Romain Rolland
And Gandhi
Correspondence
This collection of Romain Rolland's correspondence with and about Mahatma Gandhi and other writings including extracts from his diary tell the story of how the great French humanist came to conceive “an infinite love and veneration for Gandhi's person, for his great heart burning with love”, and how, at a time when Gandhiji's creed of nonviolence seemed to have little chance of being understood in the violence-filled air of Europe, became, in his own words, “one of the first in the West to discover and spread the Word of the Mahatma”. A European intellectual and artist who, as he himself said, realized God “in the particular field of beauty and truth”, Romain Rolland nevertheless recognized that of “all the paths of service that of the Mahatma is one of the straightest and most luminous.”
Romain Rolland
And Gandhi
Correspondence
Romain Rolland
And Gandhi
Correspondence
(Letters, Diary Extracts, Articles, Etc.)

Foreword
by
Jawaharlal Nehru

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
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FOREWORD

I have always found it difficult to write about Mahatma Gandhi. To write about the meeting of two great minds like Gandhi and Romain Rolland is still more difficult. For several decades I served under Gandhi's leadership and I was powerfully influenced and moulded by him. That period was one of historic significance for India and perhaps, to some extent, for the rest of the world. Those of us who were associated with Gandhi during these momentous years cannot easily form a clear and objective opinion of this period or of the great man under whose shadow we lived. When I think of Gandhi, my mind is filled with emotion and innumerable pictures come up before me. How then can I write about him?

Yet I have gladly agreed to say a few words as an introduction to this ninth volume* of the "Cahiers Romain Rolland" which contains Romain Rolland’s letters and writings about Mahatma Gandhi. In the turmoil and agonies of the world today, I think that Gandhiji’s message has a peculiar significance for all of us, whether we live in Asia, Europe or America. We live under the shadow of nuclear and thermonuclear bombs and the dreadful news of test explosions of

* The text of Nehru's above Foreword was written for the ninth volume of Cahiers Romain Rolland which was to appear in 1957. For technical reasons the publication of the book was postponed to the Gandhi Centenary. When this volume, which was now numbered nineteen, came out in 1969, the text of the Foreword was left out inadvertently.

I am sure Jawaharlal Nehru would certainly have wished that it should appear in the English edition.

Marie Romain Rolland
these bombs come to us frequently. We realise that even these explosions are doing injury to mankind. The conscience of man is shocked at this crime against humanity, and yet nothing effective can be done to stop it. And so we drift to disaster without a sense of direction or purpose.

Among the many remarkable qualities of Gandhiji the two most outstanding were, I think, the absence of fear and freedom from hatred. Today fear and hatred grip the world. I cannot imagine a worse companionship for an individual or a nation than that of fear and hatred. The older generation was filled with them and the younger grows up under their shadow.

Gandhiji trained and moulded the Indian people for half a century. We did not get rid of our main failings, but we learnt much from him and something of that teaching remains. It has become a part of the Indian tradition and the heritage of our race. Our people quarrel with each other sometimes, but I think that, on the whole, they are singularly free from hatred.

I had the privilege of meeting Romain Rolland on several occasions at Villeneuve thirty years ago. I was greatly impressed by him and, though he was so different from Gandhi, I sensed a certain communion of spirit between the two. These two men with different backgrounds and experiences met on a higher level and recognised each other. Perhaps in this correspondence we can to some extent sense this community of spirit of two great men. I hope that this publication will give some people glimpses into their minds and help to lighten the burden all of us carry in this present-day turbulent world of ours.

New Delhi
1st June, 1957
Jawaharlal Nehru
NOTE BY MARIE ROMAIN ROLLAND

This volume, which deals with the relationship between Romain Rolland and Gandhi, contains letters, extracts from Romain Rolland's *Journal* and various articles.

Some texts are reproduced in whole or in part from the volume entitled *Inde*,\(^1\) comprising passages from the *Journal* (between 1915 and 1943) which refer to India. These two books are thus complementary.

---

\(^1\) Editions Albin Michel, 1960
TRANSLATOR’S NOTE

In the correspondence between Gandhi and Romain Rolland, Gandhi’s letters were written in English and Romain Rolland’s in French. It has thus been my responsibility to translate only the words of the latter. The letters by Miss Slade were written sometimes in French and sometimes in English, and she has been good enough to translate the French passages herself.

Romain Rolland frequently quotes texts by Gandhi and other English and Indian writers in his letters and articles. Every effort has been made to trace the original English texts from which Rolland took these quotations, but in a few cases I have been forced to provide my own retranslation from Rolland’s French. Footnotes have been used to point out any substantial quotations where this is so. This affects very few of Gandhi’s own words, but it should be noted that the transcript of the conversations between Gandhi and Romain Rolland is taken from the latter’s diary and is thus a retranslation from notes in French taken at the time.

R. A. Francis
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About People Referred to in the Volume

Index
PART ONE

Letters, Diary Extracts
1. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

23 August 1920 (Paris).—A young Bengali Hindu, D. K. Roy, comes to see me. . . . He tells us about Gandhi who has an extraordinary influence over the Hindus. He is a Madras [sic] lawyer who gave up all his property 7 or 8 years ago to devote himself entirely to the salvation of his people on whom he has a magnetic effect. He preaches passive resistance to them and turns them away from violence. The great revolt of last year broke out after the British removed him from the scene. He is at present in Delhi. He seems to have been influenced by Tolstoy's ideas.

2. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

19 April 1921 (Paris, visit of Rabindranath Tagore).—He still expresses his firm hope that the Indian people will achieve the ideal pacifism which the rest of the world pursues in vain. For it is the very essence of the race never to oppose violence by violence; and its non-resistance, the age-old force against which all invasions have shattered themselves, has recently been erected into a principle of conscious action by Gandhi. To which I reply that non-resistance is indeed effective and quite easy when applied by an immense people always sure of the last word, thanks to its prodigious vitality. But it raises quite different and dangerous problems for the peoples of the West who are perpetually threatened in their very existence. There are two sorts of pacifism: pacifism by renunciation, out of
impoverished vitality, and pacifism by calm trust in one’s strength, out of superabundance of vitality.

3. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

4 April 1922 (Paris, visit of Kalidas Nag).—He tells us of the intellectual differences between Tagore and Gandhi, both of whom he admires (Gandhi was arrested a fortnight ago by the British Government). Tagore, he says, occupies in India a position identical to mine in the debate with Barbusse. He supports the principle of absolute individual liberty; and Gandhi himself, the “non-resister”, infringes it by submitting the individual to mass tactics.

4. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Monday, 14 August 1922

... Ganesan, the Madras publisher, has asked me to write a short introduction to a volume of Gandhi’s collected articles called Young India. I should be glad to do it, as I admire Gandhi; the articles my sister reads to me are noble and pure. But I wouldn’t want the fact of putting my name at the head of a book by Gandhi to jeopardize my chance of coming to India as I plan to do in the not too distant future. Do you think the British Government would be likely to refuse me access to India for this reason alone? If so, I should turn down the request (with regret), as I can be of more use if I go to Santiniketan. I’d be grateful if you’d think a little about this and answer as soon as possible, as Ganesan is waiting for my decision. ...
5. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

17-20 August 1922 (Villeneuve, visit of Dilip Kumar Roy).—
Roy, to whom I speak of Gandhi—(Gandhi’s publisher, Ganesan of Madras, has recently sent me the proofs of a collection of articles by Gandhi entitled Young India, asking me to write an introduction)—, agrees that (as I remarked) Gandhi has a practical realism which is almost disconcerting in the context of his idealism. By way of example, he tells me in confidence that the two Indian Muslim leaders, the Ali brothers, with whom Gandhi has formed an alliance, are of very dubious moral character, and Gandhi must be aware of the fact; yet the saint takes them as allies and speaks of them with the most affectionate esteem, because he considers them indispensable to the great work of Indian unification. I see in Gandhi something quite different from an internationalist of my type: he is a nationalist, but of the greatest, the loftiest kind, a kind which should be a model for all the petty, base, or even criminal nationalisms of Europe. An idealistic nationalist who wants his nation to be the greatest in spirit—or nothing. And while dominating the world by her moral grandeur, she must have fraternal relations with the rest of the world—but as an elder brother. It is noteworthy that Gandhi declares he would not give his daughter in marriage to a Muslim for anything in the world, even to the one he most highly esteemed. Nor does he admit the least weakening in the Hindu religion. He goes so far as to say that he would not kill a cow to save a man. (This is not his respect for all animal life; it is the special cult of the cow.) He seems to me to correspond more closely to a great Catholic saint (like Francis of Assisi) than to a Tolstoy or a man of my type.
6. Romain Rolland to Ganesan

August 1922

... I profoundly admire Mahatma Gandhi, but I do not believe I can write the introduction which you ask of me. Truth to tell, with all due respect to the great man, my ideas differ somewhat from his on certain points. As far as I can gather from the extracts of his work which you send me, he is less an internationalist (as I am) than an idealistic nationalist. I see in him the highest and purest type of spiritualized nationalism, a type which is unique today and which could well be offered as a model to the egoistic and materialized nationalisms of present-day Europe. I intend to do this some day in an article in a European review, but I could not do it in an introduction to a book, for I should not be as free there to discuss his work and to show the points where I differ from him. May I add that there is nothing more contrary to my way of working than giving hasty opinions on such a considerable system of thought and action. I cannot be content with a superficial reading; I want to think about it at leisure. So forgive me if I decline the honour of writing a preface to M. G.'s volume; it is precisely because I have such a high regard for him that I do not want to talk about him other than after mature reflection and in complete liberty. (N.B. The proofs you sent me are without the introductory and closing pages; in any case I would never speak about a book before receiving and reading the whole text.)...
7. Romain Rolland to Dilip Kumar Roy

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga Switzerland
29 November 1922

. . . . Should you be able to find a pamphlet or an article which is interesting and reliable on Gandhi’s life, do please send it to me. (The life and the character of Gandhi I want more than his gospel which I know, thanks to the publication of Ganesan: Young India.) . . .

8. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Thursday, 21 December 1922

. . . . My sister and I are reading—or rather have just finished—the 700 or 800 pages Gandhi has published. Some of the things he says are immortal, others are highly perishable and threaten the rest of the system: above all this mediaeval mistrust of modern science, which seems to him fundamentally diabolical, as it did to Tolstoy. The scientists, maybe. But as for science itself, Tolstoy and Gandhi don’t see that it’s the living spirit of God. . . .

9. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

January 1923.-I had told Nag of my impressions on reading Gandhi’s works and of my regrets at the mediaeval sides I found to this great apostle of purified nationalism. Nag sends us a copy of a letter written to him by Tagore in May 1922: it harmonizes with my thought.
During my journey back to India, I thought that Mahatma Gandhi evoked in a profound and extended way, in the souls of our people, the idea to which men like Romain Rolland have devoted themselves. I had also decided to co-operate with this movement by my writings and action. But back in India, I scented an atmosphere which overwhelmed me. The first sickness which appeared to me was tyranny over the minds of the people. You know that the spirit of our people tends naturally to inertia and traditionalism; it now has moral despotism imposed on it in addition; very few have the courage to express opinions contrary to current views (which means those of Gandhi); in other words, I found that the political current was hostile to liberty. . . . I therefore declared that I was ready to obey the truth, not just Gandhi;—and these words did not please.”

10. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Thursday, 8 February 1923

. . . . I must admit, Nag my friend, that I feel a little ashamed to think of you reading my pages on Gandhi. I’m so well aware of how impossible it is for a European to treat such a broad subject without going wrong! Even if I were to read everything there was to be read, I’d still lack the atmosphere created by India’s religion, her education and her country. Forgive me in advance for the mistakes I shall make! At least there’s one good thing, that you’ll be able to read my article in two numbers of the review Europe (15 March and 15 April.—I’ll have them sent to you), and if you’d like to point out the necessary changes, I can improve my work for the volume of Gandhi’s tran-
slated writings to which it is later to form the introduction. (I even hope to bring it out again, a little later on, as a small volume in my collection of “Heroic Lives”, like the Beethoven and the Tolstoy.)

There’s no one more worthy of a place in this heroes’ gallery. I know no hero more pure, more straightforward or more truthful. You can be proud to possess that “great soul”; Europe has none approaching him—not by a long way! Despite reservations which one might make about some of his notions and their dangerous deformations in the minds of his disciples, I admire and venerate Gandhi.

But I expect to meet with a complete lack of understanding from my (so-called!) colleagues in Paris when they read my essay. Already Jean Bernier of Clarté, who must have got wind somehow of what I’m going to publish, has made a scornfully ironic reference in an article in the Cahiers Idéalistes to my admiration for Gandhi. As far as he’s concerned, nothing to do with India is of any interest to Europe. (And he’s an “internationalist”.)

. . . . Gandhi says he’s a “Sanatani” Hindu; what does the word mean? . . .

11. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Friday evening, 2 March 1923

. . . . I have finished my Gandhi, in which I pay tribute to your two great river-like souls, overflowing with the divine spirit, Tagore and Gandhi. My essay is dedicated:

To the land of glory and servitude,
Of transitory empires and eternal thoughts,
To the people that defies Time,
To India resurrected.

For the anniversary of the condemnation of its Messiah.

18 March 1922
12. Romain Rolland to Rabindranath Tagore

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Friday, 2 March 1923

...I have just finished a fairly long essay on Mahatma Gandhi, based on the Young India volume of articles. I shall bring it out in the review Europe, as well as several other German and Russian reviews. Without sharing all Gandhi’s ideas, which seem to me a little too mediaeval (particularly in his disciples, such as Professor Kalelkar, whose Gospel of Swadeshi would seem to enclose India in the walls of a monastery), I have conceived an infinite love and veneration for Gandhi’s person, for his great heart burning with love. In one chapter of my essay I’ve taken the liberty, starting from your admirable published articles, of recalling the stance you took against Gandhi and the noble debate of ideas between you. The highest human ideals are present there; it could be compared to an argument between St. Paul and Plato. But when carried into an Indian context, the horizons are broadened. They embrace the whole earth, and all humanity shares in this august “Dispute” (in the serene sense given to the word by the famous Raphael fresco in the Vatican Stanze). In my conclusion I show you united in the awareness of the beauty—and even the fruitful necessity—of self-sacrifice by love. . . .
13. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

March 1923.—I am spending two months (January and February) writing a long essay on Mahatma Gandhi which will appear first in the form of two articles in the review Europe, then serve as an introduction to the French and German editions of Gandhi’s works. We have devoted all our evenings to it for several months, my sister reading to me the large volume Young India, a collection of articles by Gandhi published in Madras, and Indian Gandhist writings. Our friend Kalidas Nag is helping us a little with his explanations.

14. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

April 1923 (London)—Visited by Andrews, the friend of Tagore and Gandhi, whose testimony was so useful to me in my study on Gandhi. He has lived in India for twenty years. In 1903-1904 he was sent by India to the Transvaal in support of Gandhi, who at the time was in prison; he shared his life and his ordeals, and by his wisdom and skill contributed a great deal to the happy reconciliation in 1914 between Gandhi and the Government of the Union of South Africa. . . . He is the link between Tagore and Gandhi and he teaches at Santiniketan.

. . . . Gandhi, he says, is small, insignificant-looking, except when he begins to speak, and of unruffled patience. There is nothing severe in his manners; he laughs like a child and adores children. . . . His asceticism is extreme. Although it is visible at first glance that Andrews does not quail at privations and physical ordeals, he smilingly admits that
when he was Gandhi’s companion in Africa, life was hard. Gandhi’s principle is that life is a preparation for suffering, martyrdom and death, and the results he has obtained in Bengal are surprising. At present he is in prison, and happy; he asks that no one should come to see him: he purifies himself, prays, and believes that in so doing lie is acting in the best way possible for the Indian cause. Indeed Andrews does not doubt that the party is gaining a great deal from his imprisonment. For one thing, it maintains the fervour of India, which sees Gandhi as Sri Krishna (in the legend, Krishna too was imprisoned, and left his jail by a miracle). Above all, the delay imposed on the Indian movement by the condemnation of Gandhi has been very useful to ward off the danger of violence. At heart most of Gandhi’s partisans—notably the Ali brothers—are above all politicians. His best disciple, according to Andrews, is perhaps his son aged twenty-four (he has four sons). Andrews also names the publisher Ganesan as a fervent apostle. Mrs. Gandhi is very good, very simple and brave. She has never hesitated to share her husband’s ordeals.

Andrews was the only witness at the discussion between Tagore and Gandhi, shortly after Tagore’s return to India. He describes them as two types of two opposing Indian races; Gandhi, from western India, is of an unimaginative and very practical race; Tagore is quite the opposite. The first subject of discussion was idols; Gandhi defended them, believing the masses incapable of raising themselves immediately to abstract ideas. Tagore cannot bear to see the people eternally treated as a child. Gandhi quoted the great things achieved in Europe by the flag as an idol; Tagore found it easy to object, but Gandhi held his ground, contrasting European flags bearing eagles, etc., with his own, on which he has put a spinning wheel. The second point of discussion was nationalism, which Gandhi defended. He said that one must go through nationalism to reach inter-
nationalism,—in the same way that one must go through war to reach peace. (A terrifying argument!) This is why he has so often worked to recruit for the English armies. Andrews wrote him letter after letter to dissuade him, but Gandhi never gave in.

Andrews approves of my comparison of Gandhi with St. Paul and Tagore with Plato. He says smilingly that Gandhi is very much St. Paul.

15. Romain Rolland to W. W. Pearson

Villeneuve
28 May 1923

... I know something about you from your little book, *The Dawn of a New Age*, and your name, like that of Mr. Andrews, is linked for me with those of Tagore and Gandhi. I firmly wish that we may one day all come together in Santiniketan.

Mr. Andrews has given us hope that he may visit us in Switzerland this year. If you are passing that way, my sister and I would be happy to see you in Villeneuve as well.

... I think it was Mr. Andrews who sent us Doke’s volume on Gandhi and the album in honour of the passive resistance movement in South Africa. We are most grateful to him; they will be very useful to me. . . .

16. Romain Rolland to Rabindranath Tagore

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Monday, 11 June 1923

... I hope you’ve received the three numbers of the review *Europe* which I sent you, in which you can read my study on Mahatma Gandhi. I hope there’s nothing to
displease you in the pages I devoted to you. As to the mistakes in my study, they were inevitable for a European who is still a novice in the knowledge of India and her immense soul. I've done what I can, and if I've not always understood exactly, and I'm sure I haven't, I hope I've at least sensed something, for it was done with love. . . .

17. Romain Rolland to Hari G. Govil

Villeneuve (Vaud), Switzerland
Villa Olga
Tuesday, 19 June 1923

. . . . The publisher, F. Rieder, has sent me your letter of 18 May, after a fortnight's delay. Thank you for what you write about my essay on Mahatma Gandhi. Unfortunately I cannot authorize you to translate it and publish it in America, as I have already given this authorization to Miss C. D. Groth, the Paris correspondent of several large American newspapers and magazines; she has finished the translation and is at present negotiating with some New York publishers to bring it out. I do not know whether she has settled anything yet; in any case this is her address, in case you want to try to arrange anything with her:

Miss C. D. Groth, 3 Rue Casimir-Périer, Paris VI.

I should be happy to keep in contact in future with yourself and your review, for like you I have much love and a profound admiration for the great Indian thinkers, particularly Gandhi and Tagore, whose friend I am proud to be. . . .
18. Romain Rolland to Dilip Kumar Roy

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
2 July 1923

. . . . Thank you for your two letters; as to the book on Gandhi, it’ll arrive too late, my friend! It’s six months now since I finished reading pretty well all the works by and about Gandhi published by Ganesan and Natesan, and it’s three (months) since I published my essay on Gandhi in the Parisian review *Europe* (nos. of 15 March, 15 April and 15 May). I sent copies one or two months ago to Tagore and to Ganesan, who is to publish my essay in India. Since then I’ve collected the three *Europe* articles into a brochure which is to be published in book form in French, Russian and German (I’ll send it to you). I’ve done more; I’ve had a selection of the Gandhi articles published by Ganesan translated into French and German, and they’re going to be brought out in Paris and Germany. You see I haven’t been wasting my time. Did you think a European would have it in him to wait a year for the despatch of a book (like the one you promised me)? My dear D. K. Roy, that one little fact is enough in itself to explain why the Europeans have conquered Asia. We live at a faster tempo than you. Still, no doubt you get your own back by living longer. . . .

19. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

*September 1923* (Villeneuve, visit of W. W. Pearson).—We talk of little else but Gandhi and Tagore. . . . Pearson relates Gandhi’s first visit to Santiniketan. On the evening of
his arrival, everything was topsyturvy. Tagore was not there. Pearson and the other teachers made themselves available to Gandhi to show him the courses, but Gandhi first wanted to find out about the hygiene and the material conditions. He visited the whole establishment and came out of the kitchens in a rage, saying: “The cooks are dirty. Send them away!” And they had to be sent away then and there. Afterwards, since the service was disorganized, he set the pupils to the housework and the cooking (and, of course, the masters with them). And the strange thing is that from the start everyone obeyed him. We were no longer the masters, says Pearson. All the pupils enthusiastically obeyed all of Gandhi’s orders. I ask: “What sort of voice has he?” Pearson replies: “He has no voice. He speaks no louder in public than we are speaking here (we are on two sides of a table).” “Then no one hears him?” “No one hears him. Yet the whole crowd hangs on his lips and follows him blindly. He has a magnetic power.” As to making him change his mind, not a hope; no amount of discussion could change a thing. In the Transvaal, Gokhale, whom he venerated, and who was on his death-bed, likely to pass on at any moment, was sending him telegrams every day pleading with him to sign a pact which Gandhi did not want to sign. Gandhi knew that his refusal might hasten Gokhale’s death, but nothing changed him. When affairs had finally been arranged with General Smuts, Gandhi should have hurried back to his wife, of whose grievous state of health he had learned by telegram. But not at all. “I shall not go back before signing the treaty, in the early hours of the morning.” This Smuts consented to do, and only then did Gandhi leave. He and his wife look very frail, each as weak in health as the other; it is a marvel that they have held out. . . .

. . . . My Gandhi has turned out to be a stone thrown into the duckpond. It appears (a thing I would never have suspec-
ted) that I am the first person in France to publish a documented study on modern India. The Indianists are seething. How dare I speak of the East without being in the inner circle of orientalists? . . .

. . . . Pearson has been in India since 1907. I have noted elsewhere how he was arrested during the war and taken back to London. When he returned to India, about 1916, he was struck by the change. India had awakened. Indians dared to look Englishmen in the face and be rude to them, and although he had to suffer from this at first, he was delighted. In the countryside, Gandhi’s name was sacred everywhere, and his orders religiously carried out.

20. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

October 1923.—Birukoff, in the Tolstoy Archives in Moscow, has found new letters to Tolstoy from orientals, including—which interest me—the brief correspondence between Tolstoy and Gandhi in 1910. Unfortunately Gandhi’s first letter, which must have been the most important, is lost; Tolstoy himself writes that he cannot find it; there is only one letter by Gandhi against three by Tolstoy. It is typed on paper with the letterhead: M. K. Gandhi, Attorney, with the address and the number. I am surprised that Gandhi should have kept his title of attorney as late as 1910, but it proves his practicality; no doubt he used it to defend the cause of his compatriots.

21. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

October 1923.—Visited by Miss Madeleine Slade, daughter of an English admiral, who seems to have broken away from her family and social circle to devote herself to art, or rather to the interests of artists (for she herself seems to have had little
artistic instruction): she has organized concerts by Lamond and Weingartner in London and, a strange thing among impresarios, managed to get herself into debt while making a profit for her artists.

22. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1923.—My essay on Gandhi appears in India, in English (in Gandhi’s review, Young India), Gujarati and Hindi. The Century Magazine is publishing it in America.

23. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Monday, 21 January 1924

... Has Ganesan written to you? He wanted me to authorize him to publish some works, but I told him I’d given you the exclusive authorization for India. I know he was going to publish an English edition of my Mahatma Gandhi; I warned him clearly that I couldn’t give him rights for this book for anywhere but India: he isn’t allowed to export it, as the Century Magazine of New York has acquired the English-language publishing rights for all countries except India.

... Ganesan writes that my Gandhi was also published in Hindi and Gujarati. He’d please me if he sent me copies of these Indian editions as curiosities. ...
24. Extract from Mahadev Desai’s Diary

25 January 1924.—I asked him [Gandhi] about Non-violent Coercion.1 “Yes, I read two of its chapters preceding the last. Its author has read a lot and collected a large mass of material, but his analysis cannot stand comparison with that by Romain Rolland. . . . Romain Rolland2 has shown great insight in laying bare the essence of the difference between Tilak’s philosophy and mine. Romain Rolland at this point is not only a poet; he is a seer with a vision of the truth.”

25. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

27 January 1924 (Villeneuve).—Visited by Paul Richard and his son. Paul Richard is the Frenchman who spent ten years or so in India and Japan, including two in a Himalayan retreat, and has contacts with Tagore and Gandhi.

