

PART III
INDIA'S DEFENCE AND INDEPENDENCE

CHAPTER I

ALLAHABAD MEETING OF THE CONGRESS WORKING
COMMITTEE

Since the fall and subsequent fate of Burma and specially of the Indians in Burma and thereafter the fiasco of Cripps Mission, Gandhiji began seriously considering about the defence of India. His mind's working was clearly expressed by him in his articles in the 'Harijan,' which were quite explicit and unambiguous. His main emphasis was on two points, firstly defence of India and not to fall in the hands of the aggressor and secondly to gain popular support for this and not depend entirely on the British Government in India whose weakness was manifested by its continuous failure in Malaya, Singapore, and Burma. The idea that Gandhiji or the Congress were pro-Japanese is false and fantastic. This we have also shown in one of our previous chapter and again we hereby support the same on the basis of various Congress resolutions and views of Gandhiji and Jawaharlalji as expressed by them. The Government of India, to vilify the Congress and Gandhiji, issued a communique through its Home Department, from New Delhi, on 5th August '42 just on the eve of the memorable Bombay Session of the A.I.C.C. In this they have published an unauthorised and unauthentic record of the Allahabad Meeting of the Congress Working Committee (held from April 27th to May 1, '42) which was recovered in a subsequent police search of the A. I. C. C.'s office. Gandhiji was not present at this meeting, but he sent, for the consideration of the Working Committee, a draft resolution. Miraben who brought the draft, explained how Gandhiji's mind was working. The Committee gave earnest and careful consideration to the draft. But as regards the authenticity of the notes of that meeting which were taken by the Assistant Secretary of the A.I.C.C. and published in this communique of the Government and also about the attitude of Gandhiji towards Japan etc., we give below the statement of Jawahar Lal Nehru from Bombay on August 5th, 1942:—

"I have just seen for the first time the Government's communique issuing certain documents obtained during a police raid from the A. I. C. C. office. It is astonishing to what a pass the Government of India has been reduced when it has to adopt these discreditable and dishonourable tactics. Normally, such tactics require no answer. But as there is likely to be misapprehension, I wish to clear up some matters,

It is not our custom to keep detailed minutes of Working Committee's meetings. Only final decisions are recorded. On this occasion, the assistant secretary took brief notes unofficially apparently for his own record. These notes are very brief and disjointed and represent several days' prolonged debate during which I must have spoken on various occasions for two or three hours. Only a few sentences were taken down and torn from their context. They often give a wrong impression. None of us had a chance of seeing these notes or revising them. The record is very unsatisfactory and incomplete and hence often incorrect.

In our discussions, Mahatma Gandhi was not present. We had to consider every aspect of the question fully and to weigh the implications of words and phrases in the draft resolutions. If Gandhiji had been there, much of this discussion might have been avoided as he could have explained to us his attitude more fully.

Thus when the question of British withdrawal from India was considered, I pointed out that if the armed forces were suddenly withdrawn, the Japanese might well advance and invade the country without hindrance. The obvious difficulty was removed when Gandhiji later explained that British and other armed forces might remain to prevent aggression.

In regard to the statement that Gandhiji expected an Axis victory, an important qualification has been omitted. What he has reportedly said and what I have referred to is his belief that unless Britain changes her whole policy in regard to India and her colonial possessions, she is heading for disaster. He has further stated that if a suitable change in this policy was made and the war really became one for freedom for all peoples, then victory would assuredly come to the United Nations.

The references to negotiations with Japan are also incorrect and entirely torn from their context. Gandhiji always sends notice to his adversary before coming into conflict. He would thus have called upon Japan not only to keep away from India, but to withdraw from China. In any event he was determined to resist every aggressor in India and he advised our people to do so even to the point of death. They were never to submit.

It is absurd to say that any of us envisaged any arrangements with Japan giving her right of passage and other things. What I said was that Japan would want this, but we could never agree. Our whole policy has all along been based on uttermost resistance to aggression."

We also reproduce here the statement of Gandhiji on this communique with his answers to the questions put to him

in this connection. It clarifies Gandhiji's position in his own words and strongly refutes the Government's unfounded and imaginary allegations against him :—

"I want to make a remark or two about the manner in which the Government have got this document. I think that the procedure thus adopted of searching the A. I. C. C. offices and seizing documents was in itself reprehensible. The Congress is not an illegal organisation. Its representatives have, under the partial autonomy given by the Government of India Act, successfully administered seven large provinces of India, and so far as I am aware, without a single exception, the Governors of those provinces have nothing but praise for the considerable administrative talent and devotion to duty shown by the Ministers who were Congress representatives. Such an organisation deserves, to say the least, a better treatment than the Government had accorded it by its procedure with the A. I. C. C.

