THE INMATES OF THE ASHRAM.

" My health is alright. I rise in the morning at the Ashram hour (4 A.M.) I am given a light, so I can read the Gita chapters according to our custom. I am gradually recovering from my exhaustion of so many days. I rest regularly at 8 in the morning, and 12 noon, and thus get some two to three hours sleep during the day. I gave up oranges during my march, but have begun to take them again here. On the first day I took raw goat's milk and am continuing it for the present. I take about three pounds. I shall have to reduce it a little or take it in the form of curds. In the mornings, also, I take cold water instead of hot. They give me full facilities for making it hot, but if the body can be maintained on cold water, why bother about hot water. I have left off honey. I had begun taking cold water baths, but from yesterday I am again bathing with hot water. The goat is milked in my presence, so there is no question as to the cleanliness of the milk. If raw milk proves unsatisfactory I will, of course, get it heated.

They have given me a man to clean vessels, etc., Dates and raisins I am taking. There is no reason to be anxious about my diet.

There is, and ought to be, no time in these days for taking superfluous care of others. We have no money and ought to have no money for superfluous expenses.

As for my spinning, it is regular. I make a daily bank of yarn.

I never saw to my speed on takli outside the Jail. Interest should be created in spinning takli. In Wardha, some people have reached the speed of 80 rounds in half an hour. Let those who have learned there find out their exact speed and write to me.

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### III—TO “BA” (KASTURBA GANDHI)

How nice it was that I saw you and all the sisters the evening previous to my arrest. And I was able to go with you up to your residence which gave me much pleasure. God's favours pour down upon us as rains from Heaven...

None of you should get nervous or troubled. All the verses of the sisters' prayer were thoughtfully arranged. I hope they may be repeated with full concentration every morning.

To his son Devadas, he wrote:

I do not know where you are. But there is God above to take care of us, so let us not worry about one another.

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## IV—TO LAKSHMI (THE LITTLE UNTOUCHABLE ADOPTED DAUGHTER OF GANDHIJI) AND OTHER LITTLE CHILDREN.

Little Birds,

Ordinary birds cannot fly without wings. With wings of course, all can fly. But if you, without wings will learn how to fly, then all your troubles will indeed be at an end. And I will teach you.

See, I have no wings, yet I come flying to you every day in thought. Look, here is little Vimala, here is Hari and here Dharmakumar. And you also can come flying to me in thought.

There is no need of a teacher for those who know how to think, the teacher may guide us, but he cannot give us the power of thinking. That is latent in us. Those who are wise get wise thoughts.

Tell me who, amongst you, are not praying properly in Prabhubbhai's evening prayer.

Send me a letter signed by all, and those who do not know how to sign may make a cross.

Yerawada Palace,

Silence day.

BAPU'S blessings.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH  
LORD WILLINGDON.  
GANDHIJI'S 1ST REJOINDER.

In the year 1931 when the relations between the Congress and the British Government were straitened to a rather 'dangerous' extent, a queer situation arose. Gandhiji was scheduled to see the Viceroy — Lord Willingdon to discuss with him the political situation of the country with a view to arrive at some solution of the impasse. Parallel to the extension of invitation to Gandhiji, the Viceroy started a campaign of shooting in the Frontier and arrests in other parts of India. Gandhiji sent a wire to the Viceroy asking whether 'friendly relations between us are close or whether you expect me to see you'. His Excellency sent a reply that he was willing to see him but he was not prepared to discuss anything with regard to any of the 'repressive measures'. He also held Gandhiji responsible for various measures of lawlessness. To this Gandhiji issued the following rejoinder on 31st December 1931.

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## IT IS NOT YET TOO LATE.

I thank His Excellency for the wire in reply to mine of the 29th instant, It grieves me, for His Excellency has rejected, in a manner hardly befitting his high position, an advance made in the friendliest spirit. I had approached as a seeker wanting light on questions upon which I desire to understand the Government version of every serious and extraordinary measures to which I made reference. Instead of appreciating my advance, His Excellency has rejected it by asking me to repudiate my valued colleagues in advance and telling me that even if I became guilty of such dishonourable conduct and sought interview, I could not even discuss these matters of vital importance to the Nation.

In my opinion the constitutional issue dwindles into insignificance in the face of the Ordinances and Acts which must, if not met with stubborn resistance, end in utter demoralisation of the Nation. I hope no self-respecting Indian will run the risk of killing national spirit for a doubtful contingency of securing a constitution to which no Nation with stamina may be left. Let me also point out that as to the Frontier Province your telegram

contains a narration of facts which on the face of them furnish no warrant for arrest of popular leaders passing extra-legal Ordinance making life and property utterly insecure, and shooting unarmed peaceful crowds for daring to demonstrate against the arrests of their trusted leaders.

If Khan Saheb Abdul Ghaffar asserted the right to complete independence, it was a natural claim and a claim made with impunity by the Congress at Lahore in 1929 and by me with energy put before the British Government in London. Moreover let me remind the Viceroy that despite the knowledge on the Government's part that the Congress mandate contained such a claim, I was invited to attend the London Conference as the Congress delegate. Nor am I able to detect in a mere refusal to attend a Durbar an offence warranting summary imprisonment. In refusing to attend a Darbar if Khan Saheb was fomenting racial hatred, it was undoubtedly regrettable. I have his own declarations to the contrary made to me, but assuming that he did foment racial hatred, he was entitled to an open trial where he could have defended himself against the accusation.

Regarding the United Provinces, His Excellency is surely misinformed because there was no no-rent campaign authorised by the Congress. But whilst negotiations were proceeding between Government and Congress representatives, the time for collection of rents actually arrived and rents began to be demanded. Congressmen were therefore obliged to advise tenants to suspend payment pending the result of negotiations, and Mr. Sherwani had offered on behalf of the Congress to withdraw this advice if the authorities on their initiative suspended collections pending negotiations. I venture to suggest that this is not a matter which can be so summarily dismissed as your wire has done. The controversy in the United Provinces is of long standing and involves the well-being of millions of peasantry known to be economically ground down.

Any Government jealous of the welfare of the masses in its charges would welcome voluntary co-operation of a big body like the Congress, which admittedly exercise greater influence over the masses and whose one ambition is to serve them faithfully. and let me add that I regard the withholding of payment of taxes as an inalienable ancient and natural right of a people who have exhausted all other means of seeking freedom from an unbearable economic burden.