. . . . Richard knows Gandhi well and has stayed in his Ashram. He had a little debate with him in the period immediately preceding his arrest. He did not understand Gandhi’s attitude after the events of Chauri Chaura, when he stopped the movement he had initiated. (He furthermore says that Gandhi knew about the disturbances in Chauri Chaura before writing his letter to the Viceroy and declaring his war of non-co-operation, but a letter from his son, shocked by the sight of the massacred people, and the intervention of a disciple made him decide to revoke the orders

1 By Clarence Marsh Case
2 In his Mahatma Gandhi
he had given.) In a conversation with Gandhi about non-violence Richard, who, though he accepts it for his own use, does not seem to recommend it in politics, asked Gandhi: “Suppose a bloody revolution were to break out in England and the liberty of your people were to come out of it! What would you do?” Gandhi replied: “I should prevent the revolution.” Then while discussing the different attitude of Tilak, Gandhi admitted that Tilak expressly preferred the liberty of his people to truth, but that he, Gandhi, would prefer truth to liberty. These words were repeated, rather imprudently, by Richard, and provoked a storm amongst Indian nationalists. Richard has noted (as I have) Gandhi’s secret preference for the English ideal and his invincible hope that this ideal will finally break clear of the perversions of politics. He believes that if Gandhi were to leave his prison, he would still be ready to sign an entente with a regenerated British Empire.

26. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

4 or 5 February 1924.-Release of Mahatma Gandhi. It seems that this is one of the first acts of the new Labour Ministry.

27. Romain Rolland to Ganesan

Villa Olga,
Villeneuve (Vaud), Switzerland
Wednesday, 6 February 1924

All joy at the news that the Mahatma is released! Joy to him, to Mahatma Gandhi and to all his people.

I hope he is not very seriously ill. Would that he knows that in Europe thousands of friends love him and thank
him for the light that his life of sacrifice and of love is for them.

Romain Rolland

II

I am told that my little book on the Mahatma has appeared in Hindi and in Gujarati. Can you send me a specimen of these editions?

Please tell the Mahatma that W. W. Pearson who had a very devout love for him spent with me at Villeneuve an afternoon and another evening of last September two days before the fateful railway accident where he met with his death. In this last evening his thoughts were constantly about the Mahatma with a religious tenderness. Before his departure as if moved by a presentiment, he left with me the photograph which represents him with Andrews by the side of Gandhi in the Transvaal in 1913 or 1914. The photograph, is here, near my table in my room in the Villa Olga.

6th February 1924

Romain Rolland

28. Romain Rolland and Paul Richard to Gandhi

Villeneuve (Suisse)
17 February 1924

To
Mahatma Gandhi
Sabarmati (India)

We join together to send you our message of love and admiration.

There you are, free again, after the glorious shade of the jail, in the sunshine of the battlefield.
May India be ready this time.
And may Europe also hear your voice in her wilderness!
Yours in the love of India and the service of Humanity,
Paul Richard Romain Rolland

29. Romain Rolland to Mahadev Desai

Villeneuve (Vaud), Switzerland
24 February 1924

.... If I have unconsciously committed a few mistakes in the little book¹ that I have dedicated to him, let the Mahatma excuse me for the sake of the great love and veneration that his life and philosophy have inspired in me. A European may, often, be deceived in his judgment about an individual, or a nation, of Asia. But his heart cannot be deceived, when he finds in them the common God and universal love. As our European Mahatma—Beethoven—sings in his Ode to Joy: Let us—millions of human beings—embrace each other.

Yours,
Romain Rolland

(Post-card depicting the Lake of Geneva)

¹ Romain Rolland’s essay, first published in the review Europe, subsequently published with modifications, by Stock (late 1923).
Many affectionate thanks for your letter from Bombay, and thank you for speaking about me to Gandhi in the way you did. Your conversation with him is very interesting, and I may publish part of it (suppressing the parts concerning me) in a French Review. It’s of great importance to know this aspect of Gandhi’s thought, and you are the first to bring it out. It’s a pity that Gandhi stopped in the middle of his artistic profession of faith. After the passage in which he says, “I wanted the walls of the Ashram to remain bare”, one would have expected him to say: “But I nevertheless admire such and such a masterpiece of Indian painting or architecture.” All he talks about is the starry vault. Obviously Nature is the supreme artist, but one would have liked Gandhi to add: “Let man be an artist like her! He too should create beautiful harmonic relationships with lines, colours, sounds and thoughts!” His conception seems to remain passive in face of Nature, or the divine principle hidden in her, which alone is active and creative. If God is in each of us, then we should seek, within our means, to be in the image of the Master of Beauty.

I seemed to sense through the text of your conversations that Gandhi and his friends were a little shocked at what I wrote about the Mahatma’s notions of art. I must say I don’t remember having passed any critical remarks on this subject, but if I have made some involuntary errors in my little book, if I may unsuspectingly have caused some displeasure to the Mahatma, I sincerely regret it. It’s so
24

Romain Rolland and Gandhi: Correspondence

natural for a European to go wrong in his judgments of
an Asiatic mind, even if he feels for it the respect and love
I feel for Gandhi. But there’s no vanity in my passionate
quest for penetration into all living souls. I ask for nothing
better than to be told of my errors so that I can correct them.
You say how surprised and sad you are that no Euro¬
pean (intellectual or politician) has devoted to India or
Gandhi the passionate interest they deserve. But first do
you know that no one has done more to make Gandhi’s
true and holy grandeur misunderstood than the Indians in
Europe—and even some Indians in India! Sometimes they’re
Indian Bolsheviks who make Gandhi into a fanciful creature
with no practical intelligence; sometimes they make him
into a cunning Bolshevik using non-violence as a tempo¬
rary expedient. Barbusse’s Clarte and the French Commu¬
nist paper L’Humanite have published articles signed by
Indian names arguing these two contradictory theses, and
the result is that at the end of the day everyone is totally
confused. That’s not all; when, very recently, the Women’s
International League for Peace and Liberty had the idea
of making a public protest to obtain Gandhi’s release, it
received a very violent letter opposing this from Indian
women (in India) who presented Gandhi as an apostle of violencel They quoted a truncated passage from one of his
writings saying that, before achieving her freedom, India
would have to pass through a river of blood! They care¬
fully avoided explaining that what Gandhi meant was not
the blood of the enemy, but the personal sacrifice of mil¬
lions of the non-violent! I shan’t give you the names of
these bad Indians—first because I haven’t the right, and
secondly because it would be wrong to arouse the passions of
other Indians against them (which would sin against Gandhi's in¬
tentions). But you must take account of this fact; Europe

rarely finds Indians such as yourself and Kalidas Nag who
can tell her about India with exactitude and love.


Although you’ve read my articles on Gandhi in *Europe*, I’m sending you the little volume. I’m obliged to say that it’s widely read. Although the critics avoided talking about it (as they usually do with me), there are new editions coming out all over the place, and I know that some French readers have been overwhelmed by it.

I still have a burning desire to come to India. Material difficulties and my fragile health wouldn’t stop me; the only problem is my old father (88 years old) whom it’s hard to leave behind and not very easy to bring.

... Did I tell you that Pearson spent two days (not successively) at Villeneuve and that last time he was with me he entrusted me with the fine photograph showing the Mahatma (in the Transvaal in 1913 or 1914) seated between the standing figures of Andrews and Pearson. I’ve had it reproduced, and it will be published as a frontispiece to the volume of extracts from *Young India* (Gandhi’s articles) whose French and German translations are at present with the printers. ...

### 31. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

1 March 1924.—Mme. Duchene comes to dinner. She is a delegate of the French Committee of the Women’s League for Peace and Liberty at the Washington Congress.

She has been in England, and brings back disappointing impressions. ... Labour cannot even be given the credit for Gandhi’s release, for this was an act decided on by the previous ministry. (This is a certain fact, attested by the very sincere and perfectly well-informed Miss Marshall.)

Gandhi came very close to dying while in English hands; the papers reaching us from India now reveal this. Sick with dysentery since the end of December, he had been examined negligently by the doctors. His state suddenly
got worse, and Col. Maddock, called in great haste, diagnosed an abscess on the appendix and, without even asking the governor's permission, urgently took Gandhi in his car to hospital and operated on him (13 January). For three days the sick man hung between life and death, for the disease was deep-rooted and Gandhi in a weak state. England must have trembled, for if Gandhi had died in prison, there would have been a ferocious rising in India. Thus they made haste to sign the order for his release (early February). Gandhi never lost his lucidity of mind. Dilip Kumar Roy has sent me an interview he had with him during his convalescence in which they discussed my book and music. Gandhi has been ordered to rest for some months, and one senses that he takes no joy in resuming the burden of his responsibilities.

32. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

March 1924.-S. Ganesan, the Madras publisher, sends me a message from Gandhi (Madras, 28 February). He went to Poona, where he saw “Mahatmaji” and C. F. Andrews. He read him my message, and Gandhi asked him to send me his:

“I was very happy to have the translation of his letter, and I thank him for his good wishes. I eagerly wish to be able to meet him face to face. It was a great happiness and consolation to me to learn that Pearson had been with him two days before his fatal accident. I lived with him in profound intimacy in South Africa, and I know that we loved each other with brotherly affection.”

Ganesan had just received Au-dessus de la Mêlée, Les Précurseurs, Jean-Christophe and Clérambault. He left them for

1 Retranslated.
Gandhi to read, on Gandhi’s request. He is still very weak, and still in need of weeks of rest before he can resume his activities; but his whole free time is taken up by giving advice to various people. My book, Gandhi, has appeared in its entirety in the Gujarati and Hindi editions of Young India.

He sends me a fine facsimile edition of Gandhi’s original manuscript for Hind Swaraj. It is written in Gujarati.

33. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

10 March 1924.—A young Parsee from Poona, Framroze Pestonji Pocha…. Parsee Pocha saw Gandhi last month in hospital, shortly before his operation. He knew him already and found him transfigured. Beforehand his face had always been calm, no doubt, but with traces of care. Now it was illuminated by smiling serenity. Pocha has little time for most of the disciples, but he venerates Mrs. Gandhi; he says that it is hard to imagine her holy kindness; she has counted for much more in Gandhi’s life than is generally thought. The little untouchable girl they adopted is the only girl in the family. Pocha has seen her give a piece of bread she had bitten to Gandhi, who ate it; a simple enough thing here, but of exceptional significance in India, where prejudices are so strong.

34. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Villeneuve (Valid) Villa Olga
Sunday, 16 March 1924

….. The reprints of my little volume on Mahatma Gandhi, both in French and German, are multiplying at a rate which surprises the publishers (particularly the French publisher—an estimable fellow who’d never heard of
Gandhi when I offered him my study, and tried to make himself pleasant to me by saying: "I don’t doubt that he’s a good writer if it’s you that recommends him!"). The revelation of Gandhi’s personality has echoed to the depths of many French religious circles, particularly in the Protestant world. The Protestant churches failed so lamentably in their role during the war years that many consciences, disorientated and without a guide, are delighted to find one in Gandhi and believe they can see in him the faithful representative of Christ’s pure thought. Although there’s a large measure of historical error in this judgment, it also reflects a profound moral truth, and I believe the Mahatma would be pleased if he knew about it.

I’m following events in India attentively, going by the press cuttings which you and Gancsan send me. I’m writing a few extra pages to my book today for the next French edition.

35. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

March 1924.-Eug. Agnanine tells me (15 March) that my book on Gandhi has recently been put on the index in Russia.

It has now been published in nearly all languages; editions are following hard on each other’s heels in France and Germany; and it is making a deep impression in the religious world, particularly among Protestants. It re-awakens the sleeping Christ in them. The Mahatma himself almost seems Christ reborn.
36. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

*Late March 1924,*—Wrote a post-face to the twenty-first edition of my *Gandhi*, bringing up to date the story of events in India since Gandhi’s liberation.

37. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

*Andheri*

*22 March 1924*

Dear Friend,

I appreciate your loving card. What does it matter that you have in places made mistakes in your essay? The wonder to me is that you have made so few and that you have succeeded, though living in a different and distant atmosphere, in so truly interpreting my message. It demonstrates once more the essential oneness of human nature though flourishing under different skies.

With much regard,

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

P.S. Pray excuse the pencil hand. My hand is yet too shaky to manage the ink-pen.

M. K. G.
38. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

April 1924.—C. F. Andrews writes to me from Santiniketan (2 March, in English):

“My dear friend,—I am staying at this time with Mahatma Gandhi, and I have been with him now in his very serious illness for over a month and a half. It has been a very great joy to me to be with him and a great privilege. His life is one of great beauty to watch day by day. Every part of it is full of sacrifice and thought for others; and there seems to be no thought of self at all. The poet’s, Rabindranath Tagore’s, life is also a very great joy to watch; but there one seems to see the inner life in communion with itself and finding its own inner peace in solitude. Here, in Mahatmaji, it is the passion for others which is supreme,—a Christ-like passion. . . . With Mahatmaji, the one passion is to serve. Even in his terrible illness, the difficulty was to keep him from some little act of service which might strain him. All the patients near his bed were thought of by him, night and day. The nurse must be cared for, if she looked overtired; and now that he is slightly better and convalescent, he has brought down two young girls who are invalids, in order to gain them the benefit of the sea air. In all this he is a St. Francis of Assisi. But his mind is essentially practical, and he deals with the most intricate problems of modern times. I have thought of him often (in the past) as being ‘mediaeval’ in his conception of life (and here and there that strain undoubtedly runs through). But he has in some ways gone further even than the science of today, and thought out on scientific lines the problems of the future. In this sense he is ultra-modern.”
39. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

April 1924.-S. Ganesan writes to me (20 March) that he has recently seen Gandhi, whose wound is completely cured. The Mahatma is in a rest home near Bombay; he is reading my books, keeps them always by him and will be writing to me soon. In Poona, Ganesan had talked to him of my book about him. Gandhi was pleased with it; only he found that I had not properly understood two points of his doctrine, and he announced his intention of writing to me on the subject through Andrews. One of these points was my harsh judgment on his disciple, Professor Kalelkar, and the Gospel of Swadeshi. He said that I could not judge these ideas by a few articles in a book, and that I should come to India. “I am sure he will have to change his opinion.” Kalelkar also planned to write to me. As to Ganesan, his personal opinion was that my remarks on Gandhi’s disciples were only too apt, but he regretted that I chose Kalelkar to express them, for he, along with Mahadev Desai, is Gandhi’s best disciple: those two have best understood him.

Mahatma Gandhi writes to me in person, in reply to a short note in which I said I was afraid I might not always have properly grasped his thought, and would like to correct my mistakes if he pointed them out to me.

(Written in pencil, with a firm hand, despite his concluding observation. In English.)
40. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

26 May 1924 (Prague).—In the morning, a visit from Valentin Bulgakov. . . . I encourage him to make contact with Gandhi and link the Tolstoyan group with that centred on Young India; this he promises to do.

41. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

Sunday, 1 June 1924 (Prague).—I am receiving piles of volumes and albums to sign. The striking thing is that among those who own copies of my books there are hotel staff, chauffeurs, etc. (On the way from Zurich to Vienna, didn’t I see a copy of my Gandhi, in French, in the hands of a young sleeping-car attendant?)

42. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

16 June 1924 (Villeneuve).—Visited by the Hindu political leader Lala Lajpat Rai. . . . (Gandhi often speaks of him in his articles with esteem and affection.) He was the first man in India to be locked up for civil disobedience, and he remained in prison for two years, from 1921 to 1923. . . . He has a much more precise mind than most Hindus, and has noted a series of chronological errors in my book; he points them out to me, for which I am most grateful. The main one is that Gandhi did not wait for Tilak’s death before he resolutely entered the political arena; six months before he had already founded his party, and it was already beginning to relegate Tilak’s into the second
place. Lajpat Rai, who was Tilak's friend, had passed to Gandhi's side when he (Rai) was president of the All-India Congress in 1920, at which both Gandhi and Tilak spoke; Tilak held this desertion against him.

43. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

June 1924 (Villeneuve).-Visited by Lala Lajpat Rai's young secretary, K. D. Kohli. He brings me (on my request) a list of details to be corrected in the new editions of my Mahatma Gandhi.

... He is naturally inclined to attribute to his employer, Lajpat Rai, a role of the first importance. He says that until his imprisonment, Gandhi always used to consult him about political matters. ... He tells me one important fact: before the events at Chauri Chaura, when Gandhi was about to proclaim civil disobedience over all India, the Viceroy, Lord Reading, was so worried that he sent for Lajpat Rai and Pandit X. and offered them regional autonomy if Gandhi withdrew his order of revolt. Lajpat Rai and his companion sent a telegram to Gandhi who, like them, accepted, and at once sent a telegram announcing his acceptance to the Viceroy. But a delay in communications caused his telegram to arrive only on the morning on which disobedience was due to start, and from then on the course of events is known. Lajpat Rai now considers that it was better so. He was the first to be imprisoned in the great movement of non-co-operation. At present he still admires Gandhi as much as ever, but thinks he is going off the tracks politically by cutting himself off from the Swaraj Party. He says that one of the two things will happen; either India will not obey Gandhi's political prescriptions or she will be defeated.

I receive copies from Ganesan of the Tamil edition of my book on Gandhi.
I cannot understand who could have started such a baseless rumour! Gandhi has neither the time nor the desire to come to Switzerland for his health. He pays no heed to his health. He has returned to the thick of his political activities, and the present crisis is too serious for him to turn his attention away for even a moment. He regularly writes and publishes his articles and “mandates” in his weekly review Young India, in Madras; if you are interested in his thought, I suggest you subscribe to this English-language journal (published by Ganesan, 29, Pycrofts Road, Triplicane, Madras...).

28 July 1924.—Another visit from Lajpat Rai. . . . He is in a hurry to see Gandhi again and bring some pressure to bear on him: for he is the only Indian politician able to advise Gandhi and command any of his attention; the only first-rate political leader, along with Das—and perhaps more than Das. But as far as I can see, his mind moves purely and simply on the level of politics; if he accepted Gandhi’s doctrine of non-co-operation, it was merely for political reasons. (Which can hardly please Gandhi, I feel.) Lajpat Rai totally disapproves of Gandhi’s programme since his liberation, and says that if he does not change it he will have to break away from him, which
will be a serious blow to the prestige of the Indian cause—but there is no other way. His argument is that Gandhi can choose between only two courses: either he can withdraw from politics, retaining only the moral or religious direction of India, and the training of great disciples who will bear his thought; or else he can totally abandon his political tactics and rally to that of the Swarajists. His stubbornness in imposing the charkha (the spinning wheel) on all party members is absurd and doomed to defeat; worse still, it will split the party. Similarly, the boycott of the tribunals, schools, etc., which in itself is good and just, is in practice impossible to maintain. The party agreed to accept it only as a short-term experiment, and at the end of the set term, the results, which were inadequate or frankly bad, proved that it had to be given up. Of all his politico-religious doctrine, Gandhi should retain only non-violence, which is its heart, and not hang on to the rest, in which factual experimentation should keep him his freedom of movement. In any case, Lajpat Rai himself believes that non-violence, though politically true as a tactical means of combat for India (because of her enormous numerical force and vitality), cannot be an absolute and universal principle; for a small nation threatened by a large one, the political duty is to have recourse to arms. We have a discussion about this, and I am not of his opinion, even from a strictly practical and political point of view; I believe that a struggle undertaken in such conditions leads to ruin, and that the best, the most efficient weapon is the tenacious moral resistance of a non-violent, non-accepting people. But this depends on the quality of the soul, which must be of a moral firmness able to withstand all trials.
46. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

17 August 1924.—Visited by P. Richard. . . . He has just spent two days with a Catholic priest in Paris—a most open mind, he says, and very sympathetic to Gandhi’s doctrines. Once again I notice Paul Richard’s underlying lack of sympathy for Tagore and Gandhi. I believe it is involuntary, and when he is made aware of it he reacts sharply; but it soon re-emerges. At heart, he cannot forgive Tagore his aristocratic side, and as for Gandhi he has no taste for non-resistance.

47. Romain Rolland to C. F. Andrews

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Wednesday, 24 September 1924

. . . . I also wanted to tell you how much I admire your most moving book Christ and Labour. I have spoken of it in several quarters here and tried to shake the inconceivable apathy of those Swiss Protestant groups who take an interest, or so they claim, in missions in India, and who know nothing about what your books reveal—who don’t even seek to read them.

Unfortunately I have, as always, been taken up by so many tasks that I have not been able to write to you sooner. But I’m making a point of doing so today without further delay, as it’s quite urgent.

First, I must tell you that your very readable article, A Day in the Life of Mahatma Gandhi, has been translated by my sister and will appear in French in the Paris Revue
Européene, which is very happy to publish it. I shall also have it published in German, either in a major Swiss paper (the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*) or in one of the major Vienna papers (*Neue Freie Presse*). I should like it to be possible to publish other articles by you as striking as this one on India or other Asian countries in European papers and reviews. These direct, precise and well-documented testimonies are of very high value to us, and can have a greater effect on the European mind than general considerations and intellectual discussions. . . .

**48. Romain Rolland to C. F. Andrews**

*Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga*

*28 October 1924*

. . . . Your most interesting account of a day in the life of Gandhi is to appear in the November number of *La Revue Européenne*, and I’ve told them to send you a few copies. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (the biggest German-language Swiss newspaper) has also published it. I took the liberty of adding a few introductory lines to the French version.

. . . . Some Russian friends have written to tell me that the Bolshevik government might be making some strange advances to Gandhi. The Russian representative in Berlin, Mr. Krestinsky, is supposed to have been instructed by the Russian Foreign Office to offer an official reception (?) to Gandhi and “make use of the situation to spread activist (Bolshevik) propaganda among his adepts”. Furthermore, Krestinsky is said to have been asked to invite Gandhi to visit Russia. He has been authorized to give a subsidy towards publishing propaganda literature among the oppressed peoples of Asia, and he is to institute in the Oriental Club and Secretariat a scholarship bearing Gandhi’s name for students who share his ideas (Gandhi’s
ideas, or Moscow’s?). In conclusion, three Hindus are said to have been attached to him for this task: Manabendra Nath Roy, Bakandsha Rustem-Kala and Bairana Suvaima. (I don’t know the last two names, which are probably spelt wrong, but that of the Bolshevik Hindu Manabendra Nath Roy is enough to show the Marxist revolutionary character of the enterprise.) All this has been published in some Russian newspapers, such as Rul on 18 October.

I expect Gandhi will be shrewd enough to unravel Moscow’s true motives, but I thought it was worth telling you about it, so that you can help to enlighten him if necessary. I admire the intelligence and energy of the Bolshevik government, but I am profoundly hostile to its ways of going about things which are totally lacking in frankness. Its policy in its struggle to destroy the present European system is to use all the great forces which are opposed to European imperialism, even those which are also opposed to the Bolshevik system of violence and oppression. The Soviet commissars and their propagandists pretend to adapt themselves to the ideas of the supporters of non-violence so as to make use of them; then, after compromising them, when they have no further use for them, they scornfully trample on them. They have many times tried to use the names of myself and Anatole France in this way, but for my part I have always energetically kept on my guard. I certainly prefer Moscow to Washington, and Russian Marxism to American and European imperialism. But I claim to be as independent of the one as I am of the other, “above the battle!” The Civitas Dei, the holy city of non-violence and human fraternity must keep out of all alliances and compromises with the violent elements in any class or any party. . . .
49. Extract from Mahadev Desai’s Diary

23 November 1924.— “May your life bring Europe and India together!”

50. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Thursday, 18 December 1924

.... Thank you for warning me how ready Roy is to pass on letters written to him to the press! I shall be on my guard in future. Anyway Roy honestly (and naively) sent me the papers in which he published my letter, and I’m not too sorry that my personal remarks have been repeated in public. As to the interviews on art to which he submits Gandhi, he ought to leave the Mahatma in peace; the Mahatma has better things to do at the moment than argue about aesthetics....

51. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1924,—Kalidas Nag, who recently saw Gandhi, tells me about their meeting (21 November):
“....Since my return to India (he had been with Tagore to China and Japan), I very much wanted the chance to meet the Mahatma and to bear him your personal

1 Message on an invitation card for the peace conference at Vienna sent by Romain Rolland to Gandhi through Dr. Kalidas Nag.
This chance came suddenly without my doing anything towards it, when the Mahatma came to Calcutta a few days ago and stayed for a week with C. R. Das, making the final arrangements for the unification of the party. I am not a politician, as you know; I do not understand the importance of this pact; perhaps I have my doubts on this compromise. But I was asked to appear on 7 November before Gandhi, who had looked for my address—thanks to your generous mention of my name in your preface—, and I was proud to sit at his feet a little while. He appeared pale and emaciated, but a special light shone in his eyes; and he had the divine smile which calms the soul. . . . Who would imagine that this man was the leader of millions! He seemed very weak after the terrible three-week fast; but his mind was as alert as ever. He blessed me when I bowed before him, and then he asked me about you. I gave him information about you as much as it was in my power in this brief interview; and as a symbol of your friendship and admiration, and in memory of all your spiritual disciples whom I had the good fortune to meet for the first time at that summer school in Lugano (at which, on the recommendation of my sister Madeleine, I was privileged to speak about Gandhi’s life), in memory of this event and as a symbol, I said, of your spiritual appreciation, I offered the Mahatma a card (illustrated) from the Congress of Women on which I had your signature, if you remember. Mahatma was deeply touched and asked a series of questions on you and our ‘brother workers in the West who work for the same cause, the common cause of Humanity, of Peace and Love’. He asked me to send you the confirmation of ‘his’ soul on the truth of that great cause. But I felt that the Mahatma, for his part, also seeks a confirmation from you, and from our spiritual brothers in the West, whose goodwill and co-operation are indispensable to the triumph of the great cause of Humanity. . . . This is a thousand times more im-
important to me than the praise or blame which may come from the West, than any political movement or any governmental folly. Gandhi the politician may fade into insignificance with time; but Gandhi who has united, concentrated or symbolized in his person the diverse and still conflicting currents of the humanitarian activities of an age, this Gandhi will live and be resplendent for ever. Probably he will find his truest disciples and friends in the West rather than in the East, which is wallowing in its materialistic and nationalist preoccupations. Perhaps it was in this light that I understood the mysterious words of the Mahatma when I took leave of him:

'Tell Mr. Romain Rolland that I am trying to live up to his interpretation of my humble life.' . . ."