Their action becomes more reprehensible when they make what I consider, illegitimate use of the documents seized. They might have had the courtesy of referring the document to the A. I. C. C. and heard what the committee had to say before making public use thereof.

In spite of the effort of the Home Department to discredit the members of the Working Committee, the reading of the notes unauthenticated though they are, will not make any difference at least in India in the prestige which the Congress enjoys. There is nothing in it of which any member has any cause to be ashamed.

I do not know what should be the journalistic attitude of such use of documents seized in the manner I have shown and sprung upon an unsuspecting public at a most critical time both for the Government and the people. But I leave the profession to judge for itself."

Question 1. The whole inference of Nehru's statements in the documents is that your belief is that Japan and Germany will win the war. Does that represent your considered opinion?

Answer: You have been good enough to show Pandit Nehru's statement on the document issued by the Government. After his full and frank explanation I hardly think I need answer your questions. I wholly agree with the opinion expressed by him. That however, is his own reaction to the draft resolution sent to the Working Committee. As the language of that draft shows, it had many I's to be dotted and T's to be crossed. It was sent through Miraben to whom I had explained the implications of the draft and I said to her or to the friends of the Working Committee who happened

to be in Sevagram to whom I had explained the draft, that there was an omission deliberate from my draft as to the foreign policy of the Congress and therefore any reference to China and Russia. For as I had said to them, I derived my inspiration and knowledge from Pandit Nehru about foreign matters of which he had been deep student. Therefore, I said that he could fill in that part in the resolution.

But I may add that I have never, even in a most unguarded moment, expressed the opinion that they cannot win the war, if only Great Britain will once for all shed her imperialism. I have given expression to that opinion more than once in the columns of 'Harijan' and I repeat here that in spite of all my wish to the contrary and of others, if disaster overtakes Great Britain and the Allied powers, it will be because even at the critical moment—most critical in her history—obstinately refused to wash herself of the taint of imperialism which she has carried with her for at least a century and a half.

The suppressed races of the earth will never see the fine distinction that the Pandit and, following him, I can see and make between fascism and imperialism. The difference, if any, discerned by the man on the street will be not of kind but only of degree, and therefore I have pleaded and shall plead ever as I am fighting with all the earnestness. I command that Britain will shed the taint, and that her great ally America will make her do so, and then be sure of victory no matter how prolonged the struggle and what cost it requires.

To say the least then, the Allied powers will earn the blessings of dumb but countless millions, apart from the gaining men and material that the free association of these peoples will bring to the Allies. I would count their blessings to be of far higher value than every other consideration. I have, therefore, nothing to withdraw and nothing to be ashamed of about the draft I had the privilege of sending to the Working Committee.

Question 2. Pandit Nehru states that, according to your plans after British withdrawal, India would possibly negotiate with Japan and even allow her a large measure of civil control, military bases in India and right of passage for her troops?

Answer: As to your second question, I can only say that you have put it because I regret to have to say you have not studied my writings in 'Harijan' before the draft was written and after. Having such confidence, for which many of my friends say I have no warrant, in the efficacy of the weapon of non-violent, non-co-operation with all its implications that I have presented to the nation, I maintain that I could not be guilty of harbouring any such thought you have attributed to me. Pandit Nehru has explained quite clearly what could

be his own meaning and interpretation of my draft. I add by way of emphasis that I had purposely incorporated the sentence about negotiations with Japan, and if ultimately it was dropped and I associated myself with the deletion, I did so out of my regard for my co-workers—not because I was uncertain as to what I meant to do. It is the essence of the use of the weapon that you will always give your opponent the opportunity of doing the right thing, and if India became an independent nation to-morrow and I was witness to the grand phenomenon, I would certainly advise and plead with the provisional government to send me—old as I am—to Japan and I would plead with her in the first instance to free China, her great neighbour, from the menace that Japan has become and tell her that if she does not do this elementary justice, she will have to count upon the stubborn resistance of millions who had at long last found themselves in possession of a thing which every nation prizes before everything else.

That gentle notice—or entreaty it should be called, because that entreaty will not be backed at least to-morrow with any military show, because I will not dangle before Japan the show that will still be made by the Allied powers whose operations will still go on in India with the free consent of India become free—will carry with it the power implied in the use of the matchless moral weapon of non-violent non-cooperation. And I am sure I will make the appeal not without hope of success. That was the meaning of the sentence the use of which at the present juncture is intended to bring discredit upon my devoted head. I shall take the discredit and so much the better if I can take India's freedom also with it."

In this connection Gandhiji wrote even in June 1942, in reply to a question as below :—

"The difficulty about the confusion in the public mind by the contemplated stay of the Allied troops in the country is very real. Neither the masses nor even the classes will appreciate the necessity of military operations by the Allied powers after the declaration of withdrawal. But if the necessity is proved the public may be expected to reconcile themselves to the inevitable.