I must repudiate the suggestion that the Congress has the slightest desire to promote disorder in any shape or form. As to Bengal, the Congress is at one with the Government in condemning assassinations and should heartily co-operate with Government in measures that may be found necessary to stamp out such crimes. But whilst the Congress would condemn in unmeasured terms methods of terrorism, it can in no way associate itself with Government terrorism as is betrayed by the Bengal Ordinance and the acts done thereunder but must resist within the limits of prescribed creed of non-violence such measures of legalised Government terrorism. I heartily assent to the proposition laid down in your telegram that co-operation must be mutual. But your telegram leads me irresistibly to the conclusion that His Excellency demands co-operation from the Congress without returning any on behalf of Government.

I can read in no other way his pre-emptory refusal to discuss these matters, which, as I have endeavoured to show, have at least two sides. The popular side I have put as I understand it, but before committing myself to a definite judgment I was anxious to understand the other, that is, the Government side and then tender my advice to the Congress. With reference to the last paragraph of your

telegram I may not repudiate moral liability for the actions of my colleagues whether in the Frontier Province or United Provinces, but I confess that I was ignorant of the detailed actions and activities of my colleagues whilst I was absent from India, and it was because it was necessary for me to advise and guide the Working Committee of the Congress, and in order to complete my knowledge, I sought with an open mind and with the best of intentions an interview with His Excellency and deliberately asked for his guidance.

I cannot conceal from His Excellency my opinion that the reply he has condescended to send was hardly a return for my friendly and well-meant approach. And if it is not yet too late I would ask His Excellency to reconsider his decision and see me as a friend without imposing any conditions whatsoever as to the scope or subject of discussion, and I on my part can promise that I would study with an open mind all the facts that he might put before me. I would unhesitatingly and willingly go to the respective provinces and with the aid of the authorities study both sides of the question and if I came to the conclusion after such a study that the people were in the wrong and that the Working Committee including myself were misled as to the correct position and that the Government was right I should

have no hesitation whatsoever in making that open confession and guiding the Congress accordingly.

Along with my desire and willingness to co-operate with the Goverment, I must place my limitations before His Excellency. Non-violence is my absolute creed. I believe that civil disobedience is not only the natural right of a people, especially when they have no effective voice in their own Government, but that it also is an effective substitute for violence or armed rebellion.

I can never therefore deny my creed. In pursuance thereof, and on the strength of uncontradicted reports supported by the recent activities of the Government of India to the effect that there may be no other opportunity for me to guide the public, the Working Committee has accepted my advice and passed a resolution tentatively sketching a plan of civil disobedience. I am sending herewith the text of the resolution. If His Excellency thinks it worthwhile to see me, the operation of the resolution will be suspended pending our discussion in the hope that it may result in the resolution being finally given up. I admit that the correspondence between His Excellency and myself is of such grave importance as not to brook delay in publication. I am, therefore, sending my telegram, your reply, this rejoinder and the Working Committee's resolution for publication.

## **MAHATMA GANDHI'S SECNOD REJOINDER.**

*As a retaliatory measure to Government's repressive policy on December 28, 1931 the Congress Working Committee under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi passed a resolution involving the general revival of the Civil Disobedience movement. The then Viceroy of India in a telegram warned the Mahatma that the Government would hold him and the Congress responsible for any untoward consequences which might ensue and also apprised him of the determination of the Government to suppress the movement by all possible means. To that telegram the Mahatma issued the following rejoinder:—*

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## TIME ALONE WILL SHOW WHO WAS JUSTIFIED !

Thanks for your wire of even date. I cannot help expressing deep regret for the decision of His Excellency and his Government. Surely it is wrong to describe an honest expression of opinion as a threat. May I remind the Government that the Delhi negotiations were opened and carried on whilst civil disobedience was not given up but only discontinued. This position was reasserted and accepted by His Excellency and his Government in Simla in September last prior to my departure for London. Although I had made it clear that under certain circumstances the Congress might have to resume Civil Disobedience the Government did not break off negotiations. That it was made clear by the Government that Civil Disobedience carried with it the penalty for disobedience merely proves what civil resisters bargain for but does not in any way effect my argument. Had the Government resented that attitude, it was open to them not to send me to London. On the contrary my departure had His Excellency's blessings.

Nor is it fair or correct to suggest that I have ever advanced the claim that any policy of the

Government should be dependent on my judgment. But I do not submit that any popular and constitutional Government would always welcome and sympathetically consider suggestions made by public bodies and their representatives and assist them with all available information about their Acts or Ordinances of which public opinion may disapprove. I claim that my messages have no other meaning.

*Time alone will show whose position was justified.*

Meanwhile I wish to assure the Government that every endeavour will be made on the part of the Congress to carry on the struggle without malice and in a strictly non-violent manner. It was hardly necessary to remind me that the Congress and I, its humble representative, are responsible for all the consequences of our actions.

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## TO THE NATION.

In January 1932 the political situation in India was tense and explosive. The country was bubbling with enthusiasm of unprecedented intensity and people were bent upon casting away the yoke of slavery by hook or by crook. The Congress had already passed a resolution involving the resumption of Civil Disobedience Movement and on the other hand, the British Government were bent upon suppressing the upheavals by all possible means, and they had already apprised the Mahatma of their intentions through a telegram. At that critical period Mahatma Gandhi issued the following message to the Nation :—

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## **WE ARE EMBARKING ON A FIERY ORDEAL.**

It is a matter for deep regret to me to have received this telegram from H.E. the Viceroy and the Government. I cannot help saying that it has heaped error upon error, instead of courageously acknowledging the first error, in practically banging the door in my face by imposing for the coveted interview conditions which no self-respecting man can possibly accept and reopen the door. The telegram had added another error by deliberately and finally shutting the door by telling me that he cannot see me under threat of resumption of civil disobedience and introducing in the telegram an argument that is not germane to my repeated request for an interview. The Viceory and his Government have committed a flagrant breach of the Delhi Pact by using the so called threat of resumption of civil disobedience as an excuse for refusing to see me.