52. Romain Rolland to Fernand Benoit (India)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
4 January 1925

. . . . Thank you for your excellent letters. The last one particularly interested me. You did very well to use my introduction to Young India for the Modern Review, and I am pleased that the Review published it. We receive Young India regularly, and Andrews also keeps us in touch with Gandhi's life and activities. . . .

53. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

January 1925.—I have warned Gandhi that his name was being abused in Europe. . . . The Moscow Communists (or those who follow their line) are showing two faces: on the one hand they treat Gandhi as an enemy and proclaim the bankruptcy of non-violence in India, on the other they
disguise Gandhi as a Bolshevik (see Barbusse) and put about unlikely rumours of an imminent visit to Moscow. Gandhi who, until now, has treated Bolshevism more or less as if it did not exist, this time puts the record straight in his journal Young India (first half of December 1924), and clearly repudiates Bolshevism. He writes thus:

"...I have received no invitation from Germany or Russia, nor have I the slightest desire to visit these great countries. In any case I have no wish to launch myself into any foreign adventure. My path is clear. Any attempt to use me for violent purposes is bound to fail. I have no secret methods. I have no weapon but non-violence. I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting-ground between the school of violence and myself."

This declaration has infuriated the Indian Bolsheviks in Moscow, whose leader, Manabendra Nath Roy, had perhaps suggested and counted on this misunderstanding which Gandhi has just torn open. He launched a violent protest against Gandhi, who scornfully published it in Young India (early January 1925) with a few lines of crushing courtesy, categorically reaffirming his decision.

His declaration has done the rounds of the European press, who of course exploited it against the Bolsheviks, and set up against the lies of the latter their own opposite lie, no less repulsive. Le Matin ("via London") published a so-called extract from Gandhi’s article, half of which (the repudiation of Bolshevism) was exact, and the other half entirely false. The author of the lie did not tax his powers of invention; he simply transposed Gandhi’s negations into
affirmations. He made the Mahatma say that Moscow had sent him propositions and money to foment a revolt in India, but he had refused.

54. Romain Rolland to Dinesh Ranjan Das

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
8 February 1925

... While you are doing me the honour of translating and publishing Jean-Christophe in Bengali, some of my European friends would like to make your new Indian literature better known here. The Zürich publisher, Emil Rongcr, who has already taken the initiative in publishing Gandhi's works in Europe, is trying to build up a collection (in French and German) of Indian novels, short stories and essays. What is lacking is English translations made in India of your best contemporary works. ... This would be an effective way of working for the glory of your country, for these English translations could then be rendered here into other European languages and disseminated in our European nations.

I should also encourage your Indian writers to publish English-language biographies of great Indian characters: poets, artists, scholars, thinkers, etc., more or less on the same plan as my Vies de Beethoven, de Michel-Ange, de Tolstoy, de Mahatma Gandhi. Nothing would be better able to inspire admiration and love for India in Europe, which misunderstands India. Europe is strongly individualistic, and will always be more struck by a great figure, by a man, than by an idea. Show her your great men,—your sages and your heroes! ...
55. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

18-19 February 1925. — Visited by L. K. Elmhirst, Tagore’s companion in China and Buenos Aires. . . . He is profoundly convinced that he (Tagore) understands the Indian peasant better than Gandhi and that his plan of rural reconstruction is better and more efficient than Gandhi’s system. He never tires of criticizing the charkha (the spinning wheel), and L. Elmhirst repeats his criticisms on his own account. He claims that Gandhi’s plan is valid only for country areas close to towns. But the whole of Gandhi’s policies meet with Tagore’s disapproval. L. Elmhirst, who reflects him in this, speaks of them (following his master) with obvious hostility and little understanding. The thinker who does not act finds it easy to point out discrepancies, at least apparent discrepancies, between the doctrine and the actions of a man who has the responsibility for 300,000,000 men. He even goes so far as to accuse him of betraying the cause of the untouchables because, in order not to complicate the present entente between the Indian parties over immediate action, Gandhi did not speak about the untouchables at the last Congress. One senses at the bottom of this the invincible antipathy between the free mind in love with all forms of life (and with a fair dose of dilettantism) and the puritan who imposes rules of mortification, asceticism and harsh disciplines on his disciples — so as to build them into a militia ready for any sacrifice. Gandhi’s indifference to suffering — to his own as to that of others — when it is offered as a sacrifice to a noble cause, revolts Tagore to the point of injustice. It seems that he refuses to recognize its moral grandeur. Elmhirst presents Gandhi’s unmoved reaction to the
strikes he decreed and the resultant ruins as the sign of a cold politician. He could hardly misunderstand more the soul of this heroic believer. Tagore, Gandhi: two worlds, moving further and further apart.

56. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

April 1925.—The Polish writer, Ladislas Reymont (winner of last year’s Nobel Prize for literature), writes to me from Paris, asking me permission to translate my life of Gandhi into Polish.

The same request has been made for Portuguese by a group of young Indians from the University of Coimbra (signed by Francisco Adeodato Barreto). They say how sad and indignant they are that in their own little country, Portuguese India (Goa), they are left completely in ignorance of the great Indian fatherland—all the glories of the past and present, Tilak, Gandhi, Tagore;—it was through my book that they discovered them!

57. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

2 May 1925

.... I am adding two articles to these documents which will show you the panic-stricken obsession of our French nationalists with a possible Asiatic Union. The same Henri Massis who is denouncing me today for handing over Europe to Asia was denouncing me during the war for handing over France to Germany. It was he who in 1915 published the pamphlet, *Romain Rolland contre la France*, and it is he who recently set in motion the enquiry to which
Sylvain Lèvi replied in *Les Appels de l'Orient*.¹

As to the article from *Le Matin*, I send it to you as a typical example. It’s characteristic that *Le Matin* (one of the largest newspapers in Paris) has published blow by blow a whole series of leading articles in this tone. They’re trying to launch a whole campaign against Asia in the field of public opinion.

58. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

14 September 1925.—Visited by Madeleine Slade. This young Englishwoman, about thirty years old, daughter of an admiral who commanded the fleet in the Indian Ocean, has been touched by grace; she has been converted to the faith of Mahatma Gandhi, has decided to give her life to his service, and is about to leave for India and enter the Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad, into which Gandhi has accepted her. She is tall, strong, quite good-looking, very dark (as dark as an Indian, or a gipsy: indeed her maternal great-grandmother was one, married at St. Petersburg, to the scandal of the very insular family), pronounced features, particularly the nose whose curved shape suggests Hungarian affinities. I was the unintentional instrument of her destiny. When she first knew me, two years ago in England, her mind was prey to a violent and passionate disturbance, and she could find no way out. She suffered from it

¹ In a publication called *Les Appels de l’Orient*, appearing in February-March 1925, published by Emile-Paul, Paris, Sylvain Lèvi, replying to an enquiry comparing the East and the West, wrote: *Romain Rolland, who portrays Gandhi’s India as Philostratus portrayed the India of the Gymnosophists, is doing a disservice to the India which he claims to be glorifying. Tagore, who denounces to his compatriots, to China and to Japan the faults and crimes of the West, setting up in opposition an imaginary East, is doing harm to Asia, Europe and his own ideals.*
a long time; I guided her a little and introduced her to Gandhi. She directed her passion towards this figure whom, she at once saw as a new Christ; she read all his works, but did not think of following his doctrine. It was last autumn, during the Mahatma's great twenty-one-day fast, that the illumination came to her. She determined to devote herself to him, she wrote to him, and he replied. She learned Urdu, learned to spin the khaddar and adopted the strictly vegetarian Hindu diet. She cashed her small personal fortune and said goodbye to her parents. The fine thing is that, despite the total intellectual disagreement between her parents and herself, they accepted it—even the admiral—regretting it, unable to understand, but recognizing the moral nobility of her action. No French parent, I fear, would have been capable of this self-abnegation and respect for her liberty. Now she is setting off with the joy of a young novice about to become a Carmelite. Gandhi is sending an Indian from the Ashram to meet her at Bombay, where she is to land, and take her by rail that night to Ahmedabad. He has warned her that life in the Ashram is hard, that they eat what they earn each day by their labour and that the climate is difficult for a European; but nothing can stop her. Besides, she knows India, having been there at the age of fifteen on her father's flagship. At that date she saw only the English society there; her life was an eternal round of parties, and it exasperated her. Now she says: "Everyone is sorry for me; people say to me: 'How lonely you'll be, lost among all those Indians!' I say that it will be the first time in my life when I shall not be alone."

59. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

September 1925.—I write to Gandhi to recommend my “daughter” Madeleine Slade, who is leaving for Bombay on
24 October. She is writing us letters full of mystic joy,—which still find room for common sense and humour. She says her example has carried along her parents; her mother is spinning, and her father, the admiral, is weaving (cursing Gandhi all the while).

60. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Villeneuve (Switzerland)
1 October 1925

My dear Brother,

You will soon be receiving at Sabarmati Miss Madeleine Slade, whom you have been kind enough to admit to your Ashram. She is a dear friend of my sister and myself; I look upon her as a spiritual daughter and I am delighted that she is coming to put herself under your direction. I know how good it will be for her, and I am sure you will find in her one of your most staunch and faithful disciples. Her soul is full of admirable energy and ardent devotion; she is straightforward and upright, Europe cannot offer a nobler or more disinterested heart to your cause. May she bear with her the love of thousands of Europeans, and my veneration.

Yours,
Romain Rolland

61. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Villeneuve
19 October 1925

.... Tagore has recently written me a fine and doleful letter, in a firm handwriting which shows no signs of sickness, but confiding his sadness and solitude. His
distance from Gandhi's action and thought makes itself felt ever more commandingly. I understand him; they each have their own mission, and neither of them can or may give it up. That of Tagore is loftier and more remote; it is aimed at the soaring human spirit, beyond all barriers of classes, nations and centuries. That of Gandhi seeks to adapt itself to the passing necessities of one people and one age (yet without renouncing for himself and his Ashram disciples the strict observance of an intransigent faith). It is natural that this mixture of holiness and politics should often shock you. (In reality it's not a *mixture*, but a *juxtaposition* of these two different "orders"). But in fact it was the same for the greatest saints of the West: from St. Benedict to St. Theresa, and even the free vagabond of Jesus, Francis of Assisi, finally had to submit to it. Neither you nor I nor Tagore could do it, for our mission is less in action and thought, less in the "order of Charity" (in Pascal's definition) than in the order of Knowledge (which is, for the most highly evolved spirits, the supreme Charity). But we should be grateful to the saints who are capable of the other mission, less pure and more stained with concessions to human weakness, for without them, to what depths would human weakness fall! It needs an ideal within its reach, an ideal whose practice is easy and workaday, an ideal which can be achieved by men's hands (for most men think only with their bodies, in action). It is in this sense that I believe Gandhi's charldia useful (in the religious sense) despite everything, like the more or less mechanical exercises of the monastic orders. The supreme ideal of man is Liberty. But there is a whole hierarchy of Liberty (as in living souls), from the infinitely small which is hardly distinct from automatism, to the limitless and formless Liberty of the victorious Buddha. Life is of infinite richness and diversity; none of us can reduce it to a unity. But each of us must sing his part faultlessly in the total harmony, *P. D. G.* (Per Dei gloriam), as the old
European musicians wrote at the end of each of their compositions. For the joy of the Master of Harmonics.

... On 9 November, one of our European friends, a young Englishwoman\(^1\) of very noble and forceful character, is entering the Ashram at Sabarmati. She is the daughter of an English admiral who commanded the Indian fleet. What an astonishing victory for the Indian soul! ... 

62. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

*Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, Ahmedabad*

12 November 1925

... Ah, my Father, I could never have imagined how divine he is. I had been prepared for a Prophet and I have found an Angel.

And your letter—your two letters to the Mahatma and to me—thank you, thank you! Oh! I may become worthy. ... 

Mira

63. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

*Sabarmati*

13 November 1925

Dear Friend,

I have your very kind letter. Miss Slade quickly followed it. What a treasure you have sent me! I shall try to be worthy of the great trust. I shall leave no stone unturned to assist her to become a bridge between East and

\(^1\) Miss Madeleine Slade
West. I am too imperfect to have disciples. She shall be a fellow seeker with me and as I am older in years and therefore presumably in spiritual experience, I propose to share the honour of fatherhood with you. Miss Slade is showing wonderful adaptability and has already put us at ease about herself.

I must leave the rest to be told you by Miss Slade whom I am asking to tell you all about a French sister who came to the Ashram just a few days before she came.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

64. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

Villeneuve
26 November 1925

..... My sister, who is in Paris for a few weeks and to whom I sent on your last letter, tells me you are waiting for my authorization to publish my book on Mahatma Gandhi in Bengali. I give it to you with great pleasure; I only need to remind you that Ganesan has already brought out other editions of my book in Hindi, Tamil and English.

I should like to reply to the various points you touch on in your letter, but your letter is in English and my interpreter—my sister—is away, so I don’t know exactly what you say in your letter, and I shall have to wait for my sister’s return. You see what comes of giving up writing French in your correspondence with me!

..... Don’t be too harsh on Gandhi and his participation in politics! The task is not the same for everyone, and there’s room in the Pantheon of great souls for both Tagore and Gandhi; each of them saves an essential part of our human heritage. If Gandhi succeeds in containing—or even merely in delaying for twenty years
—the violence which is building up and threatening to break its bounds, it will be a priceless benefit for India and the whole world, and that is worth the few apparent concessions to the world of politics which shock you! Beware lest, without him, the whole of the India you love may be inexorably submerged in the unleashed fury of political passions! By associating himself with politics, he moderates and humanizes them—I should rather say he “divinizes” them, as the “human” left to itself is not far from the animal! Nor should you forget the radiance he casts on many European minds whom he thus brings closer to Asia, and to whom India has become a holy land almost with the same status as Palestine. It is inevitable that much error should be mixed with much truth in these judgments, but this is the case with all new faiths. The spirit of humanity collaborates with the man of God to build the fruitful legend from which the new Gospel will spring. . . .

65. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

Villeneuve
17 December 1925

My dear Daughter,

How happy we have been with all your letters which tell us of your great joy, superior to your expectations,—joy to have found the Master of goodness, of love and of truth,—joy to have entered at last on the good and just way for which you have hunted so long, and where your energies will best deploy themselves.

You remember the word which embodies Wisdom in the third act of Parsifal: “Dieuen” (to serve). But in Parsifal it appears to be above all the mission of the woman. And it is—it ought to be—your lot. Every being conscious of
his responsibilities feels himself joined to other beings, and endeavours to serve them with the best that is in him. Of all the paths of service that of the Mahatma is one of the straightest and most luminous. It leads to the peace of the soul. May you taste of it! When you have gathered it, distribute to us a few pieces of the delicious fruit!

Do not forget the light of Europe upon the roads of Asia! Make those around you enjoy it! Take and give! —I can see you out there in the morning before dawn on the nocturnal roads around Sabarmati, by the side of the Mahatma, singing to yourself the divine melody of the Hymn of Joy. There, it would not be out of its element.

I do not know how to thank you enough for the trouble that you took in noting down for us in detail all the days of your voyage. To us they are—and will remain—a unique testimony of your March to the Star—of this new pilgrimage of the Shepherds, who go towards the torch of the Orient.

We are keeping fairly well,—kept up by incessant occupation and the passion of work, which is as necessary to me as the air which I breathe. Long since I should have fallen by the way if the creative fire and the mission of work had not carried me on!

Tell the Mahatma how much I thank him for the letter which he has written me, in spite of his immense activity—and how much I rejoice to know of his being near to you, and of your being near to him! In this old Europe so full of genius, but at the moment covered as it were with a cloud in my beloved land of France, where still there blossom so many souls, simple and pure, courageous and charming, but who live apart leaving the government of the world and the guidance of opinion to the worst,—I fight, alone, without the hope of saving those who do not wish to be saved. But I sow for the future the corn that will [ripen] when we shall be no more. The grain does not come
from me: I have searched it out through all the world. The most beautiful is that which my bird Spirit has brought back from the Orient,—the grain of the Great Soul, which itself has gathered grain from the Sacred Books of Asia (and we have recognized there, mixed with Hinduism, the savour of the Gospel. All the seeds of life come from the same divine granary). We are a handful of religious souls in Europe who thank the Mahatma for rendering to us the good pure corn separated from the tares.

My daughter, it will now be for you to bless us. You are giving of yourself for us, and you are at the source of benedictions.

Will you ask once of your great friend and Master, to offer up with you a brief and silent prayer for us, for our peace, for the salvation of ours, so that we may know to the last how to be vanquished without bending.

Mira, I embrace you. A happy Christmas and New Year from the lands of snow and the cradle of the Epiphany.

Your friend,
Romain Rolland

66. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1925.—“My daughter”, Madeleine Slade, is writing us ecstatic letters about her arrival at Sabarmati and Gandhi’s welcome. Her series of letters to my sister will in due course constitute an amazing document for the religious historian. Her conversations with the Mahatma and the spirit of adoration in which she listens and retains them are just like a new Gospel. Certainly Gandhi is not inferior to Christ in goodness and sanctity, and he surpasses him in touching humility. As to Madeleine Slade, as I foresaw, she is a Holy Woman to this new Saviour.
Gandhi has not been long in recognizing the beauty of her soul. He writes to me on 13 November.

67. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Satyagraha Ashram
Sabarmati
8 January 1926

My dear, dear Father,

Thank you ever so much for your letter! I made a translation of it (in writing) and gave it to Bapu (as he had asked). He read it with an expression of profound concentration, and at the end said: “Ah! Indeed it is a very beautiful letter!” And then later he said: “Tell him how happy I should be if he could come to India so as to see everything for himself—and how much I should like him to stay some time with us in the Ashram. Nothing would make me happier.” Then afterwards he said: “Tell him that this prayer rises to heaven without the asking.”

Regarding practical matters, I find that the climate here is really excellent during December and January. Then Bapu would take care of you with all the tenderness of his divine love—and he would depute me to serve you in all the details of your material comforts (and spiritual ones where I can!). We have already decided on having a piano brought from Ahmedabad to be put in your room. . . .

Mira
68. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Ashram, 
Sabarmati 
23 April 1926

Dear Friend,

This is to introduce to you one of my dearest co-workers and friends Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who has gone there with his wife. She is suffering from tuberculosis. Naturally my friend would like to make your acquaintance and pay his respects to you. I know that you will befriend him and his wife.

Mirabai, as we call Miss Slade here, is getting on very well and is quite happy. We often think of you and talk about you and the possibility of your visiting India at the end of the year. I wonder if your health can bear the strain of the visit.

Yours sincerely. 
M. K. Gandhi
69. Jawaharlal Nehru to Romain Rolland

Hotel Roseraie,
Chemin de la Roseraie 25,
Geneva
8 May 1926

Respected Monsieur Rolland,

I have pleasure in enclosing a letter for you from Mr. Gandhi. I am looking forward greatly to meeting you and hope I shall have the opportunity before long. I shall probably have to stay for some months in Geneva owing to my wife’s treatment here.

I am sorry to have to write this letter in English. I am afraid my French is very weak. I am trying, however, to improve it a little.

I trust you are well.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

70. Romain Rolland to Jawaharlal Nehru

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
11 May 1926

Dear Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru,

I was happy to receive your letter and that of our saintly friend Gandhi. Your name was known to us. Just

1 Introducing Jawaharlal as “one of my dearest co-workers and friends”.

within the last few days we read it in a speech published by the *Hindustan Times*.

My sister and I will be very pleased to see you. Will it be possible for you and Madame Nehru to come over here one afternoon next week when it is fine, to have tea and to spend a few hours at the Villa Olga? Do please tell me which day will suit you best between Wednesday the 19th and Saturday the 22nd May. Should the weather be bad on the day you choose, you have only to send a telegram in the morning saying that you are postponing your visit to another day.

I hope that Madame Nehru will soon feel the good effects of the Swiss climate.

Is it not your little daughter who is in the International School at Geneva? Her teacher, Miss Hartoch, is an excellent friend of ours. She is the best and the most devoted woman. You can be sure that your little daughter could not be in wiser and more affectionate hands.

Please accept, dear Mr. Nehru, my friendly affection.

Romain Rolland

The Villa Olga is near (a little above) the Hotel Byron. If you come by boat, it is ten minutes from the landing place of Villeneuve; if you come by rail, you can get down at Territet Station, take the Vevey-Villeneuve electric tram (for Villeneuve) which passes in front of the station, and get down at the Hotel Byron Stop.
71. Jawaharlal Nehru to Romain Rolland

Geneva
13 May 1926

Dear Mr. Rolland,

Thank you very much for your letter and invitation. My wife greatly regrets that her doctor will not allow her to go out of Geneva, but she hopes a few weeks later to call on you and your sister. However, I shall be delighted to see you next week. I plan to go to the Villa Olga by train on Thursday the 20th May, and I hope to reach your house at about 2-30.

You are right, it is my little daughter, Indira, who studies at the International School here. I am glad to hear that her teacher, Miss Hartoch, is a friend of yours. Indira may come along with me to your house, as she has no school on Thursdays.

I have ventured to write to you in French though I am afraid there are many mistakes in the letter. I apologize for these.

With best wishes,

Jawaharlal Nehru

72. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

20 May 1926.—Visited by the Indian Jawaharlal Nehru and his little seven-year-old daughter Indira. He is one of Gandhi’s main disciples, and has come to Switzerland for the health of his wife, who is suffering from tuberculosis.
He is the son of Motilal Nehru, one of the eminent personalities in the Swarajist party.

. . . . He says that his father, a friend of Gandhi, is opposite to him by nature in every respect. Gandhi is of a race (and class) inclined to timidity (his autobiography reveals how much heroic discipline he needed to force his nature), very gentle, very strict from the religious point of view, imbued with Jainism and a pure Hinduist. Motilal Nehru is of a race constantly in contact with Muslim and Persian elements, forceful and extremely combative. During Gandhi’s imprisonment it was he who assumed the leadership of the Swarajist party, demanding participation in the Councils. He was three times condemned to imprisonment. He says that Gandhi still enjoys the same moral authority over the people of India, but has lost almost all his political authority among the Indian elite. He is quite pessimistic about the Hindu-Muslim division, which is favoured by the British Government and the civil servants who feel they need the government’s support. But these agitations are uncommon outside the towns; in the rural areas which include 80% of the people of India, Hindus and Muslims live on good terms with each other. But it must be admitted that no lofty figure of moral or religious authority in the Muslim party plays any pacifying role analogous to Gandhi’s among his fellow-believers.

73. Gandhi to Devdas Gandhi

Thursday, 27 May 1926

. . . . I have not yet been able to decide about the trip to Europe. At present I am waiting for a letter or telegram from Rolland. Raja is of the view that if I go, I must take you with me. Would you like to go? . . .
74. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

31 May 1926.—Visited by Lajpat Rai. . . . This old friend of Gandhi is the least Gandhian of men; combative to his very core. And a Hindu nationalist (intelligently, but with passion and intransigence).

75. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

21-29 June 1926 (Villeneuve).—Visited by Rabindranath Tagore. . . . He speaks of his differences (of thought) with Mahatmaji (Gandhi). He enjoys dwelling on his political errors. He shows that in supporting the Indian Muslims as he did in the Khilafat affair Gandhi was not working, as he hoped, for the unity of India, but for the pride and force of Islam, factors which are at present emerging in violent Hindu-Muslim disturbances of which the latter, cunningly supported by the British Government, are the instigators.

. . . . Tagore also returns to his old quarrel with Mahatmaji about Gandhi's ban on the use of foreign cloth as "impure": for it is by these religious reasons alone—Tagore calls them "idolatrous"—that the Indian people can be touched; they remain unmoved by reasons of reason and economics. Tagore asked Gandhi:

"Do you yourself really believe there are 'impure' objects?"—Gandhi avoided a direct reply (as he often does); but he said he believed in idolatry for the people of India. To which Tagore replies that this means he believes that the Indian people need lies, and if the people need lies, they
have no right to liberty; it legitimizes English domination. In their latest conversations, Tagore tried to make Gandhi say what his hopes were for India; Gandhi, always very reserved, said he expected a lot from English generosity in the near future. Thus he hoped that England would grant India autonomy within the framework of the Empire—in the style of the Dominions.

T. sees the present and the future of his people in a most discouraged light. There is no link between the divided multitudes; no common thought possible between this sprinkling of races, mingled together all over the country but unable to fuse into a unity. Any idea, like Mahatmaji’s, which tries to form them into a coalition is forced to adapt itself to their mentality, and such compromises shatter it and take away its impetus. Tagore sees a universal symbol in the tragedy of Hamlet: the drama of a great idealist wanting to do his duty by means of a criminal action, who is ruined as soon as he dabbles in crime, even in intention; with his integrity, he has lost his force and his reasons for existence. This, Tagore says (in his eyes, at any rate), is the drama of Gandhi. Ever since the compromise which, during the Great War, led him to recruit soldiers for England, it has been a story of moral collapse (Tagore thinks). He honestly thought that in this way he could achieve his great object, the liberation of his people; but in vain. The same happened when he fixed precise and early dates for the miraculous accomplishment of the grand design. This involved him in almost idolatrous means of suggestion which horrified Tagore; he was shocked to see the best, the most sensible men of his people swept aside instantly by this contagious credulity. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, whom he sees as the greatest living Bengali artist and a man of high conscience, was eagerly awaiting the miraculous date, and he refused to argue about the matter with Tagore because, he said, it was a bad thing even to doubt.
The date passed and nothing happened; and the result was bankruptcy. Tagore says that Gandhi and Gandhism today are paying the penalty for these infringements of the spirit of truth; whilst he, the Poet, who always refused to share in the contagion and was the most hated and rejected man in India, is now reaping the rewards of his intransigence. (I am not stating my personal observations, and but for a few exceptions I am noting only those of Tagore.) I try to react against his discouragement with his people.