There was obviously a gap in my first writing. I filled it in as soon as it was discovered by one of my numerous interviewers. Non-violence demands the strictest honesty, cost what it may. The public have therefore to suffer my weakness. If weakness it may be called. I could not be guilty of asking the Allies to take a step which would involve certain defeat.

The writer's argument about Britain having no cause left

for pursuing the war, if she accepts my proposal and logically follows it in Africa, is sound. But that is the acid test proposed. India has every right to examine the implications of high-sounding declarations about justice, preservation of democracy and freedom of speech and individual liberty. Is India a democracy? Are the States a democracy? Britain does not deserve to win the war on the ground of justice if she is fighting to keep her Asiatic and African possessions. I am not unaware of the tremendous change in Britain's economic policy that the acceptance of my proposal involves. But that change is a vital necessity, if this war is to have a satisfactory ending.

Who knows if Britain's acceptance of my proposal will not by itself mean an honourable end of the war resulting in a change even in the mentality of the Axis powers?

The writer is afraid that my reconciliation to the presence of the British troops would mean a descent on my part from my non-violent position. Neither Britain nor America share my faith in non-violence. I am unable to state that the non-violent effort will make India proof against Japanese or any other aggression. I am not able even to claim that the whole of India is non-violent in the sense required.

In the circumstances it would be hypocritical on my part to insist on the immediate withdrawal of the Allied troops as an indispensable part of my proposal. It is sufficient for me to declare that, so far as India is concerned, she does not need troops to defend herself, having no quarrel with Japan. But India must not by any act of hers short of national suicide let China down or put the Allied powers in jeopardy.

So long, therefore, as India lacks faith in the capacity of non-violence to protect her against aggression from without, the demand for the withdrawal of the Allied troops during the pendency of the war would itself be an act of violence, if the controllers of the troops hold it to be necessary for their defence to keep them in India for that purpose and that alone."

In this very connection Gandhiji wrote in 'Harijan' a week previous to the above also which we reproduce below :—

"If I am impatient of the British yoke, I am so because India's sullenness and the suppressed delight of the man in the street over British reverses are dangerous symptoms which may lead to the success of Japanese designs upon India. India finding herself in possession of complete freedom will never want the Japanese to enter India. India's sullenness and discontent will be changed as if by magic into joyful and hearty co-operation with the Allies in consolidating and preserving her liberty from any and every evil design."

The intention of the Congress is very distinctly and

unmistakably expressed in the various resolutions passed by the Congress Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. They all are consistent and boldly voicing the same thoughts and feelings. This will be clear from the following quotations :—

1. Extract from the draft of Rajendra Babu. Allahabad, dated April 27, '42.

"But if Japan attacks India and Britain makes no response to its appeal the Committee would expect all those who look to Congress for guidance to offer complete non-violent non-co-operation to the Japanese forces and not render any assistance to them. It is no part of the duty of those who are attacked to render any assistance to the attacker. It is their duty to offer complete non-co-operation.

It is not difficult to understand the simple principle of non-violent non-co-operation :—

1. We may not bend the knee to the aggressor nor obey any of his orders.

2. We may not look to him for any favours nor fall to his bribes. But we may not bear him any malice nor wish him ill.

3. If he wishes to take possession of our fields we will refuse to give them up even if we have to die in the effort to resist him.

4. If he is attacked by disease or is dying of thirst and seeks our aid we may not refuse it.

5. In such places where the British and Japanese forces are fighting our non-co-operation will be fruitless and unnecessary. At present our non-co-operation with the British Government is limited. Were we to offer them complete non-co-operation when they are actually fighting, it would be tantamount to placing our country deliberately in Japanese hands. Therefore not to put any obstacle in the way of the British forces will often be the only way of demonstrating our non-co-operation with the Japanese. Neither may we assist the British in any active manner. If we can judge from their recent attitude, the British Government do not need any help from us beyond our non-interference. They desire our help only as slaves—a position we can never accept.

2. Extract from the A. I. C. C. Resolution May, 1 1942.

"The Committee repudiates the idea that freedom can come to India through interference or invasion by any foreign nation, whatever the professions of that nation may be. In case an invasion takes place it must be resisted. Such resistance can only take the form of non-violent non-co-operation as the British Government has prevented the organization of national defence by the people in any other

way. The Committee would therefore expect the people of India to offer complete non-violent non-co-operation to the invading forces and not to render any assistance to them. We may not bend the knee to the aggressor nor obey any of his orders. We may not look to him for favours nor fall to his bribes. If he wishes to take possession of our homes and our fields we will refuse to give them up even if we have to die in the effort to resist them. In places wherein the British and the invading forces are fighting our non-co-operation will be fruitless and unnecessary. Not to put any obstacle in the way of British forces will often be the only way of demonstrating our non-co-operation with the invader. Judging from their attitude the British Government do not need any help from us beyond our non-interference."