Surely he must know that the negotiations which resulted in the settlement were being carried on although civil disobedience was still on, and under the settlement it was never finally given up but was

only discontinued for the purpose of securing representation of the Congress at the Round Table Conference, it being understood that it was likely to be resumed if the Round Table Conference failed to do satisfaction in respect of the national demand. To this I wish to add the Second Settlement that was arrived at in Simla immediately prior to my departure for London. On examining the correspondence that has passed between myself and the Government, it would be seen that notwithstanding the truce, I had reserved to myself the right to take civil disobedience by way of defensive action in connection with the grievances about which relief might not be attainable through milder methods. Surely, if civil disobedience was such a heinous crime, the Government could never have exchanged correspondence on that basis and sent me to London with Viceregal blessings; but I see that with the change of times, manners have also changed.

The action must now respond to the challenge of the Government. It is to be hoped, however, that whilst people belonging to all classes and creeds will courageously and in all humility go through the fiery ordeal considering no price too dear and no sufferings too great, they will observe the strictest non-violence in thought, word and deed, no matter how great the provocation may be. I would also

urge them not to be angry with the administrators. It is not easy for them to shed the habit handed down from generation to generation. Our quarrel is not with men but with measures.

We have faith in ourselves and therefore in human nature to feel that, if we suffer long enough and in the proper spirit, our sufferings must result in converting administrators. After all, let us realise that the greater and the longer sufferings, the greater would be our fitness for Swarajya, for which we are embarking upon a fiery ordeal. I would remind the nation of the pledge I gave to the Prime Minister towards the end of the Plenary Session of the Round Table Conference that there should be no malice in the struggle if it fell to our lot to resume it and that we would do nothing unworthy. I shall trust every Indian to redeem the pledge.

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## GANDHI'S LETTER TO SIR SAMUEL HOARE IN MARCH 1932.

In the following letter dated March 11, 1932 addressed to Sir Samuel Hoare, Mahatma Gandhi informed His Majesty's Government that in the event of their creating separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, he (the Mahatma) would fast unto death.

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## THIS IS A NEGATION OF DEMOCRACY.

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 would 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 religious 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 the 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 that if the decision was found to create separate electorates 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 gave to my statement.

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 would favour one of their adults, male and female, being registered as voters irrespective of education or property qualifications even though the franchise test may be stricter for others. But I hold that separate electorate is harmful for them and for Hinduism whatever it may be from a purely political stand point. 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 electorate 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. I feel that no penance Caste Hindus may do, can in

any way compensate for the calculated degradation to which they have consigned the Depressed Classes for centuries. But I know that separate electorate is neither 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 that 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 that I can urge in defence is that, for me, the contemplated step is not a method, it is a 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 that all my fears are wholly unjustified and that the British Government have no intention whatever of creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes.

It is perhaps as well for me to refer to another matter that is agitating me and which may also enforce a similar fast. It is the way repression is going on. (I have no notion when I may receive the shock that would compel the sacrifice. Repression appears to me to be crossing what might be called legitimate. Governmental terrorism is spreading through the land. Both English and Indian officials are being brutalised. The latter, high and low, are becoming demoralised by reason of the Government regarding as meritorious, disloyalty to the people and inhuman conduct towards their own kith and kin. The latter are being 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 being done in order to crush the spirit of freedom which the Congress represents. Repression is not confined to punishing civil breaches of the common law. It

goads people to break the 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 the Parliament and these have been ratified by Members having but a vague notion of what they were doing. Such was the case with Egypt and 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 mobilising the most terrible forces of destruction. To me this is a negation of democracy.

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 necessary or justifiable. It is a process of self-suffering and a 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 also 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, Sardar Vallab bhai Patel and Mr. 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.

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## TO RAMSAY MACDONALD.

(Gandhiji's letter dated August 18, 1932 from Yerwada Jail addressed to the then Prime Minister of England Mr. Ramsay MacDonald).

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## "FAST UNTO DEATH"

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.

I have read the British Government's decision on the representation of the 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 the 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 the pressure of public opinion revise their decision and their schemes of communal electorates for the 'Depressed Classes, whose representatives should be elected by general electorate under 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 rule of the jail and have communicated my desire or the contents of the two letters to no one save my two companions, Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Sjt. 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.

I regret the decision that I have taken. But as a man of religious 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 con-

tinue. 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 in regarding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes as harmful to them or Hinduism. If so, I am not likely to be in the right with reference to other parts 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 a child-like faith in my wisdom. Whereas if my judgment is right, as I have little doubt it is, the contemplated step is but a due fulfilment of the scheme of life which I have tried for more than a quarter of a century apparently not without considerable success.

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## TO MR. M. A. JINNAH.

In the year 1938 a serious attempt was made by the Congress Leaders to come to an understanding with Mr. Jinnah, President of the Muslim League of India with a view to bring about unity between the two organizations—the League and the Congress—and to solve the Hindu-Muslim tangle. Mr. Jinnah however insisted that an essential precondition to any agreement between the two organizations was (the recognition by the Congress that the Muslim League was the sole authoritative and representative political organization of the Muslims of India. The talks ended in smoke. In the course of these talks Mahatma Gandhi wrote the following letter to Mr. Jinnah:

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## IN YOUR SPEECH I MISS THE OLD NATIONALIST.

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Pandit Nehru told me yesterday that you were complaining to Maulana Sahib about the absence of any reply from me to your letter of the 5th November in reply to mine of the 19th October. The letter was received by me when I was pronounced by the Doctors to be seriously ill at Calcutta.

The letter was shown to me three days after its receipt. Had I thought it necessarily called for a reply even though I was ill I would have sent one. I re-read the letter and I still think there was nothing useful that I could have said in reply. But in a way I am glad you awaited a reply and here it is. Mr. Kher told me definitely he had a private message from you. He delivered it to me when I was alone. I could have sent you a verbal message in reply but in order to give you a true picture of my mental state I sent you a short note. There was nothing to hide in it. But I did feel, as I still do, that the way in which you used it came upon me as a painful surprise.

"Your complain of my silence. The reason for my silence is literally and truly in my note. Believe me, the moment I can do something that can bring the two communities together nothing in the world can prevent me from so doing. (You seem to deny that your speech was declaration of war, but your later pronouncements too confirmed my first impression. How can I prove what is a matter of feeling? In your speech I miss the old Nationalist when in 1915 I returned from my self-imposed exile in South Africa. Everybody spoke of you as one of the staunchest nationalists and the hope of both the Hindus and Mussalmans. Are you still the same Mr. Jinnah? If you say you are, in spite of your speeches, I shall accept your word.