.... What intractable tragedy there is in these amalgams of juxtaposed races which cannot communicate! In Bengal alone, around Santiniketan, there co-exist non-Indian races, prehistoric Indian races in a primitive state, Dravidians, Aryans, Mongols and Negroids. And if Gandhi has firmly fought against the crime of “untouchability”, he has never sought to breach casted division (this is another of the points for which Tagore finds it hard to forgive him). No doubt for Gandhi this is a question of choosing the right moment. At present he wants to solve the political problem, which is relatively easy. He does not want to tackle the infinitely more complex and dangerous social problem yet. But, says Tagore, how can one solve the political problem without first solving the social problem? It’s like building one’s house on the sand.

76. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

29 June 1926.—I sent telegrams to Georges Duhamel and Emil Roniger, inviting them to come. Both men arrive, one from Paris, the other from Rheinfelden, at about the same time. ... I take them to Tagore.

.... I say how moved I have been by Tagore’s portrayal of the even more anguished distress of the idealists of India and the appeal he has given me to pass on to the
idealists of Europe. We must come together; it is with this in mind that Emil Roniger and I have conceived the idea of an international “House of Friendship”.

. . . . . I also take the initiative in suggesting that we might like to devote the next number of the Eurasische Berichte to Tagore’s thought and what it represents in India in face of Gandhi’s thought; to these two opposed styles of action and to what has been learned from these last few years in India, of such serious significance for the whole world; a situation in which independent thought in face of Gandhist non-participation has found itself facing the same problems as European free thought in face of nationalism. For here we have a tragic example of the despotic fanaticism into which, in practice, even the loftiest and purest religious thought can develop. Tagore draws away from this. He says he would find it morally repugnant to expose these conflicts to the eyes of the world at the present moment. He personally has been too much bound up with it. But in our own discreet little circle of trusted friends he tells the story of them at some length. Here again, his bitterness against Gandhi soon shows through. He presents him as a prodigiously interesting subject for an artist to study, extremely complex, a mixture of grandeur and pettiness, a lofty political personality, but too political for his taste, and thereby leaving a stain on his moral and religious notions. He dwells on his variations and contradictions, the compromises he has accepted, and that sort of secret bad faith which makes him prove to himself by sophistries that the decisions he takes are those demanded by virtue and the divine law even when the contrary is true and he must be aware of the fact. (Anyway this is characteristic of the Hindu mind, passionately keen on sophisticated legal arguments and using them to prove to themselves that their duty is identical with what they want to do.) He returns to a number of complaints against Gandhi which he
has already voiced to me, and at the end, to avoid giving an impression of impartiality, he praises highly Mahatma-ji's heroic virtues. We get the impression (Duhamel more sharply than the rest of us) that in this opposition between Tagore and Gandhi there are many feelings mixed together—and perhaps even more feelings than there are objective reasons. Tagore, Gandhi: two races of men and two classes (the aristocrat, the prince—and the popular guru), the duel being between the prophet of religious and political action who scorns and debases intellectual values before the divine Word and moral values—and the supreme Artist, who lives in the firmament of his intellectual dream-world. Duhamel adds: Who can say that Tagore's political and social attitudes have not been commanded precisely by a reaction against those of Gandhi—and if Gandhi had not existed, or were to vanish from the scene, his place would not be taken over to a certain extent by Tagore?

Tagore then resumed his portrayal of the social and political poverty of India, oppressed and vilified by the European conqueror.

77. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

7 July 1926.— (Did I note that I suggested to the “Christian young men”, who had invited Gandhi to their international congress about to take place in Helsinki that they might give an address to Gandhi and a questionnaire to the great Indian Christian, K. T. Paul, and through him stimulate Gandhi into sending an apostolic epistle to the Christian unions of the young people of Europe?)
My dear Father,

For many weeks I have had the intention of writing to thank you for your beautiful letter! But there was never a moment—you can understand, can’t you, and excuse me!

What you say regarding the impression made by the autobiography in Europe is very interesting. Perhaps Bapu will find active and faithful disciples over there, but will they understand his teaching to the full?

As you say they are the “Soldiers of God”, but in their zeal do they not completely change (as in Christianity) the spirit of the new faith? Consequently I feel there is a danger in this occidental enthusiasm, if not well guided. And it is exactly my occidental father who can guide this movement. That is just why I wish so much that he should meet my oriental father and have long, long talks with him. But it is not simply a matter of talking—one must live near him for some weeks, because with Bapu it is his life and acts (from the most important to the smallest) that speak more than words (that are more eloquent than words).

I am always wondering about your health. Will you come here—shall we go to Europe? (It is possible that Bapu would take me with him another time.)

How happy I should be to see my dear Father again—but when? where?

Your daughter embraces you with all her heart.

Mira
5 September 1926.—Visited, by K. T. Paul, the great Indian Christian, accompanied by A. Senaud, one of the young Genevan organizers of the Universal Committee of the Universal Alliance of Young People’s Christian Unions.

He has recently been to the international congress of the Young Men’s Christian Association in Helsinki. It was hoped that Gandhi might be there, and he did indeed think about it, but his duties to India kept him in Asia. Then we thought of the idea of entrusting K. T. Paul with the mission of setting before Gandhi the questions and the doubts of the “Christian youth” of Europe and asking him to give his reply. . . . At once I set before him the tragic problem which weighs on my mind:

In every religion, particularly the Christian religion, there is an opposition between the essence of the doctrine: the “Metanoia” of the Gospels, the rejection or the ruin of all worldly values (“Leave everything and follow Me!”)—and attempts to adapt the doctrine to life in society and practical action. Is it possible to reconcile them, and how? The present world presents us with an intimidating array of evidence of the hypocrisy to which such attempts lead. Just recently I have received two books from an Italian professor in the University of Rome, Luigi Trafelli, showing the confusion reigning among truly religious minds. What are we to think of an age in which the centenary celebrations in honour of St. Francis of Assisi are patronized by a man like Mussolini! And the Roman Church, far from protesting at it, finds it suits them very well. What would Gandhi think of that? What advice
would he give to young men faced with the alternative either of following the voice of Christ (which means certain sacrifice) or lying in the sight of Christ in order to live at peace with society?

First of all, there is the question of war (which may be raised at any moment). What should we say to young people? “Refuse to bear arms, in other words sacrifice yourselves!” Or “Give in, try to come to terms with the situation!”

War is not the only problem. The oppression of men’s consciences in Italy by the despotic State creates a crying need for moral help and advice. Should men feign obedience and wait for the tyranny to pass (but this is prostitution, for lies degrade the soul) or should they stand up to all the rigours of persecution?

I provide striking examples of the situation, which seem to strike both men (who seem to know nothing about it, the Genevan no more than the Indian). But answer comes there none. K. T. Paul does not seem to see the universal side of such problems, and doubts even whether Gandhi sees it. He looks at everything from an Indian point of view. How strangely powerless is Christianity (or Hinduism) ready to lose interest in such crises of human conscience, without seeing that the form alone changes and that the substance is universal! For in the last analysis, the problem is the antagonism between the individual religious Conscience, the Christ within man—and the State.

All these great believers, even the best of them, have not a sufficiently universal soul. They are more aware of the differences, which are of man, than of the Unity, which is of God.

The only conclusion we reach is that K. T. Paul will invite Andrews to come and study these European problems and then lay them before Gandhi. For Andrews is an intermediary between Europe and Asia, as he is between
Tagore and Gandhi. But what it means is that K. T. Paul is dodging the issue.

Afterwards, the conversation ranges over many subjects. (K. T. Paul speaks only English; my sister and Senaud serve as interpreters.)

80. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

11 September 1926.—Visited by Ramananda Chatterjee, Kalidas Nag’s father-in-law and director of the *Modern Review*. . . . He is an intimate friend of Tagore and was present at his famous conversations with Gandhi in Santiniketan. He says that Gandhi is charming and mischievous in conversation, with a good sense of humour.

81. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

13 September 1926.—Visited by the American Buchanan, who has recently seen Gandhi, and has travelled all over Asia.

82. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

*Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga*

26 September 1926

Dear Friend,

I find, at last, an hour for conversing with you, and, through you, with your Bapu.

I am replying to your letter of the end of July, and I return to my regrets that Gandhi could not take part in the conference for Christian Young Men at Helsingfors. Those regrets are accentuated since my meeting with several of these young men and with K. T. Paul.
The question is in no way, as you think, one of the fashionable enthusiasm for Gandhi’s person, or a superficial infatuation for the doctrine of Gandhi. No, there is not even a question of it,—the fact more unexpected, but indisputable, is that the person, the action, the life and the faith of Gandhi have been the strongest stimulant for European Christianity. Neither you nor Gandhi could have expected it; and it was scarcely the goal for which the Mahatma was searching. But great actions have unexpected repercussions; and often their effect equals or surpasses in importance the effect which had been expected and wished by the man of God. Because, after all, it is not he who acts; it is, by his means, God.

The fact is then that Young Christian Europe has seen in Gandhi the purest Christian (without knowing it) of today,—the man who, over and above all the priests and pastors, resumes the direct tradition with the spirit of the Gospel.

That has he found himself in possession of immense influence over these young Christians, for interpreting to them their own doctrine, and for showing them the path in an hour of agonizing uncertainties and doubts.

Once more, it may be, that Gandhi did not wish this. But once more, another greater than he willed it for him. And he has not the right to escape from it in the future. Because, however imperious may be his Indian task, the human task envelops it and surpasses it. And whatever may be his personal faith in Hinduism,—the most ardent fire, the most divine of all faith, the eternal is that which feels in common with all, and not that which differentiated. God is in the centre of the Bush. And he who hears Him speak, and repeats what He says, speaks for all.

Now, the Christianity of today is consumed by the anguish of a problem of conscience and faith that not one of her chiefs or official representatives has power to solve.
I find acute expression of this in the works of a professor of the University of Rome which I have just received: *Ubi Christianus? and Dothrine di Cristo*, by Luigi Trafelli. The author, who is undoubtedly a tortured conscience, starts with the declaration that the “Metanoia” or “evangelical conversion” where the preaching of Jesus begins, is an absolute overthrow and the complete transformation of the values, which, in the normal life of men, are the most appreciated. It is necessary to strip “the old man” and to redress “the new man”, who will not be able to enter into the Kingdom of God, if he does not sacrifice all half-duties to the whole duty, and all compromises of the world to the will of perfection. “Be thou then perfect as is thy Father in Heaven.” No concessions to the world: “Leave all and follow Me.”

Now, after having examined the perpetual conflicts of this order with the worldly order, and all the “combinations” imagined by the Church and the pseudo-believers, for reconciling them, Luigi Trafelli asks himself the mournful question: “Do Christians still exist?” and concludes: “No, they exist no more”—and he admits himself: “I am not a Christian.”—but adds: “At least, I have not got the hypocrisy to call myself Christian, as do the churches, while betraying the express word of Christ.”

This question is made particularly tragic owing to the social crisis, which is passing over Europe,—the world—(and especially the country which is the seat of official catholicism, Italy).

At the present hour, the power of the State in Italy has reached a sovereignty which is veritably demoniac. Everything is sacrificed to it, religious conscience is trampled under its feet. The individual soul is annihilated. He who resists the “Public Will” (translated by one or two leaders who incarnate it) is, or will be, crushed. A Mussolini with formidable cynicism displays this doctrine,
accepted by millions of Italians, which will certainly spread before long in Europe and America, (above all in America).

Now, what are the guides of religious conscience doing at this hour? They dare not take the responsibility of the nameless sufferings into which they would throw those who ask their advice, by saying to them,—"Resist! Be persecuted!"—the worst the most mediocre think of their tranquility. The best remind themselves of old Tolstoy who was in despair at seeing his disciples persecuted while he could not succeed in getting persecuted himself: because power is too cunning not to treat with care the men who are in broad daylight, and severely the obscure. The result is that all search for, and teach, compromises—the inner lie; and the soul degrades itself.

The young men realize this, they listen for the voice of the Gospel which will say to them: "The Duty is there." The voice speaks not. They are left. It is for this reason that so many young Christians look towards Gandhi.

. . . . You say to me, my friend, that it is for me to reply to them. . . . No. I cannot. It is necessary to see me as I am, and not lend to me a faith, thoughts, a mission that I have not got.

I am not a Christian, I am not a Gandhist, I am not a believer in a revealed religion. I am a man of the Occident who, in all love and in all sincerity, searches for the truth. That which I strive to teach to myself is for others, it is never to belie one's own thoughts, never to say that one knows that which one only "believes" or hopes, to say exactly that which one knows,—nothing more,—and, be it that one understands or does not understand, to conserve intact energy and love. The word of the introduction to The Life of Michel Angelo: "See men and life as they are,—and as they are, love them and act. That is my role. And it is also to discover and make known to others all the sources of strength, all the hearths of light,
which exist in the world. The heroes and the saints. I say: “Take, and drink!”

But my role is not to speak in the name of a religion which I have not. Let those speak who have!

. . . . We have lately had a visit from a gay American who is making an express tour of all the celebrated men of the globe; five minutes for each one. His name is Buchanan, and he has seen Gandhi at the beginning of the year. He says that Gandhi said, regarding my book on him—“It is literature” (“C'est de la litterature”)—No, it is not altogether just. It should be said: “It is love” (“C'est de l'amour”). Everybody knows that love does not see very exactly. My book must often be erroneous. How could it be otherwise? I knew nothing of the atmosphere of India, or of the language. I made the tour de force in six to twelve months, from imagination, after the books I had read, all a great life, and that of a people who were far away and unknown to me. It was very audacious! But love did not give me the liberty not to imagine, and— that which I loved, my joy, my enthusiasm,— not to share them with my brothers of Europe. In that, I believe I have succeeded. If I have sometimes, often, misrepresented the character and the thought of Gandhi, may he pardon me!—I have often asked myself what Christ would have thought of the narratives of his disciples!—In any case, true or false, I have not written for “literature”. (The litterateurs scarcely consider me as one of them); I wrote to relieve my heart.

. . . . We are pretty well, in spite of the fact that I have just been laid up for a fortnight with intestinal fever. Madeleine has spent a little time in Savoie and we have had beautiful walks together. Since August the splendour of the summer has been marvellous.

I am not surprised that you feel yourself “at home” in India. Did not you tell us that you have gipsy blood? And you have seen that, according to the latest discoveries
the gypsies unquestionably had India for their cradle. You return to your point of departure.

Madeleine and I send you our most affectionate thoughts. To Bapu my filial respect,—in spite of the fact that I am corporally older than him. But the soul belongs to other cycles of time than the body.

Your
Romain Rolland

83. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

September 1926.—I write to Gandhi, through his favourite disciple Miss Slade, to tell him what the young men of Europe were expecting from his visit, and of the indirect but certain effect he has on the religious feelings of Christian youth who see in him the purest interpreter of Christ. I urge him not to sacrifice his universal duty to his Indian task. (27 September)

84. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

4 October 1926. —Visited by Dhan Gopal Mukerji. . . . Gandhi has undergone the spiritual fascination of Ramakrishna; he knows nothing more divine than the story of his life. We discuss with Mukerji the reasons why Gandhi has formally forbidden him to write his life story (as Mukerji wanted to do). I believe (and Mukerji is struck by what I say) that Gandhi is aware that he is not a divine being (the essence of which he recognizes in Ramakrishna) and he is wounded by his admirers’ zealous attempts to show that he is. This he stubbornly refuses to accept; he is determined to write his own life story in order to lower himself, to prove he is an ordinary man with
nothing divine in him. This makes him a saint, whether he likes it or not. (But it is a long way from a saint to a god—or a demigod! The saint belongs to our humanity. The god is on another level.)

**85. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary**

*13 October 1926.*—Visited by Jawaharlal Nehru, accompanied this time by his brother-in-law R. S. Pandit and the latter’s wife, Vijayalakshmi Pandit. . . .

. . . . Before they left India, Nehru and Pandit saw Gandhi and Miss Slade. They say that Miss Slade’s arrival has been good for Gandhi’s health; she alone has been able to make him look after himself, and he takes from her hands remedies which he would otherwise have refused.

**86. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland**

_Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati_

*28 October 1926*

My dear Father,

What a letter you have sent us! Bapu has read it (I gave him a written translation). He said very little. But he was encircled with that light which comes very rarely, only when he is deeply moved.

With this letter I send you his reply.

I have not the slightest doubt that he will go to Europe the moment he receives a true, natural and spontaneous invitation.

I believe, at the bottom of his heart, he wishes it greatly. When he obeyed the “small voice”, and refused to go to Helsingfors, he said to me: “I see now that the
wish was there.” But for him to wish—his own wish—is not enough if the voice does not speak. If Europe sends him the true invitation, the voice will surely speak! . . .

87. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Sabarmati
29 October 1926

Dear Friend,

Mira has given me a good translation of your beautiful letter. I think I understand and appreciate its spirit fully. I would have gladly gone to Helsingfors, had I not felt that the invitation was prompted and not spontaneous. There were other reasons. I waited for the call from within; it did not come. I give you my assurance that I shall not resist it when it comes.

I fear my estimate of your book was not quite correctly reproduced. I knew that you wrote from the deepest conviction.

One thing more which I should like to have off my mind. In the album presented to you, I am among the contributors. The Poet\(^1\) has sent me the message that my description of you as my self-chosen advertiser has given you offence. I can only give you my assurance that the expression was used as a mark of my affection for you and my unworthiness to deserve your attention. It may be difficult for the man in the street to believe, but cannot be for you, when I say that I simply do not understand the

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\(^1\) The reference is to the *Liber Amicorum Romain Rolland*, a collection of tributes, published in 1926 (for Romain Rolland’s sixtieth birthday) by Emil Roniger of Zurich.

\(^2\) Rabindranath Tagore
fuss that is made about my qualities. And I have no false modesty about me.

I do expect to meet you in the flesh some day and that in the best of health.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

88. Gandhi to Emil Roniger¹

I have purposely refrained from acknowledging your letter all these long weeks, not because there was any unwillingness on my part to contribute my humble quota to the tribute that will be paid by many persons all the world over to the humanitarian work of Romain Rolland. My difficulty was my unfitness to find myself among those men of letter whose contributions you have invited. This is no mock modesty, but my inmost feeling. I am unfit, also, because, I confess, I knew practically nothing about our great and good friend before he imposed upon himself the task of becoming my self-chosen advertiser. And you will be perhaps amazed to know that now, too, my acquaintance with him is confined to a very cursory glance at that booklet regarding myself. The work before me leaves me no time to read the things I would like to. I have, therefore, even now, not been able to read any of his great works. All, therefore, I know about Romain Rolland is what I have learned from those who have come into personal contact with him. Perhaps it is better that I know him through the living touch of mutual friends. They have

¹ From a letter to Mr. Emil Roniger published in the Liber Amicorum Romain Rolland, Zurich, 1926.
enabled me to understand and appreciate the deep humanity of all his acts in every sphere of life. The world is the richer for his life and work. May he be long spared to continue the noble mission of spreading peace among mankind.

M. K. Gandhi

89. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
14 November 1926

My dear Friend,

I have received your letter sent to me by Mira, and I thank you for it most affectionately, but I don’t understand at all what “the Poet” could have said to you. I have never said or written anything to Tagore about the lines from your pen published in the Liber Amicorum. I didn’t discuss them with anyone in the Poet’s entourage, and if I had, it would only have been to express the joy they gave me and the gratitude I felt for them. How could I possibly have thought of complaining of a judgment like yours? I regard it as one of the honours of my life to have been able to put my efforts to your service and to spread your thought in the world. I am proud of my role as “free servant”, far from protesting against it! It grieves me to see such thoughts attributed to me.

I can’t explain it at all; it must be one of those trivial pieces of hearsay which are born for no good reason, grow as they circulate and cause so many misunderstandings. This one must be entirely effaced, as it is quite baseless.

My dear friend, I love and venerate you. Be what you have always been, both to me and to others, to the end of your life: a totally straightforward and sincere man, not seeking to please or to make compliments and not
saying a word more than he thinks! All self-interest fades in your presence, for you set the example, and the writer that I am yields to the man of action that you are.

Please believe in my profound respect and faithful affection.

Romain Rolland

90. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

Villeneuve
14 November 1926

Dear Mira,

Gandhi says in his letter:

“The Poet has sent me the message that my description of you as my self-chosen advertiser has given you offence” (!)

I have never said anything to the “Poet” (I suppose he means Tagore?), nor to any of the Poet’s friends, on the subject of what Gandhi wrote about me, and it would never have occurred to me to be “upset” by what he wrote. On the contrary, I regard it as an honour and I’m most touched by it.

What could have given Gandhi that idea? I can’t believe that Tagore would have spoken in my name. It seems more likely that he made his own interpretation (in which case he completely misinterpreted my feelings), and no doubt one of his entourage reported Tagore’s judgment to Gandhi in a distorted version, what is the sort of thing that happens when people’s words are passed on by intermediaries.

In any case, it’s a complete misunderstanding of me! I’m writing to tell Gandhi that I’m proud to be of service to him and to propagate his words of life in Europe, and
I hope he never thinks I have ulterior motives of self-interest! When a man is fortunate enough to be confronted with the Spirit of God, he’s a wretch indeed if he thinks of himself and his own vanity!

My dear Mira, you know me, but Gandhi does not. He knows the artistic fraternity and he’s suspicious of them—but no more so than a man like me who has always lived in isolation, even at the time of my greatest successes! Artists are priests who trade or play games with the God within them. They say: “Life is serious, art is a game”, or else: “Life and art are both games.” But for me everything is serious and nothing is a game; and if I’ve devoted my life to art, it’s because it keeps me in perpetual contact with the divinity. I try to pass on to other men that mysterious touch of the Eternal, which is just under the surface of all the forms of life.

Affectionately yours,
Romain Rolland

We were grieved to hear you were unwell. But we rejoice with you for the return of the fine weather.

91. Gandhi to Madeleine Slade

Monday, 6 December 1926

.... Here is Rolland’s letter. ‘Sparrow’ has translated it for me. Here it is. If you think it is accurate, you need not translate anew for me....
92. Gandhi to Madeleine Slade

Wardha
11 December 1926 (Post Mark)

. . . . I was uncertain about the correctness of the passage in Rolland’s letter which you have now corrected. It reads perfectly intelligible now. Please do not return the original. File it among your papers. . . .

93. Madeleine Rolland to Jawaharlal Nehru

Villa Olga, Villeneuve
(Vaud)
13 March 1927

Dear Mr. Nehru,

I am sending you enclosed the first draft of our programme for the Summer School of 1927. May I ask you a great favour? Can you and will you take a share in our work? I know the subject will be of interest to you. My friend and co-worker, Gabrielle Duchéne, has met you at the Brussels Conference. And I think our meeting may have some real influence on future developments as all those who will come to it are (I hope) lovers of peace and truth and ready to learn and teach what is right. If you are still in Switzerland, it may not be too much trouble for you to come to Vaud and talk to us and with us. But shall you be still here in August-September? It would be such a disappointment to hear that you are to leave Europe before the end of the summer. I have asked, through a friend
in India, whether Mrs. Sarojini Naidu did not intend to come to Europe and, in that case, whether she would be willing to help us. But I have not yet got any answer.

I hope Mrs. Nehru’s health has benefited from your stay at Montana. And how is little Indira and your lovely sister we saw last summer? Shall you not be able to come to Villeneuve some day? My brother and I are going away for a few weeks at the end of March, but we shall be back by the middle of April.

Sending you our best regards, dear Mr. Nehru,
I am,

Sincerely yours,
Madeleine Rolland

94. Madeleine Rolland to Jawaharlal Nehru

Villa Olga, Villeneuve
17 March 1927

Dear Mr. Nehru,

It is a great disappointment to hear that you intend to sail for India so early! And I fear I am selfish enough to hope that something—not unpleasant, of course!—will happen to make you postpone your plans.

I believe our Summer Conference (it is not really a Summer School this year) will have a far-reaching echo in the minds—hearts of—may be a few—but a chosen few, able to speak it in every country. If it is a success, we shall go on next year and study other aspects of that same complex problem which cannot be easily solved; we know it too well, but if approached in the right spirit of peace and truthfulness, may become less rankling and festering. And we had thought that you were the one to help us to realize the Hindu problem and discuss it with our European delegates.
If you must go away before the Conference, do you see any Indian friend of yours who being in Europe could take your place and would be willing to lecture at Vaud? In any case I look forward to our meeting next month when you are at Montana. Believe me, dear Mr. Nehru,

Sincerely yours,
Madeleine Rolland

95. Romain Rolland to D. B. Kalelkar

Villeneuve Villa Olga
17 March 1927

. . . . National pride, in Europe, against which I have spent my life fighting, is such a terrible scourge that I see its shadow everywhere and wherever I see it showing itself I am on my guard. True, the situation is not at all the same in India and in Europe, but I know only too well with what rapidity this moral epidemic can spread, so that passing from a legitimate awareness of one’s personality, of one’s duties and legitimate rights it becomes a morbid hypertrophy of “I”—national or racial—trampling underfoot everyone else. Today it is a permanent danger to humanity. Watching it calls for the severe control and firm hand of great directors of the conscience of peoples, such as our master Gandhi and yourself. And since neither he nor you will be there for ever, you must train for the role of pilots those who will, after you are gone, command the ship. We are in the fierce tempest of the world. The helmsman cannot close his eyes even for a second. In your letter there is a profound thought which has become engraved in my memory:

“In fact no knowledge can ever be foreign. It is a thing of the Spirit.”
This utterance makes us brothers—sons of the same Father. All the differences of opinion between us are secondary....

96. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

March 1927.—Our friend Mira (Madeleine Slade), who is still, with unquenchable ardour, corresponding regularly from India with my sister and describing her experiences of religious life with Gandhi and his disciples, sends me a letter from D. B. Kalelkar (24 January, Sabarmati), who is one of Gandhi’s main disciples and the director of the Satyagraha Ashram. I was hard on him in my book on Gandhi; I had been shocked by his Gospel of Swadeshi, and denounced its monastic and nationalistic narrowness. Kalelkar, who was in prison when my book appeared, did not find out about it until quite a late date, and then his modesty, or rather his humility, dissuaded him from writing to me. It was Mira who finally persuaded him to do it, having come to esteem him personally. He finally made up his mind to it and he writes with touching moderation and gentleness. ... I reply to him (17 March), asking him to “forgive me my unjust criticisms of him”. I explain to him some of the reasons.

97. Gandhi to Madeleine Slade

13 April 1927

... Kaka has sent a copy of your translation of Rolland’s letter. The translation is very good indeed. The original could not be better. ...
98. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

Villeneuve
25 April 1927

Dear Mira,

My thoughts have been very much with you in the two great events which have recently touched you—one of which affects the whole world with you:—Gandhi’s sickness and the vows you have taken.

I hope that by the time you receive this letter the force of Gandhi’s soul and the invisible Presence which animates him will have overcome the sickness. The mute and ardent prayer in our hearts holds him firmly to the earth, which needs him—more than ever at this hour. There’s no need for him to lavish his energies in speeches by the hundred, as he has been doing; it is an abuse of his spiritual wealth. Just the fact of his existence, the awareness that he exists, the fact that eyes are turning from all parts of the world towards that magnetic needle which shows the road to God,—just the distant radiance of his smile, the emanations of his great love, and very occasionally, the directives he gives through his Young India to support and guide the world; let this at least be kept for us as long as possible! Mira my dear, please lay my most affectionate wishes at your Master’s feet!

As to your vows, my daughter—now the daughter of one very much greater than I—I am happy to know that from now on you are in his powerful hands. Yes, you are right and I rejoice with you; you have discovered or rather rediscovered—in his bosom your true place, your abode,
your lost homeland. The exile on the face of the earth has returned home. Keep a little corner for me, a little guest room, where I can shelter my head sometimes when I am weary on the road! I shan’t make any noise. . . .

My dear Mira, I join my loving prayer to yours, that the light which has entered into you may fill your whole being, make fertile your spirit and be shed from you upon all that surrounds you—which includes myself, although the seas separate us.

Your fraternal friend,
Romain Rolland

Madeleine has told you of our little journey to Vienna, our pilgrimage to Beethoven. If Gandhi knew him, he would recognize in him our European Mahatma, our strongest mediator between the life of the senses and eternal Life. And he would bless this music which perhaps, for us, is the highest form of prayer, a permanent communion with the Divinity.

99. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

April 1927.—Gandhi gravely ill. For months he has been overtaxing himself, travelling all over India, making 8 or 10 speeches per day to the multitudes. A fortnight ago he was on the point of an attack of hemiplegia, with one side of his body half paralysed. But his spiritual force seems to be gaining the upper hand. The next day he wrote to our friend Mira to reassure her.

Very interesting correspondence between Miss Slade and my sister—her intimacy with Gandhi. She has recently taken her final vows in his presence, and is bathing in a sea of felicity. We have the feeling that in getting to know Gandhi and in embracing his faith, she is following her vocation which until then she had not known.
100. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

1 May 1927.—Visited by Jawaharlal Nehru, his wife, one of his sisters and his daughter Indira. . . .

He seems to be breaking away from Gandhism and claims that the popular classes—workers and peasants—are also breaking away (though they still revere Gandhi) because they see that Gandhi is doing next to nothing (Nehru says) to improve their material condition; he will hear nothing of class conflict, and preaches purity of life to the workers as a remedy to their poverty. (Nehru is rather too neglectful of the importance of the cottage industries which Gandhi is trying to restore in the villages.) Nehru is particularly struck by the economic wretchedness of the popular classes in India, and it seems that he is struck by it more and more the further away from India he lives. He says that conditions there are as bad as they were in England 60 years ago: all the vices of industrialism with none of the advantages. Note that this Indian industrialism is quite recent. Fifty years ago the English were opposed to the entry of any machine into India, they were even more hostile to mechanization in India than Gandhi is. It is in the last 40 years that the scourge has spread. At present it is particularly crushing in the Bombay area, where great spinning works have been built which, after the war, were giving 200 to 300% profits to shareholders while their workers were dying of hunger. Also, a feeling of revolt is spreading; there are strikes everywhere, but quickly crushed, as the workers do not know how to organize themselves. Communist propaganda is ineffectual from a doctrinal point of view; it merely acts in the general
direction of revolution; and also because Russia is the country in which agricultural conditions are closest to those of India. As far as I can judge, Nehru over the last two years has moved some distance away from the religious and moral side of Gandhi’s doctrine.

101. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

9 July 1927.—Visited by Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose. He has been in Geneva (where he is taking part in the meetings of the International Committee for Intellectual Co-operation).

.... Bose knows Gandhi well, and respects and reveres him. But he considers him too narrow-minded, too indifferent or hostile to art and science, too lacking in these divine riches of the soul which are both natural and necessary. Bose, for his part, wants to stimulate among young people all the forces of spiritual creativity which form part—an essential part—of the divine plan for universal nature. Without this incessant surge of creation in the younger generation, nature becomes sluggish and sleepy, and risks petrification. A man must stay young to his last hour and remain in contact with youth.

102. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

Villeneuve (Vaud), Switzerland, Villa Olga
10 December 1927

My dear Friend,

I’m sending you in the same post a registered packet containing a typed brochure in French, which no doubt neither you nor your master and friend will have time to
read; but all the same I should like to attract both your attentions to the facts which are accurately related there, for they are fine and noble.

It's the story of two French peasants from the Hautes-Alpes department—the brothers Theophile and Felix Berthallon—who in September 1914 refused to enrol in the army and, to avoid killing, took refuge in the barren and desolate mountain heights where they stayed thirteen years, until they were finally caught and brought to trial in 1927. But the military tribunal didn't dare condemn them.

What they endured stoically for those thirteen years without shelter among the rocks and the snow, with very little food (they refused animal food, as they respect all forms of life), and hunted by the people of their own village,—well, you can imagine it. They never weakened, and no feeling of bitterness or rancour ever entered their hearts. They drew their strength from their religious faith, from their old Bible, which they read right through eighty times in those thirteen years.

Their sisters, who stayed in the village and sympathized with them, suffered no less from the evil deeds of their fellow-creatures. One of the three died of fatigue and grief (she wore herself out trying to take food to them at night-time), and another of them ruined her health.

But now their village which was set against them is proud of them; it doesn't even remember the harm it may have done them.

Conscientious objectors, as you know, are extremely rare in France and the Latin countries generally, where the religion of patriotism (and fear of public opinion) dominate everything, including the other religions, Catholic, Protestant or Jewish. This makes the heroic example of these proud and humble Berthallon brothers all the more remarkable. I think a note about them in Young India would interest Indian readers. It would show them that great truths
and absolute devotion to the laws of the conscience can be found in all countries.

I'm not asking for your news and I'm not giving you mine. My sister Madeleine shows me your correspondence, and I always have a share in what she writes to you. I am happy for you. I admire you and I send my fraternal greetings and ask for a blessing (that's your job now) from the sister who shares in the labours and the holiness of the Master! Tell him of my faithful and affectionate respect.

Your brother,
Romain Rolland

The brochure is to be published soon in Paris. (N.B. It's not by me; it's by Marianne Rauze, the woman who heads the movement of War Resisters in France.)

103. Madeleine Slade to Madeleine Rolland

(Originally written in English)

Satyagraha Ashram,
Sabarmati
6 January 1928

.... I wanted to write to "mon père" to thank him for his letter and the most interesting account of the brothers Berthallon, but it is impossible at the moment to find time for writing in French. So I must send him a message through you.

Regarding that account of the brothers Berthallon, I have read it through carefully and explained it to Bapu. It is very interesting, and the subject very beautiful. But we feel that it is not an out and out case of people suffering anything for the sake of not going to battle against their brother men. That was no doubt partly the reason for their marvellous endurance in the mountains, but it was
complicated by other issues. It strikes me that their original and fundamental impulse was caused by devotion to their mountain valley and all that they had left there. To work it out, as Madame Rauze has done, as an example of pure War Resistance, seems to me to be a coloured interpretation, which she (all unconsciously) cannot resist using as fine material of Anti-War Propaganda. . . .

104. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

Villeneuve
21 January 1928

My dear sister Mira,

I was a little annoyed at what you wrote about the Berthallon brothers. If these simple peasants, untaught, with no guide, unaware of any doctrine and of everything happening in the world, led only by the light of their instinctive conscience and their naive faith in their old Bible,—if humble heroes such as these, unaware of their own heroism, still don't satisfy the religious demands of the Master of absolute non-acceptation of violence, or those of his disciples, then there's no hope of the great thoughts of Gandhi ever penetrating into the rest of the world and bearing fruit there. His intransigent purity risk shuttings him up within the walls of an Indian Ashram.

One has to enter into the spirit of other souls and judge them from their centre, not from one's own. All souls are weak, inadequate and incomplete if they're related to the divine model; their value lies only in the sincerity and firmness of their aspirations. If their errors and imperfections prevent us from seeing the living God in them, how can others see this God under our errors and our imperfections?

Even Gandhi, whom I revere, has made mistakes. Shall I tell him how many times I've had the job of calming the
worries of his obscure Western disciples upset by his attitude during the 1914 war and his attempts to conciliate non-violence with his preaching inciting people to take part in the British Empire’s war!

I believe that the greatest religious saying ever pronounced is that which opens the Father’s arms to all men of goodwill, “bonae voluntatis”.

With fraternal affection,

Romain Rolland

Look after the health of your dear unruly patient! So many anxious hearts are praying for it in the West!

P.S. What I say applies only to the Berthallon brothers themselves and the pure facts,—not to the rather mediocre and affected literary “ornamentations” added to them by the woman—admittedly sincere and courageous—who did the research.

105. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

January 1928.—To my surprise, and rather discouragingly, Gandhi replies to me through his disciple Mirabehn (our friend Madeleine Slade), who passed on to him the story of the Berthallon brothers, that they did not seem to him sufficiently pure examples of true non-violence—because the basis of their refusal to join in the war was, in his opinion, their attachment to their native land and their mountains.

Still the same doctrinal narrowness, even among the best; it will end by reducing their universal Gospel to a strict sectarian regulation!

I write to Mira (21 January).
106. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

*The Ashram, Sabarmati*

17 February 1928

My dear—Brother (very well, brother, but honoured like a father),

When, on reading your letter, I realized your distress, it deeply pained me! It is all my fault I expressed myself badly in my letter to Madeleine. The hard judgment that you sense was far from our thoughts. As for myself, God knows how much I love the brave people of the Alps, and the story of the Berthallon brothers had touched me very much.

But this time Bapu is writing to you himself and he expresses himself in such clear language that I won't add another word to the explanation. It expresses my feelings exactly.

When I explained to Bapu the doings of these peasants, I gave him their history in a few words—I emphasized their good qualities, especially the fact that they did not take the life of a single creature. Then I translated word by word their testimony explaining very clearly the sense in which they used the word “faiblessé”. At the same time I explained my own point of view.

Later, when Bapu is better (at present the doctors don't allow any long conversations) I will give him the details of the brothers’ history. Bapu insists that I should translate into French his letter to you! I tried to get out of it, but he said, “No—I wish to see and sign the translation myself.” I know my translation will be full of mistakes as far as the
language goes, but I hope that the sense will tally pretty well with the original.

And now as to the great question—the glorious hope. Will Bapu go to Europe this year? Will you and he at last meet in the flesh, as he puts it? The dream which I have treasured in my heart!

Bapu says there are so many things to be considered that he cannot as yet see clearly. But personally I believe this time he is really tempted to accept the invitations because they are very sympathetic.

One is from:
L’Internationale des Résistants contre la Guerre,
(Congress at Sonntagsberg, Vienna; 27th to 30th July).
And the other from:
The World Youth Peace Congress, 1928,
(Congress in Holland, 17th to 26th August).
Would you tell us what you think of these invitations? Your advice would be the most valuable that we could have.

If Bapu accepts these invitations it seems to me he would have to arrive in Europe in May, or at latest in the beginning of June. That way he could stay for a short time in Switzerland before the conferences. For his spirit, for his physical health, and in order that he should have a good understanding of present conditions in Europe, it would surely be best.

You will send us your reply by return, won’t you? For it will already be the middle of March before this letter reaches you, and there is an idea (if his health permits) for Bapu to go to Singapore and the Federated Malay States for a tour during April and May. I should imagine that this could be postponed if the call from Europe should become imperative, because it is just a “Khadi Tour”—and there would be no conference which Bapu would have to attend.

In the end may it be that all this trouble ends in great joy!
Your little sister embraces you with all her heart.

Mira

107. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

_The Ashram,_  
_Sabarmati_  
_17 February 1928_

Dear Friend,

Mira has translated your latest letter for me. My whole soul goes out to you in your grief, especially because it comes over a letter which makes you suspect me of hardness of heart. I appreciate your desire to find me correct in all I do and think. I do indeed want to stand well with you, but I must be true to myself if I am to continue to deserve your warm friendship.

Let me first tell you that Mira’s letter reflected her own views though they were found to coincide with mine. Neither Mira, so far as I know her, nor I had the remotest idea of judging those two good peasants. Their action was undoubtedly one of heroism. What we had in our minds was the heroism of a war resister, and from the record sent by you and as it was interpreted to me by Mira, I missed that particular type of heroism which a war resister demonstrates in his own life. Joan of Arc was a heroine. So were Leonidas and Horatius. But the heroism in each case was of a different type, each noble and admirable in its own sphere.

In the answers given by the peasants, I do not notice any definite repugnance to war as war and a determination to suffer to the utmost in their resistance to war. These peasant friends, if my recollection serves me right, are heroes representing and defending the simple rustic life. These heroes are no less precious than those of a militant war
resister type. We want to treasure all these heroisms, but what I feel is that we will serve the heroes and the cause of Truth better if we treat each type separately.

You have curiously raised the question of my participation in the late war. It is a legitimate question. I had answered it in the last autobiographical chapter as if in anticipation of your question. Please read it carefully and tell me at your leisure what you think of the argument. I shall treasure your opinion.

Lastly, I do want to reach perfection, but I recognize my limitations, and the recognition is becoming clearer day after day. Who knows in how many places I must be guilty of hardness of heart, and I should not be surprised if you have noticed want of charity in my writings in more places than one. I can only tell you that the lapses are there in spite of my prayerful effort to the contrary. I suppose it was not without reason that the early Christians considered Satan to be not merely an evil principle but Evil incarnate. He seems to dominate us in every walk of life and man’s mission is to overthrow him from power.

This letter of yours to Mira makes me more and more anxious to see you in the flesh, and there is just a distant hope of my being able to do so this year, if I keep good health and if otherwise the inner voice guides me towards Europe.

I am seriously considering two invitations, and the desire to meet you may precipitate my decision in favour of accepting those invitations.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi
25 February 1928—A letter from our friend Mirabehn, who sends news from the Ashram to my sister every week, tells us that Gandhi has had a serious relapse. (Her letter is dated the 10th.) Shortly after returning from a very tiring journey through India, and without taking a rest, he lost consciousness in Mirabehn’s arms; the doctors diagnosed arterial tension almost four times the normal. Yet he finds it hard to remain idle. In any case, he expects to die soon, —“in the month of March, on the anniversary of his imprisonment,”—“unless a sort of miracle happens”. He does not rule out the possibility of this miracle, which, strangely, he links in his mind (without saying so) with the new diet he is stubbornly adopting, which excludes milk and all its derivatives. (He would like to reach the stage of living on nothing but fruits.) This, to him, has the value of a great experiment, and he would be glad if it could succeed; he would see it as a worthy conclusion to his existence! I admit that I could have wished for another, more important, to the man’s career which was about to begin at this new hour, this new period in the history of humanity. But I ought never to forget that all the lives of the saints have ended, in some degree or other, with a bankruptcy which a biased legend has cast a veil over (cf. St. Francis), and that those which have served humanity best were the most tragic for the chosen man (cf. the Cross. This Gandhi will miss—as did Vivekananda).
Dear Mira,

Thank you so much for the admirable letters from Bapu and yourself. I'm delighted at the hope you give us that he may come to Europe, and I hasten to give you an answer on the matter.

Certainly the invitations he has received are very attractive. The most attractive of the two is the one from the Internationale des Résistants contre la Guerre (Vienna, late July). Gandhi will find pure and enthusiastic youths in its ranks, men of limpid faith calmly prepared for every sacrifice. The other group, the World Youth Peace Congress, probably has more political elements and intellectual compromises mixed up in it, as do most of the associations calling themselves "pacifists"; but it certainly includes some interesting characters and much goodwill.

Now, keep me in touch (and in plenty of time!) with what you decide. My sister and I must be away from Switzerland in May; we have to go to France, Paris and the Nivernais. But we'll be at Villeneuve in June. Tell us exactly when you'll be arriving! (For I'm sure you'll be on the trip. There's no one better equipped than you to guide and organize Bapu on his pilgrimage across Europe.) But in Heaven's name see that he doesn't overtax his forces! Don't let him wear himself out in advance on this Khadi Tour to the Federated Malay States! In his state of health the journey to Europe is bound to be very tiring, and if he wants
to be able to bear it, see that he takes a little rest beforehand!

There will be much emotion among the young idealists of Europe when it's known that he's coming!

Best wishes and fraternal affection,

Romain Rolland

P.S. Please be good enough to give the enclosed letter to Bapu and read it to him, with my apologies for the haste in which I had to write it.

I was indignant at some of the terms used in a recent interview with Dilip Kumar Roy which appeared in some Indian reviews, and I've written to them to protest. Dilip Kumar Roy isn't at all a bad lad; he's charming and intelligent, but he's unboundedly frivolous. He takes no notes of what's said to him, and he understands badly, then afterwards he often unintentionally relates quite the opposite of what's said to him.

110. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Villeneuve
7 March 1928

My dear Friend,

I am touched by your kind reply and I thank you with all my heart.

I understand what you say to me about the two pious Savoy peasants, and I bow to your reasons, though I fear that there are very few men and women—at least in Europe—in whom "resistance to war" will not always be mixed with other intellectual elements: for hardly any idea, even the most intense, can be found in man in a totally pure state; that is his weakness—and his wealth.

I (or rather my sister) have read in Young India of 16 February your examination of the part you played in
the 1914 war. Forgive me if I tell you that though I should dearly love to enter into your thoughts and approve of them, I have not been able to do so!

I can very well admit—even with approval—that men who believe that their country, their homeland is sacred and that war is necessary and inevitable may take part in war. I have friends who did so, who did it for four years, who, when wounded, had no more sacred desire than to get better and return to the front; no doubt they also killed. Not without sadness, but with affection, I can take and grasp their bloodstained hands; I embrace the poor unfortunate creatures — though they wouldn’t see themselves as such!

I can understand, too, that men who do not believe in the nation and are horrified by war, but who cannot avoid it other than by getting themselves shot and have not enough moral force or faith to welcome this sacrifice which dishonours them in the eyes of the mass of their fellow-citizens, should weaken and allow themselves to be enlisted. I pity them, I suffer with them, and I have no right to reproach them. Each man must act according to his strength.

But for a man of great courage and absolute faith like yourself, who uncompromisingly condemns human bloodshed and national warfare, to take part in such activities —and out of choice, without being forced—, in that case, nothing in the world can make me either admit or even understand it. And the reasons you cite (forgive me!) do not seem to me good ones. I could even go so far as to say that I should better understand your action without reasons than with the reasons you give!

Let us look at them:

You set out three alternatives:

1. As a citizen (either willing or by accepted force) of the British Empire, enjoying its protection and aspiring to obtain from it Home Rule for your people within the
Imperial framework, you feel yourself obliged to share in its trials and injustices as well as its sufferings,—even in its crimes; and you think that from this evil heroically accepted there may come a good: that of Imperial recognition of the independence of your people, which, once master of itself, may impose on the Empire in its turn, by spiritual force alone, the law of justice and humanity called Ahimsa. . . .

Events have given you your answer—from the practical point of view. If you consider only the results, this most frank opportunism has been of no use to you; but even if it had led to practical success, to the recognition of your people's independence, my friend, allow me to tell you quite bluntly that independence bought at that price, at the price of an accepted share in the bloody sacrifice of millions of men, would be a crime before God.

2. Boycott of the war and the Empire, which you rightly judge impracticable.

3. Individual civil disobedience, bringing with it the penalty of imprisonment. This you merely state, without dwelling on it. Why not? I don't understand. It seems to me the only one of the three alternatives which is morally acceptable, if not adequate. And in many other circumstances you have set the example of accepting it—simply, without great gestures or phrases, without calculating the practical results—as the only way open to a conscience which has no accounts to render to anyone but God. Why not, then, have recourse to it at the hour of this “worst of crimes”, this mutual slaughter of peoples driven to the butchery by their bad shepherds. I don't understand! And what grieves me is that an example like yours may and certainly will be exploited by our political masters as an acquiescence, as consent to the most loathsome of their crimes, which is the enlistment to help in their wars of sordid interest, of the wretched human masses of Asia and Africa, which they exploit and use as cannon and machine-gun
fodder, as a substance less precious than European flesh.

I'm writing to you just as I feel and in haste, as Mira is waiting for my reply. I hope that one day soon we may better clarify our thought on this matter, and I rejoice in the dream that Europe—and my own eyes—may see you this year.

I assure you of my respectful and profound affection,

Romain Rolland

111. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Satyagraha Ashram,
Sabarmati
8 March 1928

Dear Friend,

Mr. Rajendra Prasad is one of the best among my co-workers. He is going to London to fulfil an old engagement. He cannot return to India without paying his respects to you.

Sincerely yours,
M. K. Gandhi

112. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

The Ashram,
Sabarmati
16 March 1928

My dear Brother,

During these four weeks since writing to you, Bapu has been thinking a lot about the European visit, and now he wants me to explain to you what he finds in his heart. Up to now he cannot decide whether it would be right for him to leave India for a single moment before his work here is more firmly established. There are so many things
to be considered, and then, even if he should decide to leave, there might be both moral and physical hindrances at the last moment.

As to the invitations, Bapu wishes me to explain that the question of the conferences is of secondary importance. He is influenced above all by the profound wish to go and meet you. The call has always been there, but now, since your last exchange of letters, it has become imperative.

If the idea appeals to you, Bapu would like to spend some time near you so that you might understand each other to the bottom—that you might absorb each other—and that the slightest misunderstandings might be removed for good and all.

He therefore wants your advice, and if you like the idea, he will try to arrive in Switzerland before the end of May.

But before giving your advice, there is yet one more thing to be considered—if Bapu goes to Europe, he will, without doubt, receive invitations from all sides. He will not like to refuse the other countries; in fact he says that if he goes to Europe he wants to go more or less everywhere. And he asks you whether you think that would be good, if in that way he could really aid your common cause.

Perhaps your reply to Bapu's letter of 17-2-28—which should be on its way at the moment—will give us an idea of your feelings on the subject, and that Bapu, when he reads it, will be able to come to a definite decision. But if you think it better, please send us a telegram on receipt of this letter.

I have read this letter to Bapu (translating it into English), and he approves of it. . . .

And now there is not a moment to write anything more, but you can easily guess all that is in my heart without my putting it into words.
Everything is in God's hands.

Your
Mira

This paper is made by hand.

113. Gandhi to C. Rajagopalachari

Ashram,
Sabarmati
19 March 1928

... My anxiety is to meet Rolland. He appears to be the wisest man of Europe. He takes an unusual interest in me and feels grieved if he thinks that in any single thing my opinion is wrong. It seems to me that it would be a tragedy if we do not meet. This is the cause that moves me above all else. The rest is thrown in. ...

114. Gandhi to Motilal Nehru

The Ashram,
Sabarmati
27 March 1928

... The expected letter being registered was received only today. It is a long letter. He would like me to go to Europe, but he himself is not likely to be in his place before June. I expect a reply to another letter from him. I am in no hurry to go. I would therefore like to await further news from him. Somehow or other I can't put my heart into this proposed visit. My heart is in the boycott. ...

1 Romain Rolland
115. Gandhi to C. Rajagopalachari

The Ashram, 
Sabarmati  
28 March 1928

. . . . I have your letter about the proposed European visit. I have myself no heart in it, nor have I any confidence in myself about making it successful; but an interview with Rolland still remains an attraction. All the reputation I enjoy in the West is borrowed from him and I feel that if I meet him face to face, there may be disillusionment on many points. It may be that we should come closer than we ever were. I do attach considerable importance to our knowing each other much better than we do.