3. Extract from the text of the Resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee at Wardha on 14th July, 1942.

"India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and in affecting the fortunes of the war that is desolating humanity. The freedom of India is thus necessary not only in the interest of India but also for the safety of the world and for the ending of Nazism, Fascism, militarism and other forms of imperialism, and the aggression of one nation over another. Ever since the outbreak of the world war, the Congress has studiously pursued a policy of non-embarrassment. Even at the risk of making its satyagraha ineffective, it deliberately gave it a symbolic character in the hope that this policy of non-embarrassment carried to its logical extreme would be duly appreciated and that real power would be transferred to popular representatives so as to enable the nation to make its fullest contribution towards the realisation of human freedom throughout the world, which is in danger of being crushed. It had also hoped that negatively nothing would be done which was calculated to tighten Britain's hold on India.

These hopes have, however, been dashed to pieces. The abortive Cripps' proposals showed in the clearest possible manner that there was no change in the British Government's attitude towards India and that the British hold on India was in no way to be relaxed. In the negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps, Congress Representatives tried their utmost to achieve a minimum, consistent with the national demand, but to no avail. This frustration has resulted in a rapid and wide-spread increase of ill-will against Britain and a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms.

The Working Committee view this development with

grave apprehension as this, unless checked, will inevitably lead to a passive acceptance of aggression. The Committee hold that all aggression must be resisted, for any submission to it must mean the degradation of the Indian people and the continuation of their subjection. The Congress is anxious to avoid the experience of Malaya, Singapore, and Burma and desires to build up resistance to any aggression on or invasion of India by the Japanese or any foreign Power. The Congress would change the present ill-will against Britain into good-will and make India a willing partner in a joint enterprise of securing freedom for the nations and people of the world and in the trials and tribulations which accompany it. This is only possible if India feels the glow of freedom."

1. Extract from the Text of the Resolution adopted by the A. I. C. C. on 8th August, 1942, at Bombay.

"The immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom.

The Committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration of the situation of the Russian and Chinese peoples, and expressed its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom. The increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathise with the victims of aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failure. It is not by adhering to such aims and policies and methods that failure can be converted into success, for past experience has shown that failure is inherent in them. These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and Colonial countries, and the continuation of the Imperialist tradition and method. The possession of Empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power, has become a burden and curse. India, the classic land of modern Imperialism, has become curx of the question, for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm.

The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India assures this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not only affect materially

the fortunes of the war, but will bring all subject and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations, and give these nations, whose ally India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of British Imperialism and the taint of that imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations.

The peril of today, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination. No future promises or guarantees can affect the present situation or meet that peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses. Only the glow of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of war.

The A. I. C. C., therefore, repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India. On the declaration of India's independence, a provisional Government will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom.....Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it."

The Congress position has been clear and consistent. As regards some superficial difference in Gandhiji and Jawaharlal ji, it should be remembered that Gandhiji has always regarded Jawaharlalji as his guide in foreign and international affairs. Gandhiji is always influenced by the views of Jawaharlalji in his decision about the foreign policy. Gandhiji in his first speech in the A. I. C. C. at Bombay said "I derive my inspiration and knowledge from Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru about foreign matters of which he has been a deep student. Therefore I said that he would fill in that part of the resolution." But the personal and private considerations of the statesmen should not be made use of publicly nor mere confidential primary consultations be taken as final opinions and policy of any political leader or organization. Hence Allahabad discussions of the Congress Working Committee members among themselves of which an incomplete and unauthentic account is published by the Government should not be attached any more importance and meaning than is expressed in the subsequent resolutions of the Congress Working Committee and the A. I. C. C. and the statements of the Congress leaders which we have quoted above. They have no doubt about the Congress position and policy which was one of effective opposition to any design of aggression on India by Japan. There is not a word which smacks of pro-Japanese sentiment in the Congress resolutions. Further the Congress intentions

and its policy as was propounded and explained by Gandhiji and Jawaharlalji and other leaders is also quite free from any smell of pro-Japanese sentiment. All along there has been a burning desire for the defence of India and to make it really effective. A bold claim for independence of India was made by Gandhiji in his suggestion which he sent for the consideration of the Working Committee Meeting at Allahabad from April 27th to May 1, 1942. The members present in that Working Committee Meeting at Allahabad could not have a chance to discuss and understand clearly Gandhiji's own views nor could he have a chance to learn and appreciate the views of them. Gandhiji always expressed that Jawaharlalji was his guide in international affairs. The question of allowing or agreeing to the stationing of Allied troops in India was not finally decided nor could it be done unless it should have been discussed thoroughly with Gandhiji and other members of the Congress Working Committee. Hence at the very first opportunity when it was discussed, the decision was announced in clear words as below in the resolution passed at Wardha :—

"It is the earnest desire of the Congress to enable India to resist aggression effectively with the peoples' united will and strength behind it. In making the proposal for the withdrawal of the British rule from India, the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied Powers in their prosecution of the war or in any way to encourage aggression on India or increase pressure on China by the Japanese or any other Power associated with the Axis group. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the Allied powers.