Lastly, you want me to come forward with some proposal. What proposal can I make except to ask you on bended knees to be what I thought you were? But the proposals to form the basis of unity between the two communities surely have got to come from you.

This again is not for publication but for your eyes; it is the one of a friend not of an opponent.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI.

## TO GENERALISSIMO CHIANG KAI SHECK.

(Following is the text of a personal letter written by Mahatma Gandhi to Marshal Chiang Kai Shek, the Chinese Generalissimo on the eve of the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay in August 1942—the fateful days when India's second violent struggle against foreign rule started. In this letter Gandhiji expressed a strong desire for unity between two great countries of the East—India and China. The Mahatma assured General Chiang Kai Shek "we want to prevent in every way Japanese aggression and made it clear to him that India's fight against the repressive foreign Government would be governed by the consideration that it should not injure China." Whereas Gandhiji appreciated Chinese heroism against Japanese aggression, he asked for China's moral support for India's freedom.)

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## A FREE INDIA AND A FREE CHINA.

Dear Generalissimo,

I can never forget the five hours close contact I had with you and your noble wife in Calcutta. I had always felt drawn towards you in our fight for freedom, and that contact and our conversation brought China and her problems still nearer to me. Long ago, between 1905 and 1913 when I was in South Africa, I was in constant touch with the small Chinese colony in Johanssesburg. I knew them first as clients and then as comrades in the Indian passive resistance struggle in South Africa. I came in touch with them in Mauritius also. I learnt then to admire their thrift, industry, resourcefulness and internal unity. Later in India I had a very fine Chinese friend living with me for a few years and we all learnt to like him.

I have thus felt greatly attracted towards your great country and, in common with my countrymen, our sympathy has gone out to you in your terrible struggle. Our mutual friend, Jawaharlal Nehru, whose love of China is only excelled, if at all, by his love of his own country, has kept us in intimate touch with the developments of the Chinese struggle.

Because of this feeling I have towards China and my earnest desire that our two great countries should come closer to one another and co-operate to their mutual advantage, I am anxious to explain to you that my appeal to the British power to withdraw from India is not meant in any shape or form to weaken India's defence against the Japanese or embarrass you in your struggle. India must not submit to any aggressor or invader and you must resist him. I would not be guilty of purchasing the freedom of my country at the cost of your country's freedom. The problem does not arise before me as I am clear that India cannot gain her freedom in this way, and a Japanese domination of either India or China would be equally injurious to the other country and to world peace. That domination must, therefore, be prevented, and I should like India to play her natural and rightful part in this.

I feel India cannot do so while she is in bondage. India has been a helpless witness of the withdrawals from Malaya, Singapore and Burma. We must learn the lesson from these tragic events and prevent by all means at our disposal a repetition of what befell these unfortunate countries. But unless we are free, we can do nothing to prevent it, and the same process might well occur again, crippling

India and China disastrously. I do not want a repetition of this tragic tale of woe.

Our proffered help has repeatedly been rejected by the British Government and the recent failure of the Cripps Mission has left a deep wound which is still running. Out of that anguish has come the cry for immediate withdrawal of British power so that India can look after herself and help China to the best of her ability.

I have told you of my faith in non-violence and of my belief in the effectiveness of this method if the whole nation could turn to it. That faith in it is as firm as ever. But I realise that India today as a whole has not that faith and belief, and the Government in free India would be formed from the various elements composing the nation.

Today the whole of India is impotent and feels frustrated. The Indian Army consists largely of people who have joined up because of economic pressure. They have no feeling of a cause to fight for and in no sense are they a national army. Those of us who would fight for a cause, for India and China, with armed forces or with non-violence cannot under the foreign heel function as they want to. And yet our people know for certain that

free India can play even a decisive part not only on her own behalf but also on behalf of China and world peace. Many, like me, feel that is not proper or manly to remain in this helpless state and allow events to overwhelm us when a way to effective action can be opened to us. They feel, therefore, that every possible effort should be made to ensure independence and that freedom or action which is so urgently needed. This is the origin of my appeal to the British power to end immediately the unnatural connection between Britain and India.

Unless we make that effort, there is grave danger of public feeling in India going into wrong and harmful channels. There is every likelihood of subterranean sympathy for Japan growing simply in order to weaken and oust British authority in India. This feeling may take the place of robust confidence in our ability never to look to outsiders for help in winning our freedom. We have to learn self-reliance and develop the strength to work out our own salvation. This is only possible if we make a determined effort to free ourselves from bondage. That freedom has become a present necessity to enable us to take our due place among the free nations of the world.

To make it perfectly clear that we want to prevent in every way Japanese aggression, I would personally agree and I am sure the Government of free India would agree, that the Allied Powers might under treaty with us keep their armed forces in India and use the country as a base for operations against the threatened Japanese attack.

I need hardly give you my assurance that, as the author of the new move in India I shall take no hasty action. And whatever action I may recommend will be governed by the consideration that it should not injure China or encourage Japanese aggression in India or China. I am trying to enlist world opinion in favour of a proposition which to me appears self-proved and which must lead to the strengthening of India's and China's defence. I am also educating public opinion in India and conferring with my colleagues. Needless to say, any movement against the British Government with which I may be connected will be essentially non-violent. I am straining every nerve to avoid a conflict with British authority. But if in the vindication of the freedom, which has become an immediate desideratum, this becomes inevitable, I shall not hesitate to run any risk, however great.

Very soon you will have completed five years of war against Japanese aggression and invasion and all the sorrow and misery that these have brought to China. ( My heart goes out to the people of China in deep sympathy and in admiration for their heroic struggle and endless sacrifices in the cause of their country's freedom and integrity against tremendous odds. I am convinced that this heroism and sacrifice cannot be in vain ; they must bear fruit. To you, to Madame Chiang and to the great people of China, I send my earnest and sincere wishes of your success. I look forward to the day when a free India and free China will co-operate together in friendship and brotherhood for their own good and for the good of Asia and the world.

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## TO THE PEOPLE OF AMERICA.

(In the following letter addressed to Americans and written on August 3, 1942, sometime before the fateful August Disturbances started, Gandhiji asked the inhabitants of America not to be misled by the vilifying propaganda of Britain against Indian national leaders including himself. He in due humility called upon them to sift the truth from the chaff and to give moral support to India's demand for freedom.)