I quite agree with you that there is nothing to gain from the health point of view. I might possibly suffer, and health is no consideration whatsoever in the proposed trip. From that point of view any hill station in India would be infinitely superior for me. . . .

116. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Satyagraha Ashram, 
Sabarmati  
30 March 1928

Dear Friend,

Though the translation of your very kind and energetic letter has been with me for three days, I am able to reach it only at the last moment. But I cannot let the post go without sending you a line if only to thank you for your friendly frankness.
The matter you have discussed is of tremendous importance. It is never out of my mind, if only because it is for the vindication of Ahimsa that I love to live and should equally love to die. But I see that I have not been able clearly to explain my position. I must not however enter into any argument. If God enables me to meet you this year we shall prayerfully discuss the matter and possibly come to a joint conclusion. Before deciding finally I propose to await your cable or letter as the case may be.

Meanwhile please accept my best thanks for your cordiality and concern for me.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

117. Gandhi to Muriel Lester

30 March 1928

.... I have replied to your cablegram. Nothing is yet certain. I am not clear in my own mind as to what I should do. I am now in correspondence with M. Romain Rolland. His final reply will help me to come to some decision....

118. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
31 March 1928

My dear Friend,

I have just received your letter of 16 March; it presents my conscience with a real problem.

You know how joyful I should be to see Gandhi. But if the main object of Gandhi’s visit to Europe is to see me, then I unhesitatingly say: “No, it’s too much. It isn’t right.
Indeed, it would be a bad thing if Gandhi were to interrupt his whole action in India to see me.”

Besides, I fear you may have given Gandhi an idea of me which isn’t quite exact. I am, as everyone knows, deeply committed to ideas of peace and fraternal union among men, and when necessary I have sacrificed my own interests and tranquillity to them. But I’m not devoted solely to the cause of peace and social action.

I am on the one hand a profoundly religious being—in my own way, which is free. And on the other hand I’m a European intellectual and artist whose main efforts are directed towards the living comprehension of all human souls. I consider that my main role is to understand and enlighten,—to be a sort of archway linking together the minds of men and women, of peoples and races; to understand all so as to love all.

Here’s an example to illustrate my case:
I have a great respect, an intellectual reverence for Goethe. Can Gandhi admit such an attitude of mind?

Therefore I fear that if Gandhi comes to Europe for me, I may cause him a deep disappointment, and that I want to avoid at all costs.

But I know that a visit from him could be infinitely salutary and beneficial to Europe. And for myself—for my sister and I—it would be a very great joy.

I’m writing these lines in haste; take them as an expression of my need for absolute truth and my wish that Gandhi should decide knowing exactly what the situation is.

Ever yours,

Romain Rolland
March 1928.—My letter to Gandhi of 21 January has inspired a long letter from him, dated 14-17 February. Though he is very unwell, he insisted on replying at once in English and at the same time sending a French translation (by Mira) which he also signed. I notice that Gandhi is much more grateful for criticism than for praise; he seems to get a secret pleasure from it, as he would from a reviving and stimulating cold shower. Anyway, the stubborn old fellow will not concede an iota of the errors of which he is accused. He likes you better for standing up to him, but at heart he is a mule—a sacred mule. No one can convince him, and he convinces no one. He has been taken with a sudden and burning desire to come to Europe again and see me. I must confess I fear the ordeal—for him as much as for me. (More so, in fact! I don’t mind being thought ill of, but I should not wish to think ill of him.)

Mira adds that the “invitations” come from the War Resisters’ International (Congress at Sonntagsberg, Vienna, 27-30 July) and The World Youth Peace Congress, 1928 (in Holland, 17-26 August). Gandhi is waiting for my opinion on the subject. If he accepts, he would arrive in Europe in May, or the beginning of June at the latest; that would allow him to spend some time in Switzerland before the Congress. (There is still a possibility that Gandhi may go beforehand to Singapore and the Federated Malay States, in late March and April. And this from a man who is still seriously ill! Mira says the doctors forbid him long conversations. ... It is much to be feared that his health will bring him to a final standstill before he leaves for Europe.)
120. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

March 1928.—Gandhi is thinking more and more about coming to Europe, but he tells me that the real reason for coming would be to see me and come to an understanding with me; everything else is accessory. This trust should give me cause for some pride; in fact it gives me much more of a feeling of heavy responsibility, and I fear that whatever interest I may have stimulated in Gandhi is based on a misunderstanding. I should be most grieved to abuse it.

121. Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru

Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati
1 April 1928

. . . . Though Romain Rolland’s first expected letter has arrived and [he] warmly looks [forward] to my proposed visit, it does not enable me to come to a decision. As the time for arriving at a fixed decision is drawing nearer, my diffidence is growing. There may be however a cable from Rolland next week and it may decide my fate. . . .

122. Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru

The Ashram, Sabarmati
5 April 1928

. . . . No final decision has yet been arrived at about the European visit. I am shirking it and making it depend
upon some further indication from Rolland which I should have next week. . . .

123. Gandhi to Dr. M. A. Ansari

The Ashram,
Sabarmati
7 April 1928

. . . . The proposed European visit is causing me much trouble just now. I can’t make up my mind. I know that I should not be so undecided like this. But what is the use of my hiding my weakness? I can’t account for it myself. However, I should come to a decision in the course of the next fortnight at the latest. Improvement in health has no attraction for me. The meeting with M. Romain Rolland and a quiet conference with the chief men of Europe is what would take me to Europe. Let us see how God leads me. . . .

124. Gandhi to Muriel Lester

The Ashram,
Sabarmati
13 April 1928

. . . . I can’t summon up sufficient courage to make up my mind whether to go to Europe or not to go. I am therefore waiting for an expected letter from Romain Rolland. The expected letter will compel me to make up my mind finally. I don’t know why I have difficulty in making up my mind about the European visit in spite of your glowing letter. . . .
My dear Friend,

Thank you for your letter of 30 March which I have just received.

I see you are still uncertain whether to come, and I fear my last letter may have added to your uncertainties rather than clarifying them. I wrote it in haste to catch the post, and I couldn’t weigh my terms exactly. I wouldn’t want it to be misunderstood.

Please understand that it was a moral scruple which drove me to write it, and rather than fall short, I was inclined to exaggerate that scruple. A sincere man like yourself knows how painful it is to risk giving an idea of oneself different from what one really is—even if it’s superior to what one is—indeed, above all if it’s superior.

I am not, as you are, a man whose inner forces are realized in action—though my action is always faithful to my thought. The essence of my life is rather to be found in thought. True and free thought is my commanding need, my vital necessity, and the role which has been given to me; I have never ceased to work towards it.

This need to know, to understand (and understanding is impossible without love), this perpetual drive for truth corresponds to a religious instinct within me, very deep, which was for a long time obscure, then in a sort of half-light, and has steadily become brighter. The closer I come to my end as an individual, the more I feel myself filled with God, and I realize this God in the particular field of
beauty and truth. I know that He is far beyond this, but I touch Him, I taste Him, and I breathe His breath.

Thus my divine field (if I may so express it) is perhaps different from yours, though they touch. But they belong to the same Master: they are of His flesh.

However great would be my joy to see you and speak with you, I still believe that it would be neither right nor fair for you to come to Europe solely for that.

But it would be right and it would be fair for you to come to Europe in order to make contact with the youth of Europe, which needs your help, your advice and your enlightenment.

And it is necessary in either case (whether you come or not), it is indispensable that you should give an absolutely clear, precise and definitive formulation to the listening world of your doctrine, your faith, on the matter of war and non-acceptance.

We are both of us fairly old and of suspect health; we may disappear any day. It is important that we should leave a precise testament to the youth of the world which it can use as a rule of conduct, for it will have a terrible burden to bear in the coming half-century. I see fearful trials building up in front of them. It no longer seems to me a matter of doubt that there is in preparation an era of destruction, an age of global wars beside which all those of the past will seem only children’s games, of chemical warfare which will annihilate whole populations. What moral armour are we offering to those who will have to face up to the monster which we shall not live to see? What immediate answer to the riddle of the murderous Sphinx, who will not wait? What marching orders?

Our words must not be equivocal. We have the sad example of Christ, whose admirable Gospels contain too many passages which, though not contradictory in fundamental content, at least appear so in form, and lend them-
selves to the self-interested interpretations of the worst Pharisees. In the last war we saw in all countries how hypocrites, fanatics, statesmen like Lloyd George, bishops and pastors, false believers and, worst of all, true believers, could by chosen passages from the New Testament justify themselves for extolling war, vengeance and holy murder. In the coming crises, there must be no doubt about Gandhi’s thought.

Then again, it is necessary to weigh all the consequences of the orders given, to weigh the forces of the men to whom they will be entrusted. The young men of Europe are aware of the trials waiting for them. They don’t want to be duped about the imminence of the danger, which too many “pacifists” are trying not to see and to put out of their minds. They want to look it clearly in the face, and they ask: “To what extent is it reasonable, to what extent is it human, not to accept? Must the sacrifice be total, absolute, without exception, without any consideration either for ourselves or for the things which surround us and depend on us? And in all honesty to ourselves, can we be sure that this total sacrifice will diminish the sum total of future human sufferings—or does it not risk handing over man’s destiny to a barbarity without counterweight?”

I’m asking the questions (some of the questions) which I feel are being turned over in the minds of the young. I’m not giving my own answers. I don’t count. My importance in this matter is secondary alongside yours. The man of pure thought (pure in the intellectual sense) has no more than a weak effect on the present; his forecasts have only a long-term chance of working themselves out. But you as a man of active faith are the direct intermediary between the forces of Eternity and present movements. You are on the poop-deck; you have the power to give direct orders to the sailors how to steer the ship in the storm. Give those orders! Let’s stop thinking about the port we have
left (that 1914 war, about which we seem unable to reach understanding and which risks confusing all our discussions) and look to the port we must reach—in the future!

My dear friend, I'm sorry to be always speaking to you so freely. I am aware of my moral inferiority. I am not worthy to touch your feet. But I know the anxiety and the doubts which assail the best men in Europe, and I am passing on what they say.

Assuring you of my respectful affection,

Romain Rolland

126. Madeleine Rolland to Madeleine Slade

16 April 1928

Dear Friend,

We have just received your letter of the 30th of March with the precious lines of Gandhiji. I do not know if, out there, you have fully realized the temptation to send forthwith the cable calling him here! But how would it have been possible to explain in a cable all that Romain wished that your Bapu should know about him before deciding in full knowledge of the case regarding the voyage to Europe, so big with consequences? With a man of Gandhi's eminence there is no question of being satisfied with approximations—one must lay one's soul bare. I agreed with Romain that he should explain his position exactly in this vital problem, and risk to appear to wish to retard the voyage, and all the same! What a tremendous price it would be for us! And we are sure that the coming of Gandhiji to Europe would give to all those who fight for Ahimsa a renewal of faith, would be for all a source of inspiration and joy, and awaken so many others to the true life! Yes. Gandhi cannot come for only one man, however great may be that man's moral influence. He
should come for all afflicted souls who await his contact and his word amongst us. May this sacrifice of my brother to Truth in no way be the cause of your Bapu refusing to come! —and then so many points would be cleared up by the two of them in affectionate discussion, as he has said himself.

Well I hope—we hope—that a favourable decision will not be delayed, if the situation in India does not become suddenly aggravated. A paragraph in European newspapers professing to give Sir J. Simon’s opinion said that he was opposed to any change of Government in India. One always trembles, lest this kind of thing may drive the Indians to an explosion—very understandable—if the news should be true.

With very affectionate thoughts,

Madeleine Rolland

127. Gandhi to Motilal Nehru

The Ashram,
Sabarmati
20 April 1928

.... The expected letter from Romain Rolland is due next Tuesday at the latest. I must after that come to a decision quickly. Supposing that Romain Rolland predisposes me in favour of the European visit, what would you have me to do in view of the talk of the boycott? Would you want me for the sake of the boycott not to go to Europe? I shall accept your decision whatever it may be. I am not personally keen on the European visit, but if all is plain sailing in India, and if Romain Rolland wants me to visit Europe, I should feel bound to accept the European invitations. Will you please wire your decision? Jawahar will be with you and probably you will know Doctor Ansari’s mind....
128. Gandhi to C. F. Andrews

The Ashram, Sabarmati
22 April 1928

... You will be perhaps sorry to hear that I have decided not to go to Europe this year. There was no call for me to go in answer to the various invitations, but I felt that, if Rolland considered it worth while my going to meet him in furtherance of the common cause, I would go and incidentally respond to invitations from Europe. Now there is the expected letter from him. I send you a copy so that you can better understand my decision. Rolland’s hesitation to let me go to Europe principally for the sake of meeting him shows that as an artist and as the interpreter of my message he does not regard it as necessary that I should leave all my important work here and go to Europe to meet him. And as there is no call in him to ask me to go or to accept my offer to go, I feel that if my letter to him was truthful, that is to say, if the deciding motive was to see him, I should consider his letter to be God’s guidance in answer to my prayer. As days went by I was hardening my heart feeling more and more reluctant to go to Europe at the present moment and was feeling also that I had nothing to give to Europe, whereas my hands were absolutely full here. The call of the Ashram is incessant. It is becoming clearer day by day that if I am to do justice to the Ashram, which I claim to be my best creation, and if I cannot give it the whole of my time, I must at least give to it the major part of my time. ...
129. Gandhi to European Friends

It is not without deep sorrow that I am now able to announce that the much-talked-of visit of mine to Europe is not to come off this year at any rate. To those in Austria, Holland, England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Russia who had sent me kind invitations I can only say that their disappointment will be no greater than mine.

Somehow or other I dread a visit to Europe and America. Not that I distrust the peoples of these great Continents any more than I distrust my own, but I distrust myself. I have no desire to go to the West in search of health or for sightseeing. I have no desire to deliver public speeches. I detest being lionized. I wonder if I shall ever again have the health to stand the awful strain of public speaking and public demonstrations. If God ever sent me to the West, I should go there to penetrate the hearts of the masses, to have quiet talks with the youth of the West and have the privilege of meeting kindred spirits—lovers of peace at any price save that of Truth.

But I feel that I have as yet no message to deliver personally to the West. I believe my message to be universal, but as yet I feel that I can best deliver it through my work in my own country. If I can show visible success in India, the delivery of the message becomes complete. If I came to the conclusion that India had no use for my message, I should not care to go elsewhere in search of listeners even though I still retained faith in it If, therefore, I ventured out of India, I should do so because I have faith, though I cannot demonstrate it to the satisfaction
of all, that the message is being surely received by India be it ever so slowly.

Thus whilst I was hesitatingly carrying on the correspondence with friends who had invited me, I saw that there was need for me to go to Europe, if only to see M. Romain Rolland. Owing to my distrust of myself over a general visit, I wanted to make my visit to that wise man of the West the primary cause of my journey to Europe. I therefore referred my difficulty to him and asked him in the frankest manner possible whether he would let me make my desire to meet him the primary cause of my visit to Europe. In reply I have a noble letter from him through Mirabai (Miss Slade) wherein he says that in the name of truth itself, he will not think of letting me go to Europe if a visit to him is to be the primary cause. He will not let me interrupt my labours here for the sake of our meeting. I read in his letter no false humility. I read in it a most genuine expression of truth. He knew when he wrote his reply that my desire to go to Europe to meet him was not for a mere courteous discussion but in the interest of the cause as dear to him as to me. But evidently he was too humble to bear the burden of calling me merely so that in furtherance of the common interest we might by mutual talks understand each other better. And I wanted him to shoulder that very burden, if he felt that truth required us to meet each other face to face. His reply therefore I have taken as a clear answer to my prayer. Apart from this visit, I felt within me no imperative call.

I have taken the public into my confidence as, against my wish, the fact that a visit to Europe during this season was under serious contemplation was published in the papers. I regret my decision but it seems to be the correct one. For whilst there is no urge within to go to Europe, there is an incessant call within for so much to do here. And now the death of my best comrade seems to keep
me rooted to the Ashram.

But I may say to the many friends in Europe, that next year, if all is well and if they still will have me I shall try to undertake the postponed tour, under the strict limitations mentioned by me and this I shall do whether I am ready to deliver my message or not. To see my numerous friends face to face will be no small privilege. But let me conclude this personal explanation by saying that if ever I am privileged to visit the West, I shall go there without changing my dress or habits, save in so far as the climate may require a change and self-imposed restrictions may permit. My outward form is, I hope, an expression of the inward.

Young India, 26-4-1928

130. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

The Ashram, 
Sabarmati 
27 April 1928

My dear Brother,

I have your noble letter of 31st March. Bapu is deeply touched and he tells you everything from the bottom of his heart in his article in this week's Young India. (He wrote it at 3 o'clock in the morning of the day following the death of Maganlalbhai.) He does not want to put you in a difficult position, but at the same time the desire to meet you remains the same. Well then, he is ready to come next year. And if he comes according to the way he puts it in his article, how much better it will be for him, for you and for the world! He very much wanted to write to you himself, but he cannot, on account of all that has happened—you can well understand! And he has left it to me to explain.
I can't tell you how much he has suffered on account of this loss—it is a terrible blow. The telegram giving the news of Maganlal's death arrived on Monday morning, his Silence Day, when he always writes for *Young India*. He went straight to Maganlal's wife, and stayed in their house the whole day writing his articles and doing all his work without a moment's rest. The tension was fearful—you will see in the article and understand everything. And if Bapu can come to Europe later, the joy and the good will be still greater.

Your humble little sister who longs again to see and embrace her great and dearly beloved brother, but who must continue to wait!

Mira

131. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

*April 1928.*—Gandhi, who shows himself to be more and more concerned with my letters to him about the war, but cannot make up his mind to clarify his attitude in 1914, which is rather difficult to understand, has written to me again—uncertain whether he will come to Europe, eager to see me, but waiting for me to give him the word (which I do not want to do, for reasons I have already stated). I write to him again (16 April).

132. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

*10 May 1928.*—Visited by Ambalal Sarabhai, a major industrialist from Ahmedabad. . . . He is on friendly terms with Gandhi, whose Ashram is three miles away from his home, on the other bank of the river. . . . But this owner and director of large cotton mills finds himself much embarrassed by Gandhi's bans, which would have him shut
down his works, unless he confined himself to luxury materials, so as not to compete against the spinning-wheel industry. One senses that he has clearly decided not to pay any attention. Gandhi’s wish to come to Europe to see me is known in those parts; people were sure he would come.

133. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
14 May 1928

My dear sister Mira,

I have just received your letter of 27 April telling us of the cruel blow which has struck our great friend. We are most saddened by it, and we ask you to tell him how much our love sympathizes with his grief. There is no deeper wound than the loss of the filial companion of almost a whole lifetime; it’s the purest of our blood flowing away.

But nothing belongs to us, neither ourselves nor our nearest and dearest. We are drops of water in a torrential current; drops which pass, but wherever they are they do not leave the river, and the same river is in each of them. We do not direct the course of the river; its current carries us along; but this current is ourselves. *Fiat voluntas!* . . .

I trust in the force of the current which carries Gandhi’s work. Men will be found somewhere to carry it along. The flood-gates have been opened and the impulse has been given.

But our great friend must be careful for his life! He’s not the absolute master of it. It’s been given to him, and he must not burn it up faster than he is authorized to do! His task is not complete; above all he must not forget to leave clear directives to the world, his words of testament!
I hope with all my heart that we shall meet next year, and if our wishes have any power, mine will do all they can to bring it about. But our destinies are uncertain. My health, like Gandhi's, is deeply undermined and threatened. And since I am much more deprived than he of intellectual companions—my only really proven companion is my sister, whose life is no more assured than mine—I must use every moment left to me to give written realization to my life's work, to the spiritual mission with which I have been entrusted. For though my work finds echoes everywhere, in almost half a century of working life I have not met anyone who can take my place. This thought weighs heavily on the shoulders of a man of 62 who knows he has said so little as yet of what it was his task to say.

Best wishes to you and Gandhi, with all my love,

Romain Rolland

P.S. I hope Gandhi will allow me to join my pleas to yours and consent to seek a less destructive climate and a little rest during the hot season!

134. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

May 1928.—A letter of 27 April from Mirabehn says that Gandhi has received my letter of 31 March and was deeply disturbed by it; he has written what he thinks about it in his weekly article in Young India. Thus he has decided not to come to Europe this year; but he esteems me all the more, and he hopes to come next year. He explains in his article that apart from wanting to visit me, he was uncertain and worried about the journey to Europe: he felt that the universal message which he was to bring was not yet ready, or that the best way of serving Europe was by his example in India. In any case his visit would have had to be cancelled at the last moment on account of a sudden
bereavement: the death of his dearest companion and intellectual heir, his grandson Maganlalbhai Gandhi.¹ This was a terrible blow to him. This emotion, his overwork and the torrid heat are a severe trial for his already most suspect health. His friends are very worried, but they can do nothing for him. Gandhi is now determined not to leave the Ashram, despite the summer season.

135. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

7 August 1928.—Visited by two Indians: one of Gandhi's most forceful lieutenants, Rajendra Prasad, from Bihar, the leader in India of the non-co-operation movement, and a companion from the Punjab, Bhai Balmukand.

136. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

3 September 1928.—Visited by Sir J. C. Bose and Lady Bose. He has no sympathy for Gandhi's asceticism and his exhortations to return to nature and simplicity. He is too strong an incarnation of the genius of creative invention not to be a declared champion of progress, of the eternal march forward which never turns back. He is in favour of the development in India of large-scale industries, and he says that Gandhi's khaddar, powerless to stop them, merely serves to provoke Japanese imitations; India is already being inundated with false khaddar, perfectly imitated, made in Tokyo.

¹ This has a reference to Maganlal Gandhi, a grandson of an uncle of Gandhiji.
137. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

16 September 1928.—Andrews spends the day with us. He has been at a religious Congress (religious forces against war) in Geneva, and is going back to England.

.... He says that the followers of Ramakrishna always relate their religious practices to the adoration of some image, whereas the followers of Gandhi have none; on the other hand, the latter are very fond of religious music. Gandhi’s popularity is immense; there is not an Indian in whom his name does not evoke deep emotion. Wherever he goes, the people come running. Andrews describes one of his open-air meetings, with Gandhi in the centre, and Andrews close to him. All around him in a circle, thousands of rows of people crushed together. When Andrews had to make his way through them in order to leave, he counted his steps in a straight line which formed a radius from the centre of the conference. From the figure thus obtained, it was calculated that the audience must have numbered more than a hundred thousand. Andrews adds that he never likes to escort Gandhi in these assemblies, for he is always afraid that the multitudes crowding around Gandhi will one day suffocate him. I try to find out what link there is between Gandhi and Vivekananda. Andrews says that it was indeed from Vivekananda that Gandhi took the sublime formula of “God-Narajana”, God in the form of the poor and the oppressed. Andrews, who has faithfully revered Gandhi for twenty years, has never been able to accept two of his acts: his recruiting role for England at the beginning of

¹ The reference is to the term Daridranarayan.
the war, and his exhortations to boycott and burn foreign merchandise. On the second point, Gandhi has recognized that he went too far, and that it was from his words that sprang the violence he condemned. But he has never been willing to disavow his attitude during the war, despite the endless arguments Andrews has had with him, during the war and after; for the two men are each as stubborn as the other in their ideas. By and large, I have come to the conclusion that Gandhi is a hero in an age of transition, who, like many others, has been divided between two ideals, that of the past and that of the future, and has been forced to abandon the first only very slowly, with difficulty, as if with regret. Nor must his legal training be forgotten; it has left him with certain habits of thought. He has always kept a natural respect for the state, the law and the military authorities. He is the opposite of a rebel (the opposite by temperament of a man like Vivekananda, whose reason and religion had to fight against his instinctive movements of revolt). Gandhi has become a great rebel only because circumstances forced his moral generosity and his honesty in that direction.

Andrews arrived in India in 1904. He was for several years a teacher in Delhi. In 1908 he met Pearson, and in 1913 he went with him to South Africa to join and assist Gandhi. Pearson was his dearest friend.

He says that Communism has gained much ground in India, particularly in northern India and Bengal, and its gold is corrupting many of the poorer Indian leaders who are more easily open to temptation. Unfortunately even some Trades Unionists are inclined to accept for their parties the sums offered them by Communism under a show of disinterest but in fact to compromise them in their company. The moral change is rapidly taking place. Andrews foresees that very soon the question between former supporters of Gandhi will no longer be co-operation or
non-co-operation, but violence or non-violence; and the outcome of the debate worries him. This is why he would be so pleased if Gandhi would pronounce categorically and finally on the subject of war, any war. It is not that he has the least doubts about Gandhi’s personal feelings at the present time; but it is essential that he should impose them publicly.

138. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

October 1928 —The daughter of Stepan Raditch, the Croat parliamentarian and political leader, recently assassinated in the middle of a session of the Yugoslav Diet, informs me (17 October) that her father had translated and written a preface to my book on Mahatma Gandhi. “He was enthusiastic about it because of the affinities that existed between Gandhi’s ideas and his own well-known opinions. It was above all the ideals of peace and democracy which they had in common.”