The Congress is, therefore, agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression and to protect and help China. The proposal, of withdrawal of the British power from India was never intended to mean the physical withdrawal of all Britishers from India, certainly not of those who would make India their home and live there as citizens and as equals with the others. If such a withdrawal takes place with good-will it would result in the establishing of a stable provisional government in India and co-operation between this government and the United Nations in resisting aggression and helping China. The Congress realises that there may be risks involved in such a course. Such risks, however, have to be faced by any country in order to achieve freedom, and more especially at the present critical juncture in order to save the country and the larger cause of freedom from far greater risks and perils. While, therefore, the Congress is

impatient to achieve the national purpose it wishes to take no hasty steps and would like to avoid, in so far as is possible, any course of action that might embarrass the United Nations. The Congress would be pleased with the British Power if it accepts the very reasonable and just proposal herein made not only in the interest of India but also that of British and of the cause of freedom to which the United Nations proclaim their adherence. Should, however, this appeal fail the Congress cannot view without the gravest apprehension the continuation of present state of affairs involving a progressive deterioration in the situation and the weakening of India's will and power to resist aggression."

The main and central idea guiding the movement of "Quit India" was one and only one which was repeatedly expressed and explained by Gandhiji and in the Congress resolutions. It was: "The immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is *degrading and enfeebling* India and making her *progressively less capable of defending* herself and of contributing to the cause of the world freedom..... Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the peoples' united will and strength behind it." In short it was, that *Independence* of India was *absolutely* essential for her effective defence. "It is clearly expressed in the Congress resolution itself: "Future promises cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses. Only the *glow* of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the war."

Thus for India's defence when her independence was considered essential by the Congress it very emphatically and boldly expressed its proposal that *British rule in India must end immediately*. This proposal was an appeal of India to Britain and the United Nations. Gandhiji addressed personal letters to Marshal Chiang-Kai-Shek, President Roosevelt and an open letter to every Briton and every Japanese; and lastly his last address to the A. I. C. C. at Bombay on 8th August, '42, Gandhiji declared: "We shall make every effort to see the Vicroy before starting the struggle."

The struggle which the A. I. C. C. sanctioned at Bombay was *on non-violent lines* on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize *all the non-violent strength* it has gathered during the last 22 years of *peaceful struggle*. Again the people of India were given clear instructions "*to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji* and carry out

his instructions. Further they were reminded that they must remember that "*non-violence is the basis of this movement.*"

So far as the Congress is concerned its resolutions are very clear in their motives and aims. There was absolutely no ambiguity in their meaning or purpose. Hence to allege or attribute any other motive or meaning to them than they expressly declare is not "just and honest". The motive was clear and definite. It can be expressed in short as "Independence of India is essential for her *effective* defence." Hence it was resolved to sanction, for the vindication of India's unalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of *mass struggle on non-violent lines.*

As regards Gandhiji, he was anxious to avoid any conflict with the Government, hence his declaration to see the Viceroy and his various letters to leaders and the people of the world. Non-violence has been his article of faith and he stuck to it so far he had the freedom and was not clapped in jail when, of course, he could and should have done nothing. Still he could not keep mum and he held correspondence with the Viceroy (Published in the appendices) when he failed to get reasonable consideration at the hands of the Viceroy, and he being left to no other choice, still he, as a true Satyagrahi and a votary of non-violence and truth, decided to fast for 21 days, in his such an old age, as a measure of self-suffering and penance.

It now stands amply proved that neither the Congress nor Gandhiji can even remotely be held responsible for the happenings after his and other Congress leaders' arrest on the 9th August, 1942.