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## **INTERESTED PROPAGANDA HAS BEGUILED YOU.**

I claim to be a votary of truth from my childhood. It was the most natural thing to me. My prayerful search gave me the revealing maxim "Truth is God" instead of the usual one "God is Truth". That maxim enables me to see God face to face as it were. I feel Him pervade every fibre of my being. With this truth as witness between you and me, I assert that I would not have asked my country to invite Great Britain to withdraw her rule over India, irrespective of any demand to the contrary, if I had not seen at once that for the sake of Great Britain and the Allied cause, it was necessary for Britain boldly to perform the duty of freeing India from bondage.

By that supreme act of justice Britain would have taken away all cause for the seething discontent of India. She will turn the growing ill-will into goodwill. I submit that it is worth all the battleships and airships that your wonder working engineers and financial resources can produce.

I know that interested propaganda has filled your ears and eyes with distorted visions of the Congress position. I have been painted as a hypocrite and enemy of Britain under disguise. My demonstrable spirit of accommodation has been described as my inconsistency, proving me to be an utterly unreliable man. I am not going to burden this letter with proof in support of my assertions. I know the credit I have enjoyed in America will not stand me in good stead, nothing I may argue in self-defence will carry conviction.

You have made common cause with Great Britain. You cannot therefore disown responsibility for anything that her representatives do in India. You will do a grievous wrong to the Allied cause if you do not sift the truth from the chaff whilst there is yet time. Just think of it. Is there anything wrong in the Congress demanding unconditional recognition of India's independence? It is being said but this is not the time. We say this is the psychological moment for that recognition. For then and then only can there be irresistible opposition to Japanese aggression. It is of immense value to the Allied cause it is also of equal value to India. The Congress has anticipated and provided for every possible difficulty in the way of recognition. I want you to look upon the immediate recognition of India's independence as a war measure of first class magnitude.

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## **LETTERS WRITTEN BY GANDHIJI TO THE VICEROY AND HOME MEMBER, GOVERN- MENT OF INDIA, DURING THE 1942 MOVEMENT**

### **1ST LETTER.**

To Lord Linlithgow :

During the course of the political upheavals of August, 1942 in India, Mahatma Gandhi wrote some letters to the then Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow. The Government in their propaganda campaigns within as well as outside the country laid the entire responsibility for August Disturbances upon Congress Leaders, whereas the national circle were unanimous in declaring that the crisis was precipitated by the repressive policy of the Government. The entire country from one end to the other was aflame with unprecedented mob fury, and it appeared as if the Indian action had once for all decided to 'do or die'. The Government on their part were bent upon crushing the movement by hook or by crook. It was in such a sorry state of affairs that Gandhiji addressed the following letter to Lord Linlithgow, wherein he criticized the Government resolution on Congress struggle point by point. While the disturbances were deplored as an unfortunate lapse from the tradition of non-violence set for the country by the Congress there was no disposition to regard them as having been planned by the Congress Leaders.)

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## WHO IS GUILTY?

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

The Government of India were wrong in precipitating the crisis. The Government resolution justifying this step is full of distortions and misrepresentations. That you have the approval of your Indian 'colleagues' can have no significance except this that in India you can always command such services. That co-operation is an additional justification for the demand of withdrawal irrespective of what people and parties may say.

The Government of India should have waited at least till the time I inaugurated mass action. I have publicly stated that I fully contemplated sending you a letter before taking concrete action. It was to be an appeal to you for an impartial examination of the Congress case. As you know, the Congress has readily filled in every omission that has been discovered in the conception of its demand. So could I have dealt with every difficulty if you had given me the opportunity. The precipitate action of the Government leads one to think that they were afraid that the extreme caution and gradualness with which the Congress was moving towards direct action

might make world opinion veer round to the Congress, as it had already begun doing, and expose the hollowness of the grounds for the Government's rejection of the Congress demand. They should surely have waited for an authentic report of my speeches on Friday and on Saturday night after the passing of the resolution by the All-India Congress Committee. You would have taken advantage of the interval foreshadowed in them, and explored every possibility of satisfying the Congress demand.

The resolution says: The Government of India have waited patiently in the hope that wiser counsels might prevail. They have been disappointed in that hope. I suppose 'wiser counsels' here means abandonment of its demand by the Congress. Why should the abandonment of the demand, legitimate at all times, be hoped for by a Government pledged to guarantee independence to India? Is it a challenge that could only be met by immediate repression instead of patient reasoning with the demanding party? I venture to suggest that it is a long draft upon the credulity of mankind to say that the acceptance of the demand would plunge India into confusion. Any way the summary rejection of the demand has plunged the nation and the Government into confusion. The

Congress was making every effort to identify India with the Allied cause.

The Government resolution says : "The Governor-General in Council has been aware too for some days past of dangerous preparations by the Congress Party of unlawful and in some cases violent activities directed among other things to interruption of communications and public utility services, the organization of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of Government servants, and interference with defence measures including recruitment. This is a gross distortion of the reality. Violence was never contemplated at any stage. A definition of what could be included in non-violent action has been interpreted in a sinister and subtle manner as if the Congress was preparing for violent action. Everything was openly discussed among Congress circles, for nothing was to be done secretly. And why is it tampering with your loyalty if I ask you to give up a job which is harming the British people' ?

Instead of publishing behind the backs of principal Congressmen the misleading paragraphs, the Government immediately they came to know of the 'preparations' should have brought to book the parties concerned with the preparations. That

would have been the appropriate course. By their unsupported allegations in the resolution they have laid themselves open to the charge of unfair dealing.

The Congress movement was intended to evoke in the people the measure of sacrifice sufficient to compel attention. It was intended to demonstrate what measure of popular support it had. Was it wise at this time of the day to seek to suppress a popular Government avowedly non-violent?

The Government resolution further says. The Congress is not India's mouthpiece. Yet in the interest of securing their own dominance and in pursuit of their totalitarian policy its leaders have consistently impeded the efforts made to bring India to full nationhood. It is a gross libel thus to accuse the oldest national organization of India. This language lies ill in the mouth of a Government which has, as can be proved from published records, consistently thwarted every national effort for attaining freedom, and sought to suppress the Congress by hook or crook.

The Government of India have not condescended to consider the Congress offer that if simultaneously with the declaration of the Independence of India they could not trust the Congress to form a stable

provisional Government they should ask the Muslim League to do so, and that any National Government formed by the League would be loyally accepted by the Congress. Such an offer is hardly consistent with the charge of totalitarianism against the Congress.