139. Jawaharlal Nehru to Romain Rolland

All India Congress Committee,
Fifty-two Hewett Road,
Allahabad
22 January 1929

Mons. Romain Rolland,
Villa Olga,
Villeneuve (Vaud)
Switzerland

Dear Mons. Rolland,

On behalf of the Indian National Congress I have to express my deep gratitude to you for the beautiful message of greeting that you sent us. Your message was read out
at the open Congress and was greatly appreciated. It is a great consolation to us that in our struggles in India we have the sympathy of great thinkers across the seas. We have every hope that our efforts, aided as they are by your blessings, will meet with success.

With regards and greetings,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

140. Romain Rolland’s Message on Lajpat Rai’s Death

Villeneuve
January 1929

I had the honour of meeting Lajpat Rai several times in Europe, and of talking with him. Of these meetings I have a very vivid recollection. He possessed the penetrating insight into men and nations, the quick infallible glance, the bold yet just determination, the exactitude and precision in all details of action, which make the master-mind, the great statesman. I have often remarked, since, that I considered him to be the equal of our greatest European politicians (Europe has none of such calibre today).

But to these gifts of an active mind, which the West is accustomed to consider as belonging to itself alone, he added the soul of ancient India, of the old Rishis—heroic faith, unlimited selflessness and absolute sacrifice.

I have always thought that if Dayanand Sarasvati had lived in our time he would have thrilled with joy at recognizing in Lajpat Rai the highest type of the Arya Samaj, the warrior, the knight “without fear and without reproach” who devotes his life to the defence of justice. I read again the lines of Dayanand:

Lajpat Rai died on November 17, 1928 in Lahore.
"To strive to combat, to humiliate, to destroy the wicked, though they be powerful, the sovereigns of the whole earth. To strive constantly to undermine the power of the unjust and to strengthen that of the just—though oneself must undergo terrible suffering, even death, let no attempt be made to avert it."

This hero's vow was kept by Lajpat Rai until the day of his death. Hail to the Bayard of India, to the great Rishi!

Romain Rolland

141. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Monday, 17 February 1929

My dear Friend,

We have been reading in Young India your reasons for giving up your trip to Europe this year. We understand them too well to think of countering them by reasons based on our own selfish affection—or even by those of the youth of Europe, threatened by new catastrophes, who could profit so much by your advice when they come to decide the route to follow and cut through their mortal hesitations.

But it is clear to me that your first duty is in India at this grave hour of vigil before the battle, for I have little doubt that this is the eve of the battle.

All I should like to do is to offer you a few reflections on the fearful days which India faces.

You know the conditions of modern combat. You know that the first act of the modern state in warfare is to ruin its adversary in the opinion of the rest of the world; to this end it stifles its enemy's voice and fills the world with its own. You know that the British Empire is past master in this art, and that it has all the wherewithal to blockade India and cut her off from the rest of the world, which it
can then flood with its own propaganda. The process has already started. For the last month events in Bombay have served as a pretext for making the world think that India is in flames, and every day the main French papers, with a docility which I suspect is well-paid, receive the reports coming from England and carry stories with large headlines about “Hell in Bombay” and the “sinister tally” of each day—as if the trouble extended to the whole of India and as if there were no evil, crimes or massacres anywhere but in India—as if the salvation of all humanity depended on the good gaoler keeping the prison doors well bolted, to protect the world from the Indian hydra which he alone in his heroism is able to keep in chains! It is easy to imagine how shrill this propaganda will become as the decisive hour approaches, and when the gauntlet is down it will know no bounds.

Now I have already seen far too much evidence of the terrifying intellectual passivity in which the peoples of Europe are at present lying. Ever since the first day of the 1914 war their poor brains have been subjected to so much daily intoxication from the whole of their press that they have become unable to react. This is another type of intellectual alcoholism, no less ravaging in its effects than the other. There is hardly a free newspaper left in the West. There is not one where a free man like myself can write (except for a few poor news-sheets with no circulation and one or two large reviews which do not reach a wide public because they appear at infrequent intervals and cost quite a lot).

I consider it would be of urgent utility to India to take the first step—before the blockade which awaits her and have her cause heard directly in Europe. I do not suggest that you take a stance of political “mendicancy”, as you call it, or that you ask for anyone’s help. But in face of the tribunal of public opinion where the British Empire as plaintiff alone is heard, the defendant too must make herself
heard, and become plaintiff in her turn. No one fights alone today. The whole world is involved in every conflict, and it throws the enormous weight of its opinion into one of the trays of the balance—either for or against. It was largely by this weight of opinion, well directed and well manipulated by the Allies, that the German Empire was crushed.

It would be unwise of the Indian leaders to neglect these great forces. It seems to me indispensable that they should use this year to prepare European opinion, to open the eyes of the thousands of men here who are blindfolded by their domesticated press. If you do not come yourself, other highly qualified Indian personalities should make themselves seen and heard in various countries of Europe and America. But the difficulty is to find such personalities whose name already represents in the world, as yours does, an uncontestable moral power, whose ascendancy will force the crowds to listen and believe them. Alongside yourself, only Tagore enjoys this ascendancy in Europe, and Tagore’s health does not permit him much effort now. It should be your task to see who could be India’s best legates in Europe. Anyway, do not neglect this form of action! And prepare straightaway, if you can, channels through which India can keep in communication with Europe, to be ready for the extremely likely contingency of communications being officially cut off by the British Government.

My dear friend, I send you my affectionate wishes for your health. Look after it, in view of tomorrow’s great task for which your presence is indispensable.

Please believe in my respect and fraternal devotion.

Yours,

Romain Rolland
142. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Chatwam Village,
Bihar
18 February 1929

My dear Brother,

Not yet! But for sure later—that is my firm impression. You were very much in Bapu’s thoughts when he decided not to leave India during this year, and he has told me to write to you.

. . . . Surely Bapu could not leave his country at such a moment.

. . . . Dear Friend, I believe I have never given Bapu an inexact idea of you. But now, after your last letter, I think, and Bapu also, that I have never sufficiently praised the nobleness of your soul.

Your Mira.

143. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Satyagraha Ashram,
Sabarmati
27 February 1929

Dear Friend,

This letter introduces you to a young friend B. B. Desai from whom when I was convalescent I received kind treatment in his bungalow at a seaside place. Young Desai is an earnest student of French. He has been professor of French in a Bombay College. He wants however to increase his knowledge of French and therefore wishes to place himself
under the influence of French savants. If you could give him any help in this direction I shall appreciate it.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

M. Romain Rolland
Villa Olga
Villeneuve
Switzerland

144. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

February 1929.—Gandhi announces in Young India his intention not to leave India this year and to give up the journey to Europe which had been settled on. I understand his reasons only too well; it is an armed vigil. Gandhi has recently obtained from Congress that a final deadline should be set for England by which to grant India her requested constitution. After this deadline, which expires on 31 December next, Gandhi has promised to join the rest of his people in seeking total and unconditional independence. It is thus important that he should not leave the battle-posts at which he is waiting. I write to him, however (17 February), to say that if he cannot come himself he should send to Europe one or several Indians whose moral personalities carry worldwide authority in order to enlighten Europe about the struggle which is about to begin. It is only too clear that as soon as it starts the British Empire will blockade India and flood world opinion with its own false reports so as to turn the world against India. India should thus take the first step.
145. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Ashram, Sabarmati
2 May 1929

Dear Friend,

I have before me a translation by Mira of your kind and touching letter of 17th February last. I have been anticipating your permission to make cautious use of portions of that letter without mentioning your name.

I am glad you think with me that the proper course for me was not to come to Europe this year.

With reference to India being heard in Europe, I hold the view that India will not be heard in Europe or the West until she has suffered more and on a more extensive scale than hitherto. Hers will be a voice in the wilderness at the present moment. And I feel that even the biased, and in some cases, bribed journalists of Europe will shudder to take as gospel truth all the manifest and one-sided exaggerations and falsehoods circulated by the British Government if India is not represented. I feel too that this non-violent battle does not need the same kind of propaganda that a battle based on violence would. Thirdly, there is the practical difficulty that you mention of finding one who can be at all heard. The only person I have in view is for the moment Andrews, since the Poet is unavailable. Andrews will certainly be heard in the quarters that matter.

I hope you are keeping well and that God will permit you to hold out till the battle is fairly over in India.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi
146. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

27 October 1929.—Visited by the young Hindu Manilal Patel, who has spent two years in Germany, studying philosophy at Marburg University. . . . He has worked in the two Ashrams of Gandhi and Tagore, and he brings us two pieces of cloth, one made in each of them. He is very concerned and pessimistic about coming events in India. He sees no other possible way at present than that of Gandhi.

147. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1929.—India proclaims her independence. Gandhi joins with Motilal Nehru in the appeal to his people. The die is cast.

148. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

January 1930.—My Vie de Vivekananda et l’Evangile universel is published by Stock on 6 January. It coincides with the Indian Declaration of Independence at the opening of the Congress of Lahore, by Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi.

149. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

22 April.—Visited by André Philip, a Frenchman who spent some months last year in India, studying it from the economic, syndical and co-operative points of view. He saw Gandhi, who made a very strong impression on him.
(The dominating feature in his recollection of the Mahatma is an irony which in no way detracts from his faith and humility. All agree on Gandhi's power of fascination, though no one can explain it. The thing which most sticks in my mind among Philip's recollections is the independence of judgment he noticed among the two hundred or so members of Gandhi's Ashram. They all hold Gandhi in veneration, but none of them hesitate to say so when on some point or other they do not agree with him. And Gandhi likes people to contradict him. He has made of his disciples a nursery of future leaders, who will be able to do without each other and without him. This is perhaps the rarest thing to be found in a great man. On the other hand, in Tagore's Ashram the disciples are shadows who melt away in the sunlight of the master.)

150. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

22 May.—Visited by an Argentinian journalist, Arias, correspondent with Critica, a major Buenos Aires newspaper, who has been sent to India to follow the independence movement. He has approached me beforehand so that I can tell him how things are there, and it certainly has not been a waste of time, as he knows almost nothing of the country to which he is going. It was not without difficulty that he got his passport visa from the British Government. The British Consul in Berlin said to him: "What does it matter to you what's happening with us? What is there in India that could interest the Argentine?" The powerful Argentinian paper had to exert some pressure in London. I have given him introductions in Calcutta and Ahmedabad, to Miss Slade and Reginald Reynolds, staying in Gandhi's Ashram. But by the time he reaches India I wonder whether there will still be a single disciple of Gandhi outside prison. The
movement is spreading widely, and Gandhi in prison cuts
the figure of a sovereign on his throne. The European press,
which only a year ago pretended not to know about him
or spoke of him ironically, now treats him with astonished
respect.

151. Romain Rolland to Dilip Kumar Roy

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
3 June 1930

... What you note from Gandhi’s words about art
seems to me the most interesting of all—but you didn’t
make the right reply. You should have said: “Humanity
is always advancing, and the intellectual elite forms its van¬
guard, its pioneers. It is they who pierce the roads by which
the whole of humanity will later pass. Thus it is false to pre¬
sent this elite as being separate from the masses of hu¬
manity because it goes on ahead. It would be a bad leader of
men who wanted to make his vanguard march in the main
body of the army.”

... You can add this reply, if you think fit, as a
footnote to your interview with Gandhi.

152. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

June 1930.— I am receiving many letters asking me to
intervene on India’s behalf. To one of them forwarded to
me by Monde, I send this reply (3 June):

“I have received many letters from Europeans wanting
to start a movement of protest against Gandhi’s imprison¬
ment. I understand the emotions which have been aroused,
and I invite Monde to pass on to India the expression of our
entire sympathy with her in her claim for independence.
She has the right to it, and she has the strength to take it. But it would be useless to protest against the arrest of Gandhi and his volunteers, and it would even be contrary to Gandhi’s intentions. Gandhi never thought when he set this powerful movement in motion that he and his followers would come through unscathed. He deliberately walked out towards prison and death. He wrote on 27 February that at the end of such a campaign ‘not one single civil resister would remain alive or free’. These are not mere words. All those who really have a faith are ready for personal sacrifice and they do not seek to avoid it, for they know that the victory of a great cause is never bought at a lesser price. India is so convinced of this that it is congratulations, not protests, that are being sent these days to Mrs. Gandhi on the Mahatma’s imprisonment. (Young India, 15 May).

We are witnessing the inexorable development of an Actus tragicus, which Gandhi foresaw, willed and commanded. The victory of India lies at the end. The British Empire may use whatever arms it wishes, but its days are numbered. Let us not be deceived by its displays of power and bluster! From this day forth it is a hunted animal fighting for its life. The British Empire was built on a pile of monstrous injustices, on the murderous exploitation of millions of men; these millions of men have rediscovered their own strength. They only have to shrug their shoulders and the British Empire is already trembling on its foundations. We shall see it crumble, and may all empires based on pillage follow in its fall! We too need to settle our accounts with humanity!

P.S. Need I add that my condemnation of the British Empire in no way affects my love and esteem (which Gandhi shares) for the English as individuals? Many of them are my friends. Some of them are among India’s noblest champions. But we all pay for the crimes of our governments. The same thing will happen to us French.” (I give this appeal
the title "India Will Conquer"; it appears in Monde about 12-14 June.)

153. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

5 June 1930.—Visited by Mrs. V. Keller, a teacher at the New School of Odenwald, who has just spent nearly a year in India. She also visited Gandhi and Tagore, and travelled through a large part of the country. The dominating figure in India at present is incontestably Gandhi. Even in the Ramakrishna Mission, which makes a point of keeping out of politics, all the monks and even the superior are illuminated by his thought and speak of him with a radiant smile. Mrs. V. Keller, who nevertheless is good at observing and noting amusing little details (which aren't lacking in Gandhi), was still charmed by his personality: above all his absolute straightforwardness, his cloudless and unvarying honesty, and his attentive interest in everything surrounding him, large and small. He has the ability to carry off actions which might appear ridiculous without raising a smile: (before dinner he sends for his false teeth in full view of everyone, puts them in, calmly tries them out, then after eating he removes them and puts them back in a glass of water). He is adored and venerated by all who surround him; he converses with them on an equal footing, asking and giving advice with familiar good humour.

154. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

31 August 1930—C. F. Andrews comes to lunch. . . . (He) says that Tagore has come much closer to Gandhi this year; he has understood his grandeur, and the last meeting between the two men last February was beneficial to both of them.
155. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

14 September 1930.—Kalidas Nag back from a long lecture tour through Europe. I learn from him—a thing which the papers hide—that there are at present twenty-five thousand Indians in prison; and that even the Moderates who have made themselves intermediaries between the British Government and Gandhi share the same desire for national independence, which they will defend at the Round Table Conference.

156. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

September 1930.—The young English Quaker, Reginald Reynolds, who played a vigorous part in Gandhi's last campaign, writes to me from London (15 September). He tells me of his fruitless efforts in England, and of his sufferings in his Quaker environment, which he attacks for its false pacifism, cowardly and shifty. "They are always thinking about 'Peace', and they prefer peace even if founded on violence and injustice to civil resistance against tyranny, which (for them) evokes anarchy. . . . They cannot understand that their visible (apparent) peace is sometimes a violent peace which profanes peace of mind." He also speaks of the "crushing disillusionment" of English youth, which had believed until now in the "idealism" of the Labour Party in England, and now see idealism denied in the public interest. "Once again, religion and the social gospel have been used to deceive the credulous enthusiasm of youth. . . . The professionals of religion and politics have betrayed us. We know now that we are betrayed, but we are few and without
guides. Against violence and cynical ‘moderation’, we feel ourselves powerless. I myself am only 25 years old. I have faith and I know I am intelligent; but I lack strength. I was born to serve some great leader, and he whom I wish to serve is imprisoned in Yeravda. I write all this to you because I know that you are one of the only men in the West who can understand everything. I know that you have clear sight and that you can see above the battle. I implore you to send me a few lines in reply. Remember that I am a pupil who has lost his master! . . .”

He signs: “Your devoted son.”

. . . . (I give him a few directives, a few ideas he can act on, one of which is to draft a gospel of action for Europe, based on Gandhi’s latest writings.)

. . . . “It’s no use shutting Gandhi up in a prison, his spirit is and always will be present among those who know him—like the spirit of the Man who came to sit at table with his disciples in Emmaus. You will bear the reflection of his halo upon you for the whole of your life. Pass it on! . . .”

157. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

19 September 1930.—Visited by Sir J. C. Bose. . . . He is entirely possessed and consumed by the thought of India and her struggles. He can think of nothing else. All his work has stopped, and during the two hours we spend together, India is the sole object of our conversation. . . . He expresses himself with pessimism and care. He knows—that India will win, but he thinks of the overwhelming suffering, both today and tomorrow. He sees India without arms, without instruction, cruelly oppressed, gagged and blinded by England, and he wonders what will become of her after the death of the two great statesmen in whom he has placed his trust: Gandhi and Motilal Nehru (who is very ill).
158. Romain Rolland’s Message on Gandhi’s Birthday

_Villeneuve, Lake Geneva
1 October 1930_

Gandhi, for us, is not only the heroic guide of his immense people claiming its liberty—and about to take it. He is the surest, the purest spiritual light shining in the dark skies of our time. Amidst the tempests in which the sinking ship of our civilization risks vanishing with all its cargo, he is the star that shows us the way—the only way still open that leads to salvation.

This way is within us. It is the supreme energy, the energy of heroic non-acceptance. It is the refusal hurled by the proud soul against injustice and violence. It is the revolution of the spirit.

This revolution does not breed opposition between races, classes, nations and religions; it brings them together. It awakens in every man the deep fire of the One Soul, which made humanity rise from the void into which in its madness it now aspires to return. It reminds the Christians of how to be Christians (which they no longer are except in form); it reminds the “free spirits” how to be free (which they no longer are except in empty speeches which mask their servility); it reminds all men how to respect in each other equal sons of the same Father—the same _Dei Optimi Maximi_—the spirit of light and love, who, as on the first days, “when darkness was upon the face of the deep”, (as it still is today) “moved on the face of the waters”.

¹Text sent to Reginald Reynolds for publication on the occasion of Gandhi’s birthday.
159. Gandhi to Madeleine Slade

3 January 1931

.... I was sorry to learn about Romain Rolland’s health. Do please send him my love and tell him I often think of him and pray that he may be long spared in the service of humanity....

160. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland¹

Telegram postmarked 5 January 1931

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Is convalescence satisfactory

Mira

161. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland²

Telegram postmarked 6 January 1931

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Thanksgiving Love

Mira

¹,² Romain Rolland had been very ill in December 1930. These two telegrams are certainly replies to letters and telegrams from Madeleine Rolland which have not been found.
162. Gandhi to Premabehn Kantak

Yeravda Mandir
January 11, 1931

Chi. Prema,

I was glad that prayers were offered for Rolland. Even apart from his relation with me, his sincerity draws one towards him. . . .

Blessings from
Bapu

163. Gandhi to Madeleine Slade

January 12, 1931

.... I have your letter and the post card. Let us thank God that Rolland is quite out of the wood. The world needs him for many years yet. His work, so far as we can see, is not finished. Please send him my loving regards and say he must hold on for a while. Premabehn has described to me the prayer you had for his recovery. I do not know that these prayers add a single second to the life prayed for. But they elevate those who pray and comfort those for whom the prayers are offered. The comfort has the appearance of prolongation of life.

Bapu
164. Gandhi to Madeleine Slade

Simla
July 19, 1931

... I followed your advice and read the introduction\(^1\) in the “library”.\(^2\) The original must be very good. I marvel at the immense industry that Romain Rolland gives to all he writes. The introduction is another sketch like the one he wrote before, bringing his opinion up to date. ...

Bapu

165. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Ahmedabad
August 15, 1931

Dear Friend,

I had your most affectionate letter.\(^3\) How I would have loved to see you if I had gone to England, but it was not to be. I feel that it was God’s will that I should not go. But I am not yet without hope that some day, somehow we shall meet in the flesh.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

\(^1\) By Romain Rolland to the abridged French edition of An Autobiography

\(^2\) Gandhiji means “lavatory”.

\(^3\) This letter has not been found.
166. Gandhi to Romain Rolland\textsuperscript{1}

*Telegram postmarked: Lugano
31 August 1931*

1568 Rajputana Schveningenradio 103 19 31/8 1310
Marseilles eleventh morning will health permit you meet and travel Calais—Gandhi

167. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

*September 1931.—We reply by cable\textsuperscript{2} that we shall try to join him at Dijon and travel together from Dijon to Paris.*

168. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

*Telegram postmarked 7 September 1931
Handed in 6 September 1931 Cairo*

Rolland, Villeneuve Vaud

Following from Suez stop special reaches Dijon after midnight could you not come Marseilles where we reach early morning stopping seven hours trust health will permit you travel but in no case will I leave Europe without seeing you therefore would not like you endanger your health shall be delighted any case see your sister Marseilles if possible.

Gandhi

\textsuperscript{1} This telegram was sent on from Villeneuve to Lugano, where Romain Rolland was staying at the time.

\textsuperscript{2} The text of this cable from Romain Rolland to Gandhi is missing.
169. **Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary**

*September 1931.*—Gandhi cables me from his ship, the *Rajputana*, which left Bombay on 29 August, that he is arriving at Marseilles on 11 September, and he hopes we can meet him on the train journey between Marseilles and Calais. Having been delayed a fortnight by his tergiversations and discussions with the Viceroy of India, all he has time to do is to go directly to London for the opening of the Round Table Conferences. He cannot stop at Villeneuve.

We reply by cable that we shall try to join him at Dijon and travel together from Dijon to Paris. But another cable from him, very long and affectionate, says that the train will not pass through Dijon until after midnight, and it would be better, if my health permits, if we came to Marseilles, where we would have seven hours to talk between the arrival of the liner and the departure of the special train, the Bombay Express. He adds that in any case he will not leave Europe without coming to see me.

170. **Romain Rolland to Gandhi**

Telegram  
*Mahatma Gandhi on Board Rajputana*  
*10 September 1931*

My sister and our friends Privat meeting you arriving Marseilles Tuesday Hotel de Geneve
171. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

September 1931.—Being unable to go to Marseilles myself, I give my sister the following message for Gandhi (10 September):

Villeneuve
10 September 1931

My dear Friend, it grieves me that I cannot come with my sister and greet you as you arrive on European soil, but my health does not allow it. I came back from Lugano to Villeneuve planning to go on to Marseilles, but on returning from a sunny to a rainy climate I caught a chill again, and I have to spend these few days shut up in the Villa Olga. I hope you will be able to come here later on, on the way back to India—so that we shall meet in this life.

My thoughts go with you on your noble and arduous mission to London. I should like to believe in the political wisdom of the men who govern the British Empire, and I hope they will be able to reach an understanding with you and with India which it will not be given to them to achieve later if they miss this last chance of agreement. But what seems to me no less essential is that you should maintain your close intellectual contact with the people—the people of India and the oppressed peoples of the world—so that they always recognize in you their just and staunch champion who speaks for them and surrenders none of their rights. Their faith in you, their moral solidarity with you, is the salvation of humanity in these troubled times when violence is everywhere on the point of bursting the last barriers restraining it. It will seek every
chance to create misunderstandings between you and the masses in revolt, so as to drag them along in its torrent. For those of us in Europe, for the free and disinterested men observing this vigil before the combat, there is no hope but in a complete renewal of the social order, replacing the capitalist imperialism which would subjugate nations body and soul, by a sovereign organization of labour. The whole question for us now is to see that this inevitable revolution is carried out by non-violence and by love and is not left to the blind forces of hatred, which would breathe destruction over the whole world. For these coming conflicts, you are our acknowledged and proven general. Even if you were to die in the thick of the battle, your example would still remain as a guide to us. This is why nothing must shake our union; let us bind it still closer! When you are in London, in your negotiations with the Empire, feel yourself strong with the strength of the people—the people of Europe as well as of India—whose voice and whose highest conscience you are! The best of Europe is with you. I greet you with affection and respect.

Romain Rolland

172. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Telegram postmark Villeneuve 11 September 1931
Handed in at Marseilles 15-52h. Received 17-05h.
Romain Rolland
Villeneuve Suisse

Sorry to miss you but glad you did not take any risk delighted see your sister and friends Privat love from whole party hope see you early

Gandhi
173. Gandhi’s Interview to *The New York Times*

*Marseilles*

*September 11, 1931*

The only engagement I have made is in the nature of pilgrimage. I have promised to visit my friend, Romain Rolland, the celebrated French writer, who is lying sick at his home near Territet, Switzerland, and whose sister, Medeleine Rolland, was among the old friends who greeted me on my arrival at Marseilles.

174. Gandhi’s Speech at Meeting of Students, Marseilles¹

*September 11, 1931*

Since I visited France as a student to see the Exhibition held at Paris in 1890, some greater and more permanent link between you and me have been formed. The forger of these links is your own distinguished countryman Romain Rolland who constituted himself an interpreter of the humble message that I have been trying to deliver to my countrymen for the last 30 years or more.

¹ The meeting was organized by the Association of the present and past students of Marseilles to honour the “spiritual ambassador of India”. The report has been extracted from Mahadev Desai’s “London Letter”.
175. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

13 September 1931.—Visited by an aristocratic Indian intellectual with a handsome light-coloured turban, P. Seshadri, head of the University of Agra and Professor of English literature.

.... This distinguished man can scarcely conceal his resentment (and scorn) for Gandhi, who has so little esteem for literature and whose magical ascendancy is diverting all present spiritual energies in India towards national action.

176. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

September 1931.—Since I cannot go to Marseilles, I give my sister a message for Gandhi (10 September).