The motives of the Congress resolution are very clear as discussed above. It was never the motive of the Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji to seek an opportunity in Britain's danger. The whole life-history of Gandhiji speaks contrary to this unimaginable and false allegation against him, his followers and the Congress. He was all along, even from the beginning of this war, avoiding any embarrassment or hindrance in the war-efforts of the Government. He followed a policy of neutrality and let the Government carry on its own plan and scheme of war. Why? Because he did not deem proper to put any obstacle in the way of the Government specially when they were involved in a life and death struggle. But this movement, he was forced to start by the circumstances which were created by the entry and victories of Japan in the war and the conduct of the British Government in all the struggles which they fought with Japan. Specially the behaviour of the British in Burma was the immediate

and strong cause of shaking the faith of Gandhiji and the Congress in the British might and even intention to save India from Japanese or any foreign aggression. Hence Gandhiji was left with no other choice but to advise the Congress and country to take to a drastic and even risky step of launching a movement for freedom of India from the British rule. The motive was very clear that let the Indian people be left free before actually they fall into the real trouble of facing the double devastation that is both from the Japanese attacking and British retreating armies. However, unarmed and weak Indian people were, they should have been allowed a fair chance to organise their own defence and be prepared in their own way to face death and destruction. The motive of the Congress and Gandhiji was not, and could never be, to hamper the war efforts by paralysing the administration of the country. It was only one, and one that of organising the country and arousing the enthusiasm of the people of India by actually letting them have the *glow of freedom* to defend and die for their country and liberty. An administration commanding no confidence and good-will of the people of the country can have only mercenary soldiers to fight in the battle-field but not the real defenders of their country who could lay their lives in the battle-field as a duty bound delight. The real motive of the Congress and Gandhiji was to turn the present armies of mercenary soldiers at the command of the Government into a real militia of the fighters for protecting the freedom of their motherland. The British Government did not realise the importance of this fact and persistently ignored and insulted this very vital sentiment of the people of India. Hence the Congress and Gandhiji were driven to the desperate path of dread and dangers. But this was not adopted by the Congress and Gandhiji at option but being deprived of any other choice. How could the Congress, Gandhiji and other leaders be idle spectators to the devastation and destruction of their country by the external foreign invaders and internal foreign rulers! Hence what the Congress contemplated in its Bombay decision was the only right course.

As regards the question of violence and non-violence, the point raised by the Government and the Congress critics is absolutely irrelevant. The Bombay A.I.C.C. resolution is quite clear on the point. It emphatically declares: "Its (the Provisional Government) primary function must be to defend India and resist aggression with all *the armed* as well as the non-violent forces at its command *together with its Allied powers*... The provisional Government, if would not

even, undertake to defend India, what else would it do? Who would be opposed to this? Where does the question arise of *committing the provisional Government in advance to any particular course of action*, in this simple question of fundamental policy in which there could never be two opinions. It is a very simple narration of a fact in which there could never be any chance of difference of opinion among same people who are required to run a Government and are willing to be governed by an organised Government of their own formation. This is a bad logic and a very very untenable argument to say in this connection that "the Congress cannot commit the Government in advance." Again to criticise Gandhiji for "his little belief in the effectiveness of non-violence as a means of resisting Japanese invasion" and at the same time to quote his orders for fixing for a Satyagrah in the individual and symbolic Satyagrah of 1940-41, the slogan, "it is a sin to help in the *armed war* with men or money" with the object that the Congress was wedded to the policy of non-violence which was not effective in the matter of India's defence is nothing but sophistry. A policy is never set for all times and under all circumstances. The Congress has followed a policy of non-violence in its internal struggles with the British Indian Government but it never committed itself to a policy of non-violence for her external defence nor laid down that there will be no armies in Independent India. Hence all this is a very sad and bad logic which is being employed by the Government Propaganda Machinery. The Congress position is quite clear. Gandhiji's personal faith in non-violence is not the Congress creed. Gandhiji and the Congress are not identical in this matter. If Gandhiji could have his way and could carry all the people with him, despite their human short-comings, he would certainly like to do away with arms and armies but it does not mean what he holds as his personal faith and principles they are all followed by the Indian National Congress. On the other hand Gandhiji himself declared in his draft of Allahabad Resolution:—

"In such places where the British and Japanese forces are fighting, our non-co-operation will be fruitless and unnecessary. At present our non-co-operation with the British Government is limited. Were we to offer them complete non-co-operation when they are actually fighting, it would be tantamount to placing our country deliberately in Japanese hands. Therefore not to put any obstacles in the way of the British forces will often be the only way of demonstrating our non-co-operation with the Japanese."

It means nothing else but this that in the midst of violence on both serving sides "Non-violent resisters" cannot effectively resist or help from either side. It neither expresses ineffectiveness of non-violence nor shows any abhorrence for violence.

It may be stated without fear of contradiction that the Congress resolution of Bombay was an honest attempt for the *effective defence of India* in case of any foreign aggression and for the same purpose a bold bid for Independence of India. But certainly it was neither the intention nor motive of the Congress, much less of Gandhiji, to stab in the back of the Government of India when the foreign enemy was expected to invade India. Had this been the motive or attempt of the Congress, it would have rather been suicidal and detrimental to the best interest of the country which the Congress claims to advocate.