Let me examine the Government offer. It is that, as soon as hostilities cease, India shall devise, for herself, with full freedom of decision and on a basis embracing all and not only a single party, the form of Government which she regards as most suited to her conditions. Has this offer any reality about it? All parties have not agreed now. Will it be any more possible after the war? And if the parties have to act before Independence is in their hands? Parties grow up like mushrooms for without proving their representative character, the Government will welcome them as they have done in the past, and if they, the parties oppose the Congress and its activities, though they may do lip-homage to Independence, frustration is inherent in the Government offer. Hence the logical cry of withdrawal first. Only after the end of British power and a fundamental change in the political status of India from bondage to freedom will the formation of a truly representative government

## 26' *Famous Letters of Mahatma Gandhi.*

whether provisional or permanent, be possible. The living burial of the author of the demand has not resolved the deadlock, it has aggravated.

Then the resolution proceeds : 'The suggestion put forward by the Congress party that the millions of India, uncertain as to the future, are ready, despite the sad lessons of so many martyr countries, to throw themselves into the arms of the invaders is one that the Government of India cannot accept as a true representation of the feeling of the people of this great country'. I do not know about the millions but I can give my own evidence in support of the Congress statement. It is open to the Government not to believe the Congress evidence. No imperial power likes to be told that it is in peril. It is because the Congress is anxious for Great Britain to avoid the fate that has overtaken other imperial powers that it asks her to shed imperialism voluntarily by declaring India independent. The Congress has not approached the movement with any but the friendliest motives. The Congress seeks to kill imperialism as much for the sake of the British people and humanity as for India. Notwithstanding assertions to the contrary, I maintain that the Congress has no interests of its own, apart from that of the whole of India and the world.

The following passage from the peroration in the resolution is interesting. "But on them lies the task of defending India, of maintaining India's capacity to wage war, of safe-guarding India's interests of holding the balance between the different sections of her people without fear or favour." All I can say is that it is a mockery of truth after the experience of Malaya, Singapore and Burma. It is sad to find the Government of India claiming to hold the 'balance' between the parties for which it is itself demonstrably responsible.

One thing more. The declared cause is common between the Government of India and us. To put it in the most concrete terms, it is the protection of the freedom of China and Russia. The Government of India think that the freedom of India is not necessary for winning the cause. I think exactly the opposite. I have taken Jawaharlal Nehru as my measuring rod. His personal contacts make him feel than I can and, may I say, than even you can. In that misery he tried to forget his old quarrel with Imperialism. He dreads much more than I do the success of Fascism and Nazism. I have argued with him for days together. He fought against my position with a passion which I have no words to describe. But the logic of facts overwhelmed him.

He yielded when he saw clearly that without the freedom of India that of the other two was in great jeopardy. Surely, you are wrong in having imprisoned such a powerful friend and ally. If, notwithstanding the common cause, the Government answer to the Congress demand is hasty repression they will not wonder if I draw the inference that it was not so much the Allied cause that weighed with the British Government as the unexpressed determination to cling to the possession of India as an indispensable part of the imperial policy. The determination led to the rejection of the Congress demand and precipitated repression. The present mutual slaughter on a scale never before known to history is suffocating enough. But the slaughter of truth accompanying the butchery and enforced by the falsity of which the resolution is reeking adds strength to the Congress position.

It causes me deep pain to have to send you this long letter. But however much I dislike your action, I remain the same friend you have known me. I would still plead for reconsideration of the Government of India's whole policy. Do not disregard the pleading of one who claims to be a sincere friend of the British people. Heaven guide you.

I am, Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI.

To the Secretary, Home Department.

**THE RIGHT COURSE FOR THE  
GOVERNMENT.**

Sept. 23, 1942.

Sir,

In spite of the chorus of approval sung by the Indian Councillors and others of the present Government policy in dealing with the Congress, I venture to assert that had the Government but awaited my contemplated letter to His Excellency the Viceroy and the result thereafter, no calamity would have overtaken the country. The reported deplorable destruction would have most certainly been avoided.

In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, I claim that the Congress policy still remains unequivocally non-violent. The wholesale arrest of the Congress leaders seems to have made the people wild with rage to the point of losing self-control. I feel that the Government not the Congress are responsible for the destruction that has taken place. The only right course for the Government seems to me to be to release the Congress leaders, withdraw all repressive measures and explore ways and means of

conciliation. Surely, the Government have ample resources to deal with any overt act of violence. Repression can only breed discontent and bitterness.

Since I am permitted to receive newspapers, I feel that I owe it to the Government to give my reaction to the said happenings in the country. If the Government think that as a prisoner I have no right to address such communications, they have but to say so, and I will not repeat the mistake.

I am, Yours, etc.,

M. K. GANDHI.

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**Letter on New Year's Eve.**

*New Year's Eve 1942.*

**MAY THE NEW YEAR BRING PEACE  
TO US.**

**Personal.**

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

This is a very personal letter. Contiary to the biblical injunction, I have allowed many suns to set on a quarrel. I have harboured against you, but I must not allow the old year to expire without disburdening myself of what is rankling in my breast against you. I had thought we were friends and should still love to think so. However, what has happened since August 9 last makes me wonder whether you still regard me as a friend. I have perhaps not come in close touch with any other occupant of your gadi as with you.

Your arrest of me, the communique you issued thereafter, your reply to Rajaji and the reasons given therefor, Mr. Amery's attack on me and much else I can catalogue go to show that at some stage or other you must have suspected my *bona fides*.  
..

Mention of other Congressmen in the same connection is by the way. I seem to be the *fons et origo* of all the evil imputed to the Congress. If I have not ceased to be your friend, why did you not, before taking drastic action, send for me, tell me of your suspicions and make yourself sure of your facts? I am quite capable of seeing myself as others see me, but in this case I have failed hopelessly. I find that all the statements made about me in Government quarters in this connection contain palpable departures from truth. I have so much fallen from grace that I could not establish contact with a dying friend; I mean Prof. Bhansi who is fasting in regard to the Chimur affair and I am expected to condemn the socalled violence of some people reputed to be Congressmen, although I have no data for such condemnation save the heavily censored reports of newspapers. I must own that I thoroughly distrust these reports. I could write much more, but I must not lengthen my tale of woe. I am sure that what I have said is enough to enable you to fill in details.

You know I returned to India from South Africa at the end of 1914 with a mission which came to me in 1906, namely, to spread truth and non-violence among mankind in the place of violence and false-

hood in all walks of life. The law of Satyagraha knows no defeat. Prison is one of the many ways of spreading the message, but it has its limits. You have placed me in a palace where every reasonable creature comfort is ensured. I have freely partaken of the latter purely as a matter of duty, never as a pleasure, in the hope that some day those that have the power will realise that they have wronged innocent men. I had given myself six months. The period is drawing to a close, so is my patience. The law of Satyagraha as I know it prescribes a remedy in such moments of trial. In 'a sentence, it is. 'Crucify the flesh by fasting'. That same law forbids its use except as a last resort. I did not want to use it if I can avoid it. This is the way to avoid it, convince me of my error or errors, and I shall make ample amends. You can send for me or send some one who knows your mind and can carry conviction. There are many other ways if you have the will. May I expect an early reply? May the New Year bring peace to us all.

I am,

Your sincere friend,

M. K. GANDHI.

January 19, 1943.

## TO LORD LINLITHGOW.

*Personal*

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

I received your kind letter of the 13th instant yesterday at 2-30 p.m. I have almost dispaired of ever hearing from you. Please excuse my impatience.

Your letter gladdens me to find that I have not lost caste with you.

My letter of 31st December was a growl against you. Yours is a counter-growl. It means that you maintain that you were right in arresting me and you were sorry for the omissions of which, in your opinion, I was guilty.

The inference you draw from my letter is, I am afraid, not correct. I have re-read my letter in the light of your interpretation, but have failed to find your meaning in it. I wanted to fast and should still want to if nothing comes out of our correspondence and I have to be a helpless witness to what is going on in the country, including the privations of the millions owing to the universal scarcity stalking the land.

If I do not accept your interpretation of my letter, you want me to make a positive suggestion. This I might be able to do, only if you put me among the members of the Working Committee of the Congress.

If I could be convinced of my error or worse, of which you are evidently, I should need to consult nobody, so far as my own action is concerned, to make a full and open confession and make ample amends. But I have not any conviction of error. I wonder if you saw my letter to the Secretary to the Government of India, of September 23, 1942. I adhere to what I have said in it and in my letter to you August 14, 1942.

Of course I deplore the happenings which have taken place since August 9 last. But have I not laid the whole blame for them at the door of the Government of India? Moreover, I could not express any opinion on events which I cannot influence or control and of which I have but a one-sided account. You are bound *prima facie* to accept the accuracy of reports that may be placed before you by your departmental heads. But you do not expect me to do so. Such reports have before now often proved fallible. It was for that reason that

in my letter of December 31, I pleaded with you to convince me of the correctness of the information on which your conviction was based. You will perhaps appreciate my fundamental difficulty in making the statement you have expected me to make.

This however, I can say from the house-top that I am as confirmed a believer in non-violence as I have ever been. You may not know that any violence on the part of the Congress workers I have condemned openly and unequivocally. I have even done public penance more than once. I must not weary you with examples. The point I wish to make is that on every such occasion I was a free man.

This time, the retracing, as I have submitted lies with the Government. You will forgive me for expressing an opinion challenging yours. I am certain that nothing but good would have resulted if you had stayed your hand and granted me the interview which I had announced on the night of August 8, I was to seek. But that was not to be.

Here, may I remind you that the Government of India have before now owned their mistakes as, for instance, in the Punjab when the late General

Dyer was condemned, in the United Provinces when a corner of a mosque in Cawnpore was restored and in Bengal when the Partition was annulled. All these things were done in spite of great and previous mob violence.

To sum up—

- (1) If you want me to act singly, convince me that I was wrong and I will make ample amends.
- (2) If you want me to make any proposal on behalf of the Congress, you should put me among the Congress Working Committee members. I do not plead with you to make up your mind to end the impasse.

If I am obscure or have not answered your letter fully, please point out the omissions and I shall make an attempt to give you satisfaction.

I have no mental reservation.

I find that my letters to you are sent through the Government of Bombay. This procedure must involve some loss of time. As time is of the essence in this matter, perhaps you will issue instructions that my letters to you may be sent direct by the Superintendent of this camp.

I am,  
Your sincere friend,  
M. K. GANDHI.

**To Lord Linlithgow.**

**DECISION TO FAST.**

(Whereas Gandhiji in his letters defended the Congress stand Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy continued to hold Congress responsible for the August 1942 rebellion. A vigorous anti-Congress, anti-Indian campaign was launched in Foreign countries and a ruthless repression let loose on Indian 'rebels'. Gandhiji was pained at the sight of such a tyrannical policy of the Government. He therefore decided to go on fast and sent the following letter to the Viceroy.)

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## THE GOVERNMENT GOADED THE PEOPLE TO THE POINT OF MADNESS.

*January 29, 1943.*

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

I must thank you warmly for your prompt reply to my letter of the 19th instant. I wish I could agree with you that your letter is clear. I am sure you do not wish to imply by clearness simply you hold a particular opinion strongly. I have pleaded and would continue to plead till the last breath that you should at least make an attempt to convince me of the validity of opinion you hold that the August resolution of the Congress is responsible for the popular violence that broke out on August 9 last and after even though it broke out after the wholesale arrest of principal leaders. Was not the drastic and unwarranted action of the Government responsible for the reported violence?

You have not even said what part of the August resolution is bad or offensive in your opinion. That resolution is in no way a retraction by the Congress of its policy of non-violence. It is definitely against Fascism in every shape or form. It tenders co-operation in war effort under circum-

ances which alone can make effective and nation-wide co-operation possible. Is all this open to reproach? Objection may be raised to that clause of the resolution which contemplated civil disobedience. But that by itself cannot constitute an objection since the principle of civil disobedience is impliedly conceded in what is known as the 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact'. Even that civil disobedience was not to be started before knowing the result of the meeting for which I was to seek from you an appointment.

Then take the unproved and in my opinion unprovable charges hurled against the Congress and me by so responsible a Minister as the Secretary of State for India.

Surely, I can say with safety that it is for the Government to justify their action by solid evidence, not by mere '*ipse dixit*'.