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPLATED CHARACTER OF THE MOVEMENT

In the previous chapters an attempt has been made to show the motives underlying the "Quit India" move and to put forward the logical and psychological development in a very natural sequence leading finally and irresistibly to the decision which Congress was forced to take at Bombay under Gandhiji's leadership. We now proceed to critically and unprejudicially examine the nature of the steps which Gandhiji could have advised the country to take, should the British not accede to his suggestion for their voluntary withdrawal.

It is needless to quote Gandhiji to show that he regarded his move as a final struggle of his life. But at the same time it should not be ignored that Gandhiji's struggle was going to be *non-violent* which has its own peculiar technique and plan. They are quite different from violent warfare. Hence it is very difficult for those to appreciate them who are given to understand only *violent and violent* warfare. It is really impossible to understand and still worse to appreciate "non-violent struggle" for those whose purpose is served only by misunderstanding and misinterpreting it. The similar is the case of the British Government and its able advisers. But still to properly understand the contemplated *character and programme of the movement* we would quote Gandhiji himself.

The very first and fundamental thing which should be clearly understood is that Gandhiji never, never even in dream desired change of Masters that is Japanese occupation

of India or even its help in the removal of the British rule from India. Hence despite his faith in the principle of non-violence he accepted the retention of the Allied troops in India and clearly wrote in "Harijan" as early as in June 1942, replying to a correspondent :—

"I could not guarantee fool proof non-violent action to keep the Japanese at bay. Abrupt withdrawal of the allied troops might result in Japan's occupation of India and China's sure fall. I had not the remotest idea of any such catastrophe resulting from my action. Therefore, I feel that if in spite of the acceptance of my proposal it is deemed necessary by the Allies to remain in India to prevent Japanese occupation, they should do so, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by any national Government that may be set up after the British withdrawal."

Further Gandhiji on the Resolution of the Congress Working Committee which was later passed on the 8th August in the A. I. C. C. at Bombay gave an interview to the Associated Press at Bombay on 6th August '42, in which he said :—

"The emphasis in any non-violent struggle, projected or in operation, is always on peace; war, when it becomes an absolute necessity.

I have definitely contemplated an interval between the passing of the Congress resolution and the starting of the struggle. I do not know that what I contemplate doing according to my wont can be in any way described as in nature of negotiation. But a letter will certainly go to the Viceroy, not as an ultimatum but as an earnest pleading for avoiding conflict. If there is favourable response, then my letter can be the basis for negotiation.

Whether people believe it or not, I must confess that in non-violent action God is the decisive factor. Whatever strength I possess is not my own. Every ounce of it comes from God who does not dwell in the clouds up above but who dwells in every fibre of my being. Therefore, it is very difficult for me to speak with precision of say General Wavell who thinks that his dispositions and calculations must be such and can be made such that they cannot be overridden by any unknown and intangible power called God or Truth or whatever other name human fancy chooses to give to that power.

You are right, however, when you say that for a swift ending a general strike is necessary. It is put outside my contemplation, but seeing that I shall take every step in terms of my oft-repeated declaration that mass struggle is not conceived in any mimical spirit I shall move with utmost

caution. If a general strike becomes a dire necessity, I shall not flinch."

The above quotations give an idea of Gandhiji's mind's working about the movement and his anxiety for avoiding any conflict with the Government.

Gandhiji's criticism of the Government policy of arrest and repression, as was expressed in his letter of 12th August, '42, to the Viceroy after his arrest, gives very clearly Gandhiji's plan and character of his movement. We quote the relevant extract from it below :—

"The Government of India were wrong in precipitating the crisis. The Government resolution justifying this step is full of distortions and misrepresentations.

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.

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.

The Congress movement was intended to evoke in the people the measures 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 movement avowedly non-violent.

The Congress has not approached the movement with any but the friendliest motives. Congress seeks to kill imperialism as much for the sake of the British people and humanity as for India.

The Government's 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. This 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.

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."

From foregoing quotations it is quite clear that Gandhiji's contemplated movement had fundamentally non-violence as its basis. Its plan and programme were as open as ever and there was absolutely no secrecy about them. It was to be a mass movement, in case no settlement could be arrived at with the Government, but of the same variety as all his previous movements were excepting that it was to be more intensive and more extensive, so it should have been, because the demand was also much more than ever before. Naturally Gandhiji should have appealed and exhorted to his countrymen for maximum sacrifice in several terms. The same was repeated by all his lieutenants but in a very vague and uncertain terms. There was no clear cut programme or any definite scheme in the mind of any leader including Gandhiji. To him the scheme of his non-violent struggle unfolds itself automatically at the proper time and he never lays it down elaborately and precisely like the modern Generals conducting the violent warfare. He believes in "God" and gets his inspiration from him. He has very clearly expressed this as is quoted above. So to impute any sort of motives of secrecy or hidden plan of work to Gandhiji is not only wrong and false but is most mischievous. As regards other leaders and members of the Congress Working Committee, they knew nothing more than the general public and they gave no other plan than what Gandhiji expressed through his writings and speeches. In all the speeches of the leaders during that period there was only one thing which was expressed with all the emphasis at their command, and it was an exhortation and appeal to the people to be prepared to *sacrifice and suffer*. To allege that the Congress planned any secret and violent movement is absolutely false and mischievous and cannot be proved by facts. The whole history and activities of the Congress have been such that there is not an iota of sense and reason in suspecting Congress of planning a secret and violent movement. The Congress and Gandhiji always condemned both and never encouraged or favoured either. Under such a back-ground how could the Congress and Gandhiji in a sort of a fit or a miracle change the policy and programme of the Congress and convert all the people to follow the path of violence and secrecy! This, from its very face appears as imaginary and unreal as a day-dream. Then the Congress is not a child's play which could lightly launch upon any policy and programme. It has been guiding the destinies of the whole people of

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the country and it has been enjoying the fullest confidence of its people so much so that it was entrusted with the administration of seven provinces of the country at a time and for years together. So how could such a responsible and influential body as the Congress contemplate and advise a course of action to the people of the country which may not only lead to a sure failure but may even result into a saddest disaster for the people! Again, what violence can the people of India think of doing when they are capable of doing nothing! They have no armies then how can they dare invite the brutal might of so very powerful a Government as the British Government of India, well equipped with arms and armies, to crush the unarmed and innocent people of the country. We quote below an extract from a writing of Mr. James Maxton in Manchester Guardian, September 12, 1942:—

"I do not believe any Indian politician, any supporter of Congress, any average Indian ever did anything to burn a policeman. Neither the Prime Minister nor the Secretary of State for India had the slightest desire to give self-government to India at all. It was part of the political philosophy of the Herrenvolk."

There were no secret meetings held in the country before the arrest of Gandhiji and other leaders and workers of the Congress. No secret circulars were issued to the workers or the people. Everything was open and public. There was no definite programme and no detailed instructions issued to the workers and the people. Everybody was in the dark about the work ahead and was simply looking at Gandhiji for guidance. Even leaders like Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru could give no programme and no instructions. All leaders and prominent workers were taken away leaving people without any programme and plan of work. This is proved by the subsequent events. All what happened in the country was the mere result of the ruthless and indiscriminate repression of the Government which was persuaded by the Government in a sort of frenzy which the Government displayed just on the passing of the resolution by the A.I.C.C. at Bombay. But for all that the Government was planning and preparing from the moment it learnt of the intended Congress move from Gandhiji's writings. Before we proceed to deal in detail with the Government plans to pounce upon the Congress, we may conclude this chapter by explaining very clearly the motives of the "Quit India" move.

The idea originated into the mind of Gandhiji with the British defeat and behaviour in Burma. No doubt there were two principal motives by which Gandhiji was actuated. The

first was his serious concern about the really *effective defence of India* in case of Japanese invasion and secondly to obtain the *freedom of India* without the glow of which millions of people could never be enthused and energised to take bold plunge into the war and transform the nature of war. The people could never be enthused to fight for the defence of their slavery. Really the main motive of Gandhiji and of the Congress was to save India from that lot which fell on the people of Burma, Malaya, Indo China and Dutch Indies or Iran and that too not only in the interest of the people of India but in the real interest of *freedom front* of the world for which the Allies claim and proclaim to fight. India's slavery is the insignia of the British imperialism which gives added strength and even justification for the Japanese invasion of India. None could have a design to invade *Free India* when it should have borne no enmity with any country and thus Free India not only would have been no liability on British might for her defence but would have been a positive source of strength for the Allied cause and could effectively render both moral and material help both to China and Russia and could play an important part in liberating all such countries as Malaya, Burma, Indo China, Dutch Indies etc. Further Free India could be successful not only in terminating this disastrous war but also in establishing permanent peace for the world. These were the motives which really inspired Gandhiji to advise the Congress to demand the withdrawal of British Government from India. He contemplated to plunge the country into a mass non-violent movement in which he demanded the maximum of suffering and sacrifices from his people not merely for ending the British rule in India or obtaining freedom for India alone but for the *world freedom and world peace*. Why these pious motive and high ideals were deliberately misinterpreted by the British Government in India and why the intended mass struggle on non-violent lines which was sanctioned by the A.I.C.C. at Bombay was never allowed to be actually started by the Government are the questions, the answers of which are not difficult to find out because the imperialism has not withdrawn voluntarily—it only perishes. Correctly Churchill said "I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside at the liquidation of the British Empire."