But you throw in my face the facts of murders by persons reputed to be Congressmen. I see the fact of the murders as clearly as I hope, as you do. My answer is that the Government goaded the people to the point of madness. They started leonine violence in the shape of the arrests already referred to. That violence is not any the less so,

because it is organised on a scale so gigantic that it displaces the Mosaic Law of tooth for tooth by that of ten thousand for one—not to mention the corollary of the Mosaic Law, i.e., of non-resistance as enunciated by Jesus Christ. I cannot interpret in any other manner the repressive measures of the all-powerful Government of India.

Add to this tale of woe the privations of the poor millions due to India-wide scarcity which I cannot help thinking might have been largely mitigated, if not altogether prevented, had there been a *bona fide* National Government responsible to a popularly elected assembly.

If then I cannot get soothing balm for my pain I must resort to the law prescribed for Satyagrahis, namely, a fast according to capacity. I must commence after the early morning breakfast of February 9, a fast for 21 days ending on March 2. Usually during my fasts, I take water with the addition of salts. But nowadays my system refused water. This time therefore I propose to add juices of citrus fruit to make water drinkable. For, my wish is not to fast unto death, but to survive the ordeal, if God so will. This fast can be ended sooner by the Government giving the needed relief.

I am not marking this letter personal as I did the two previous ones. They were in no way confidential. They were a mere personal appeal.

## TO LORD LINLITHGOW.

(LAST LETTER)

*(The reply from the Viceroy to Gandhiji's intimation on fast was not only responsive but also threatening. He went to the length of describing Gandhiji's decision to fast as 'political blackmailing'. Gandhiji addressed the following last letter to the then Viceroy.)*

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## THE RESPONSIBILITY IS NO DOUBT MINE BUT ...

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

I have to thank you for your long reply dated the 5th instant to my letter of January 29 last. I would take your last point first, namely, the contemplated fast which begins on 9th instant. Your letter from a Satyagrahi's standpoint is an invitation to fast. No doubt the responsibility for the step and its consequences, will be solely mine. You have allowed an expression to slip from your pen, for which I was unprepared. In the concluding sentence of the second paragraph you describe the step as an attempt to find any easy way out. That you as a friend, can impute such a base and cowardly motive to me passes comprehension. You have also described it as "a form of political blackmail". And you quote my previous writing on the subject against me. I abide by my writing. I hold that there is nothing inconsistent in them with the contemplated step. I wonder whether you have yourself read those writings.

I do claim that I had approached you with an open mind when I asked you to convince me of my

error. "Profound distrust" of the published reports is in no way inconsistent with my having an open mind.

You say that there is evidence that I—I have my friends out for the moment—"expected this policy to lead to violence", that I was "prepared to condone it", and that "the violence that ensued formed part of a concerted plan conceived long before the arrest of Congress leaders. I have seen no evidence in support of such a serious charge. You admit that part of the evidence has yet to be published. The speech of the Home Member, of which you have favoured me with a copy, may be taken as the opening speech of the prosecution counsel and nothing more. It contains unsupported imputations against Congressmen. Of course he has described the violent outburst in graphic language. But he has not said why it took place when it did. You have condemned men and women before trying them and hearing their defence. Surely, there is nothing wrong in my asking you to show me the evidence on which you hold them guilty. What you say in your letter carries no conviction. Proof should correspond to the canons of English Jurisprudence.

If the wife of a member of the Working Committee is actively engaged in "planning the bomb outrages and others acts of terrorism" she should be tried before a court of law and punished if sound guilty. The lady you refer to could only have done the things attributed to her after the wholesale arrests of August 9 last, which I have dared to describe as leonine violence.

You say that the time is not yet ripe to publish the charge against the Congress. Have you ever thought of the possibility of their being found baseless when they are put before an impartial tribunal? Or that some of the condemned persons might have died in the meanwhile, or that some of the evidence that the living can produce might become unavailable?

I reiterate the statement that the principle of civil disobedience is implicitly conceded in the Settlement of March 5, 1931 arrived at between the then Viceroy on behalf of the Government of India and myself on behalf of the Congress. I hope you know that the principal Congressmen were discharged before that settlement was even thought of. Certain reparations were made to Congressmen under that Settlement. Civil disobedience was discontinued on certain conditions being fulfilled by the Government.

That by itself, was, in my opinion, an acknowledgement of its legitimacy, of course under given circumstances. It therefore seems somewhat strange to find you maintain that civil disobedience cannot be recognised as being in any circumstances legitimate by your Government. You ignore the practice of the British Government which has recognised this legitimacy under the name of "passive resistance".

Lastly you read into my letters a meaning which is wholly inconsistent with my declaration, in one of them of adherence to unadulterated non-violence. For, you say in your letter under reply that "acceptance of my point of view would be to concede that the authorised Government of the country on which lies the responsibility for maintaining peace and good order, should allow movements to take place, that would admit preparations for violence, interruption of communications, for attacks on innocent persons, for murders of police officers and others to proceed unchecked". I must be a strange friend of yours whom you believe to be capable of asking for recognition of such things as lawful.

I have not attempted an exhaustive reply to the views and statements attributed to me. This is not the place nor the time for such a reply. I have only picked out those things which in my opinion

demanded an immediate answer. You have left me no loophole for escaping the ordeal I have set before myself. I begin it on the 9th instant with the clearest possible conscience. Despite your description of it as a "form of political blackmail", it is on my part meant to be an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you. If I do not survive the ordeal, I shall go to the Judgment Seat with the fullest faith in my ignorance. Posterity will judge between you as representative of an all-powerful Government and me as a humble man who has tried to serve his country and humanity through it.

{ My last letter was written against time, and therefore a material paragraph went in as postscript. I now send herewith a fair copy typed by Pearey Lal who has taken Mahadev Desai's place. You will find the postscript paragraph restored to the place where it should have been.

I am,  
Your sincere friend,  
M. K. GANDHI.

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**PRAY, DO NOT RELEASE ME !**

Dear Sir Richard,

I have very carefully studied your letter. I am sorry to say that there is nothing in the correspondence which has taken place between His Excellency and myself, or your letter to warrant a recalling of my intention to fast. I have mentioned in letters to His Excellency the conditions which can induce prevention or suspension of the step.

If the temporary release is offered for my convenience I do not need it. I shall be quite content to take my fast as a detenu or prisoner. If it is for the convenience of the Government, I am sorry, I am unable to suit them, much as I should like to do so. I can say this much that I, as a prisoner, shall avoid, as far as is humanly possible, every cause of inconvenience to the Government save what is inherent in the fast itself.

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