My sister and the Privats are there, on Friday 11 September at 6 o’clock in the morning, on the mole at Marseilles, for the arrival of the liner Rajputana which carries Gandhi and his companions. Despite the unprecedented swarm of journalists and photographers, my sister is immediately introduced to Gandhi’s presence, thanks to Andrews and Miss Slade, and he shows himself extremely affectionate. They are privileged to stay with him in his narrow 2nd class cabin, seated on the same bunk, for four hours, from 7 to 11 a.m., while he receives the journalists and official delegates. She (and the Privats) retain from those unique moments an impression of unreserved admiration and love (and yet my sister has a critical mind and sees clearly). Gandhi seems to be in marvellous physical and moral form; calm, attentive, smiling or laughing through the gaps in
his teeth, always simple, honest, spontaneous and reflective at the same time, in control of himself, his very sharp and precise gaze going right through people and penetrating all their deviousness at first glance. Mirabehn (Miss Slade) also commands admiration by her regal dignity. Both are good enough to think affectionately of their absent friend in Villeneuve, to whom Gandhi refers in his speech to the students of Marseilles. (Though the Paris press is careful to efface this tribute and all reference to my name from their reports.) And Gandhi sends me a telegram at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, before leaving for Calais by the Bombay Express, promising to come and see me.

177. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

September 1931.—Impressions of Gandhi from my sister and the Privats. He is small, with a well-shaped head, not bald but shaven bare; ugly and likeable (in the end he appears charming), a receding brow, a large turned-up nose, a more or less toothless mouth (which is normally closed, but when he laughs, he shows off the gap in his front teeth, and the Privats ended up by finding this made his laughter all the more irresistible),—his complexion not very dark, almost European,—very sharp eyes behind a large pair of glasses, which look at you full in the face and see right through you,—much mischief and humour, immediately followed by great seriousness and concentration,—a very good voice, grave and tenor (without Tagore's lofty intonations, but he makes an effort to keep it on a medium level, calm, even and without inflexions); he handles the English language with purity and perfection, without ever correcting himself and without stumbling; each of his sentences is thought out and says exactly what he wants to say. He is well built, quite broad and strong in the chest
and the upper arms, with refined and cool hands. But his forearms and above all his legs are extremely skinny (perhaps as a result of the Indian habit of sitting cross-legged): for the last two years, he says, he has not been able to speak in public in anything other than a sitting position. Meticulously clean (as are all in his entourage). No detail escapes him.

Privat says: "I was afraid I'd be meeting a 'man of God', a preacher or a visionary. But I met a Socrates. It was Socrates that he most reminded me of. (Particularly in profile.)"

As if quite unconsciously, he says some outrageous things—turning the whole world upside down. Scolding an English journalist, Slochum, for falsely attributing to him a loyalist attitude leading him to bow down before the Prince of Wales, he says: "I have nothing at all against that young man. Personally I wish him well. . . . If I meet an ant, I look at it with sympathy, I do not seek to crush it; but I do not go and bow down before it!" (All this in the most gentle and natural of tones.) My sister hears it and thinks she must have been dreaming. Slochum yields and takes it in good part.

Also characteristic was the scene at the reception of the British Consul's representative, who had arrived by air from London to bear Gandhi a letter from the Ministry bidding him welcome and asking him what preparations he wanted for his arrival. Gandhi made him wait his turn, after the interviews he had agreed to give (5 minutes each: he is forever pulling his big watch out of his belt to check); and when he came in, Gandhi scarcely bothered to get up to greet him; the little Consul, affected, ridiculous, embarrassed and talkative, carried on paying drawing-room courtesies to everyone present while Gandhi, quietly and very seriously, slowly read the letter, weighing up every term in it, then dismissed his visitor, saying he would
think about it and let him have his reply before midday.

He firmly, clearly and severely refused to be present at the banquet prepared for him; allowing his suite to go if they wanted, he himself made his escape, and for an hour no one knew where he was; it later transpired from an eyewitness account that he went in search of some of the Marseilles dockers on the ship. They conversed by gestures and grimaces. After that he was in a delighted mood, as he always is when he can make contact with the people; they for their part, slapped their chests and said: “Now there’s a man with his heart in the right place, a real Communist.”

During the three or four hours he spent sitting in his cabin—my sister on his left—receiving the interviewers or official delegates, the door occasionally opened slightly and some Hindu Lascar from the ship slipped in to feast his eyes on him in silence, then come closer, take his hand between his own without a word and withdraw, after carrying his right hand to his heart or his mouth, or else, more timidly, stayed in a corner for a few minutes to contemplate him in ecstasy—then go away. More than twenty people came and went in this way; this was not the least moving thing that happened.

178. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Kingsley Hall,
London E. 3
29-9-31

Beloved revered Brother,

.... I now have your letter\textsuperscript{1} enclosing one with regard to Bapu touring in the south of Germany and other places. Would that it could be! He would love to meet and talk

\textsuperscript{1} This letter has not been found.
with those eager souls. But who knows what may be possible? There is only a faint chance.

When I read the beautiful words you write to me at the end of your letter, I feel overwhelmed. The greater the divine joy of life in Bapu’s guidance (and it is ever swelling), the deeper and the more unforgettable becomes my gratitude to him through whom I found that Path.

When we shall be able to come to Villeneuve is still unknown. The struggle here is long and hard. But as soon as ever Bapu can get free his first move will be to come, at last, to you.

Yours in deep affection,

Mira

179. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Kingsley Hall
London E 3
2-10-31

Beloved Friend,

We share with you the anxiety regarding Bapu’s European tour. I hope very much that we shall come first to Villeneuve, and talk things over before launching forth.

..... It never has been, and never will, in this world, be possible for me to express all I feel for you in words, all you have been and are to me, and the love and thankfulness with which I cherish every memory and thought of you.

But though I cannot express myself, I know that you must know what is in my heart, for love needs no words.

The expectation of the now fast approaching moment when I may again look into those eyes which led me to the light is ever welling up within me.

Your ever devoted,

Mira
180. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Telegram postmarked 18-10-1931 Sellyoak

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Bapu seriously contemplating European tour stop calling group of friends immediately confer possible programme stop would Privat like attend stop writing

Mira

181. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Telegram No postmark October 1931 London

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Obliged abandon continental tour stop hope arrive Villeneuve end month for two three days writing

Mira

182. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

18 October 1931

Dear Friend,

I was grieved to learn from your letter to Mira that Birukoff was no more. Through Sundaram now I have a beautiful note from him. This was written just before his death. Will you please convey to his widow my respectful condolences and tell her how grieved I am that the cruel hand of death has deprived me of the pleasure of meeting one who knew Tolstoy so intimately.
Hoping to meet you soon,

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

183. Extract From Romain Rolland’s Diary

November 1931.—I must transcribe the following letter which I am sending to Gandhi in London, through Mira, his disciple and my dear friend.

9 November 1931

My dear sister Mira,

Many loving thanks for your letters, which go to my heart. I am touched by your memories of me; my memories of you, in return, are among those very rare ones which bring holiness into my life. This life of mine has been remarkably troubled and disarrayed by all the winds that blow, both within and without, and it is only by will-power that I have held my frail barque on a straight course, assailed from all sides and suspended between Pascal’s two abyssms: the Void and the All, which are perhaps the two faces of the One. In this tragic passage—not mine alone, but that of a whole age of humanity—my guide has been the stars whose light penetrates the clouds; Mahatmaji is one of those stars, and you are one of the rays linking my eyes to his. Thanks to you, it is as if I were in permanent contact with them. I see in your last letter how greatly your plan to travel in Europe is threatened. I understand only too well the commanding reasons which may force Gandhi to hurry home, and I have always foreseen and feared this, possibility. If this is the way things go, one can only regretfully bow to the inevitable; I should certainly not allow any egoistic considerations of mine to enter into the decision.
I should merely like to make Mahatmaji aware, through you, how critical the present hour is, both in a social and moral sense, for Europe and hence for the whole world—Asia, and even India, whose destinies are strongly conditioned by those of Europe. The spiritual crisis—that which faces the best souls, who wish to *act* and to *serve*—has reached a critical point in Europe. After twelve years (since the peace) of gropings and hesitations, most of us have come to accept that the maintenance of the existing social state in the whole of the West (in its broadest sense, as far as the Russian frontier and including America) is *impossible*. This social state is corrupted to its roots, and it generates ever more venomous injustices; it must be thoroughly cleansed and transformed. On this, non-resisters, pacifists, Quakers and Communist revolutionaries are in agreement. (Some shout it from the roof-tops; others whisper it.) But when we move from the problem of thought to action, total confusion reigns in people's minds. The races of Europe, more divided amongst themselves than those of India by prejudices and conflicts artificially maintained for a thousand years or more, find themselves confronted by a common enemy, infinitely more dangerous and harder to fight against than the enemy with whom you in India are about to grapple. For our enemy is almost impossible to grasp, and has no name. It is not a foreign master, creeping in like a maggot under a nation's skin, nor is it a national master, with whom one can, and must, settle accounts man to man. It is an international combination of capitalist interests and enterprises, secretly including the great industrial and commercial tycoons of a whole bloc of nations (even nations officially hostile to each other, like France and Germany) and spreading its net over the whole world. For twenty or thirty years now it has been working in the shadows. Its intrigues in the pre-war years have been precisely traced, and during the war it strengthened
its position in monstrous fashion, as revealed by a large number of publications and even public revelations in parliamentary debates—subsequently strangled and stifled by occult financial powers. During the war, national policies and even, in some circumstances (such as the Briey mining basin in Lorraine), troop movements were subordinated to them. In the last twelve years their supremacy has become established; most national governments on the continent are no more than screens for their activities, and nearly all the European press is subject to them. How can one fight? Pacifist organizations are senile almost as soon as they are born; they waste all their energy, most of which is merely verbal anyway, against false targets; for the hidden masters of politics and the shady international businessmen use peace as well as war, one after another, to serve their profits and their domination. The non-resisters, the conscientious objectors, are all too often isolated individuals, widely separated; and apart from an elite, they lack a sufficiently deeply rooted religious conscience; they may perhaps save their own skins (and even that I doubt), or, at best, their souls. But to save your own soul is not enough; if you don’t give other people efficient help in saving theirs, you don’t save your soul; you lose it. They need to organize themselves in a severe, “military” way, as you have done in India, and it isn’t happening; they haven’t even started! And yet time is pressing. We can no longer count as we used to do on the slow evolutionary rhythm of events. The same accelerated movement which carries along the European machine-age and its inventions is also arousing peoples and states. A social conflict or a world war which in the past would have taken decades or a half-centuries to ripen now takes shape, swells and erupts like an abscess in a few years. Resistance and defence must be just as prompt—and, if necessary, as overwhelming—as the attack.

What sort of resistance can we envisage? The revolu-
tionaries of Europe have their direct way, brutal and immediate. The "non-resisters" of Europe have *nothing* but their isolated and sporadic refusals. Many of them know this, and are troubled by it. They are bound to be attracted by the Revolution, and they will enter into it without any methods of their own to hold up against it. Thus they are bound to be submerged.

I wanted to set out the main features of this crisis in my letter (for Gandhi through you, Mira), in case we don’t have the time to speak of it personally. I’m sure Gandhi already senses this crisis, but it may be of use for me to write it down for him during his last days in Europe, when he’s bound to be closer to it in spirit—and before he becomes totally absorbed again in his great Indian movement. . . .

**184. Romain Rolland to N. S. R. Iyengar**

*Villeneuve Vaud, Switzerland*

28 November 1931

. . . . Thank you for your letter of 14 November. I’m sorry, but I cannot write anything new on Gandhi and the Hindu cause. I have too many other things to do, and in any case I have already published enough works and articles on the question.


. . . . P.S. As to your request concerning the translation of my book on Gandhi, I know it has appeared in India in several dialects, and you would do well to check what the situation is. All the royalties due to me in India for books about Gandhi and the Gandhist movement are to be paid in my name to the Sabarmati Ashram. . . .
185. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Telegram (postmarked 28 November 1931, London)

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Departure postponed arriving Villeneuve definitely sixth evening and leaving eleventh evening stop please decide with Madame Guieysse best date Geneva meeting Mira

186. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Telegram (postmarked 29 November 1931, London)

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Can you reserve three rooms sixth to eleventh pension Rosset otherwise hotel du Port for friends Mira

187. Madeleine Slade and Mahadev Desai to Romain Rolland

Telegram (postmarked 30 November 1931, London)

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Re private telegrams if you think workers and international meeting should both be organized Lausanne best date Tuesday Bapu agrees Mira Mahadev
188. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Telegram (postmarked 1 December 1931, London)

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Bapu's cold disappeared and health good love

Mira

189. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Telegram (postmarked 4 December 1931, London)

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Please reserve two more rooms hotel du Port love

Mira

190. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Telegram (postmarked 5 December 1931, London)

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Will not settle Italy till after discussion

Villeneuve love

Mira
191. Romain Rolland to P. N. Natarajan  
(Switzerland)  

Villeneuve Villa Olga  
Saturday, 5 December 1931  

... I do not doubt that Gandhi will be pleased to receive you, but I cannot commit him to anything. As soon as he arrives (tomorrow, Sunday, in the evening) I shall pass on your request, and I expect he will fix a date and time for a meeting. (He is staying at Villeneuve from the 6th to the 11th). In any case I know already that he is setting aside a period each day to meet people, from eleven till midday. . . .

192. Extract from Gandhi's Diary  


Villeneuve, December 7, Monday.—Spun 185 rounds. From 10 to 12-30 with Rolland. Did not go for a walk in the morning because of the rain but had sound sleep. . . . When the sun appeared in the afternoon, I went for a stroll. Wrote letters to Hoare in the evening. Cable from Vallabhbhai; replied to it. Cable to Sir Jagdish Bose, to Ghose.

Villeneuve, December 8, Tuesday.—Spun 170 rounds. Spent two and half hours in the morning with Rolland. Three meetings in the afternoon in Lausanne. Returned at midnight.

Villeneuve, December 9, Wednesday.—Spun 160 rounds.
Visited a poor woman's house and International Sanatorium; held prayers at Romain Rolland's house. Presented a shawl from Madame Cama to Madeleine Rolland.

*Villeneuve, December 10, Thursday.*—Spun 204 rounds. Meeting in Geneva, talks with Rolland, speech at a Chillon School, talk with Toma, talk with the Arabs.

*On way to Rome, December 11, Friday.*—Spun 178 rounds. Talk with Rolland; Sir Cowasji met me. Left Villeneuve at 2-30. Girls from Indu's school called. Was provided a State car in Milan. Large crowds had gathered on the way.

193. **Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary**

*December 1931.*—This is the time when we at last receive the long-promised visit from Gandhi. It was delayed a month or two by the slow proceedings of the Round Table Conference. (And these delays have played their part as well in my sister's state of nervous exhaustion; she would have preferred to leave Villeneuve long ago.) Many letters and telegrams exchanged with London through Mira (Miss Slade). We also have to defend ourselves against a shower of letters, telephone calls and requests of all sorts provoked by Gandhi's announced arrival. Some of them are strange, some absurd, some completely crazy. (An Italian lady writes to Gandhi through me to ask him the ten winning numbers in the next Lotto. . . . ) The Swiss German "nudists" (Werner Zimmermann) want to come Gandhi, and he has to be protected. Disturbed minds and "Sons of God" emerge from the earth like snails. Nice young people offer to come at night and play little tunes on the flute or the violin under the Mahatma's window. The local dairymen's union telephone officiously to say that they hope to be "purveyors to the king of India" during his stay
The press agencies set up camp around the villa, the Lausanne police authorities get worried, and the Villeneuve hotels are full of “undesirables” coming to look at the strange guest. I offer the young Japanese sculptor Takata the wherewithal to come from Paris to see and sketch Gandhi.

Gandhi leaves London on Saturday 5 December, spends the evening in Paris where he addresses a meeting at Magic City and stays with our friend Louisette Guieysse. He sets out on Sunday morning for Territet, where he arrives at 6 p.m., in the dark, and in bad weather; my health does not permit me to go to meet him.

(I am scarcely able to leave the house once during the whole time that he is my guest, except to take him to Villeneuve station the day he leaves.) But Edmond Privat and his wife go as far as Paris to escort him, and my sister is waiting for him on Territet station. For the whole of the Swiss part of the journey, from Vallorbe, he is feted. Here, Dr. Niehans and Dr. Perret have made their cars available for him for the whole period of his stay. (But he makes little or no use of them, as he always tries to take the simplest means of transport available, which is third class on the railways.)

Our villas form an enclave in Byron Park, which now belongs to an English school (Chillon College) full of highly imperialist young bourgeois. (There have been noisy celebrations recently of the Labour Party’s defeat in the elections.) Three quarters of an hour before the arrival, these young gentlemen assemble along the roadside and indulge in various demonstrations of bantering and mocking character. Fortunately the Swiss crowd invading the park and the photographers with their magnesium flash force the young Englishmen to be careful, and when the Mahatma finally arrives nothing worse is heard than a few voices in a well-shaded corner at the bottom of the slope, intoning a not very harmonious God save the King! (Next day the young gentlemen are told off in their school, so thoroughly that
they can be seen hanging round the villa with respectful curiosity, with a new sense of the importance of the Indian guest. Even their headmaster, Mr. Pym, comes to ask to be received, and invited Gandhi to speak at the school, which Gandhi does on the evening before his departure.)

Waiting on the threshold of the Villa Lionnette, in the dark, the rain and the poor light of our electric lamps, I finally see the little man arriving in his white burnous, bare-headed under the drizzling rain, his bare legs skinny and stilt-like, bespectacled, toothless and laughing—he always laughs nervously each time he comes to see me; it's like a welcome greeting—as he makes the Indian gesture of reverence: hands joined and raised to the height of the mouth. He rests his cheek against my shoulder and puts his right arm round me; I feel against my cheek his grey head with its shaven pate and its rough, moist skin—the kiss of St. Dominic and St. Francis. Mira follows—the noble features and august bearing of Demeter. Then three Indians; the two secretaries, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal, and a young son of Gandhi, Devdas. (He is 30, but could pass for less than 20; his face is round and happy.) We go up to the first floor where we have prepared for Gandhi the room with a terrace to the front of the house, with three windows, one overlooking the Rhone valley and the Dent du Midi, the other two (window and door) overlooking the Villa Olga and the Lake of Geneva. Almost at once, after exchanging a few words, Gandhi and the Indians sit cross-legged on the floor—my sister and I on chairs—the electric light is switched off and they say their 7 o’clock prayers. Each day they consist of a series of three chants; ancient hymns with Sanskrit texts which Gandhi has translated into Hindi (the first is taken from the Gita), always concluding with the same canticle to Rama and Sita, intoned by

1 Gandhi and his followers pray again at (?) 3 a.m.
Mira’s grave, warm voice and repeated in refrain by the gathered company.

Of the other two, the first is very much like the old Gregorian chant; the second, much more ornamented, with aspirated and vocalized nasal sounds, is of the same race but more oriental-sounding; only a trained Indian can sing it (Mira tells me that she has never succeeded). These fine recitatives, calmly unfolding in the night, are separated and followed by periods of absolute silence, the last being the longest; then quietly Gandhi gives the order to put on the light, and conversation is resumed. It could be an impressive effect; but though I appreciate the beauty of the chants, I feel foreign and detached: whether they are Hindu or Christian, these ritual prayers to the divinity are no longer for me. They merely accentuate my sense of isolation.

We leave Gandhi to his supper (about forty dates, raw vegetables, goat’s milk) and fix a time for tomorrow morning. He insists that we should meet in my house, in the Villa Olga, to save me the trouble of crossing the garden. Mira and the Indians come to share our supper. (They too are vegetarians, but less rigorously so; no eggs or cheese, but they eat cooked vegetables and noodles.) The telephone keeps ringing from one end of the evening to the other, and Macha will have a lot to do.

The next day, Monday, is Gandhi’s “silence day”. He says nothing, but he listens; he jokingly says that it’s the best moment for other people to make him listen to anything they want him to hear. He has to sit through everything without replying (there is just one concession; he allows himself to give some short written answers). He arrives punctually at 10 in the morning, having slept, unusually for him, until 8 o’clock. (In London he allowed only three or four hours’ sleep each night for himself and his followers; they would come home at 1 o’clock in the morning and get
up again at 3 for prayers. Thus they are all visibly very tired—Gandhi himself the least of them. In addition Gandhi caught a bad cold in London’s November fogs; but his solid constitution very soon overcame it without it interrupting his business or his meetings.) So he comes up my stairs, heralded by his jerky little laugh, and I settle him in the large folding armchair near my table; I am resting my elbows on the table and leaning towards him from my swivelling desk armchair. He at once takes his bare feet out of his sandals and folds his legs under him, surrounding himself with his burnous. He is wearing his broad spectacles, whose lenses consist of two half-moons framed together for distant and close vision at the same time. His complexion is weathered rather than dark, bronzed by the sun. The profile of his head is elongated, and the impression is accentuated by his missing front teeth which reduce his jaw to something like a rat’s muzzle; his lower lip is rather large and protruding, and his upper lip bears a thin grey moustache. His nose is straight, a little sunk, and crushed at the end with his broad nostrils. His ears stick out considerably. His brow is broad and well-formed; deep wrinkles become visible when he is speaking, but his cheeks and the rest of his face are of strong substance and show no signs of the network of wrinkles usually seen on European faces. The first impression he gives of fragility is deceptive; his constitution is solid. His large, skinny hands, clutching at the burnous on his arms, are all bones and protruding, swollen veins and muscles. Their perpetual twitching (together with what one can sense of his feet under the burnous) reveals to me the underlying nervousness of this calm and always self-controlled (though lively) man. (Mira later confirms this impression. She tells me how hypersensitive his body is, under the control of his mind. When she massages his legs, for all the tender care she puts into the task, the least grain in the oil rolled under her fingers causes
Gandhi a little twinge of repressed pain.) Present at the conversation are my sister who does the translation (Gandhi speaks and understands only English), Mira sitting on the carpet at our feet, Gandhi’s two secretaries taking notes (and from the second conversation, Macha, who also takes down everything said, for me).

On the first day, as I said, I am the only one to speak. I tell Gandhi at some length about the moral and social state of continental Europe, and France in particular. I go back briefly to the period of 1900-1914, to explain the double bankruptcy during and after the war of the so-called realists (the politicians) and the idealists, symbolized by the final failure of both Clemenceau and Wilson—hence the bitter disillusionment of the following generations. I show him the true hidden face of politics, which we began to suspect only about the middle of the war: Money, the great adventurers and industrial tycoons (Zaharoff, Deterding), the international trusts and cartels,—and their daily growing supremacy over the nation states, and over public opinion through the press which they control. I give some of the more striking examples: the Comite des Forges, the Briey affair during the war, the steelworks, the oil and petrol companies, the Hugenberg-Reynaud negotiations, the worst kind of war-mongering nationalism stimulated and made drunk by business internationalism. I consider what form of opposition may today be set up against this cancer, gnawing at the West and America, and seeking to eat away the rest of the world. The democracies have no means of defending themselves: Money has corrupted them to the core, bribed, divided and emasculated them. Fascist movements (an understandable reaction) are themselves toys in the hands of Money; for instance Mussolini and America. As to the Christian and Gandhian non-resisters, if they are to be organized, it must be understood that the question is no longer merely one of warfare. War, in the West, has become
the lesser danger. It is in the interest of robbers to make mutual agreements at everyone else's expense. The masses need to be aroused against the exploitation of the rest of the world, and to do this will be much more difficult than it would be to unite them against an immediate danger touching them closely, such as war in their own land. It suits people's egoism and apathy that peace should be assured in Western and Central Europe at the expense of other races. The only really effective non-resistance would be in the factories and the arsenals, that of the working proletariat. This is the only significant opponent that can be set against the faceless octopus of Money. It has on its side its weight of numbers, its vigour as yet untapped, the very injustice which crushes it and the moral force coming from the sense that it alone in the world has interests coinciding with justice. Add to that that the progress of mechanization has led to the creation of a really superior elite of workers harmonizing the activities of both body and mind. This is the army standing in the way of the giant capitalism. That said, the question arising is one of tactics. The aim is clear: the victory of the people, of humanity and of Labour. This is the only just and necessary order. By what means can it be achieved, non-violent or violent? The best means will be the one that actually obtains the just order; so is non-violence capable of it? Yes, if applied in the absolute and uncompromising spirit represented by you (Gandhi) in India. But you would not be able to apply it if there were not to be found in India an environment ready to receive it, that of a religious people used to Ahimsa for centuries. In Europe there is nothing like this. There are little islands of Ahimsa, very thinly scattered in Anglo-Saxon, Czech and Slavonic territories, but almost non-existent in the Latin countries. This is not for lack of religious feeling, of which there is plenty in the West; but such feeling nearly always has the fighting character of a "church militant";
holy books are deformed by state religions, and in any
case the texts of these books are not sufficiently precise; they
gave rise to some scandalous controversies during the war
years. Above all, the Western spirit is practical by nature,
short-sighted and directed to short-term aims. When a
Westerner speaks of progress, he is thinking about tomorrow,
hardly ever about the distant future, and he needs tactics
aimed at bringing him victory tomorrow. Now, what sort
of adversary is he up against? A growing monster who
will very soon swallow the whole of humankind, so the work
must be begun quickly. This is a duel, in which the thrust
must be parried and anticipated. Can non-violence do it?
Lajpat Rai said to us: “I am a champion of non-violence
in India, for I am sure that it will bring us victory. But I
would not apply it in Europe.” What does Gandhi think?
In any case there is one fact before us: since 1917 the work-
ing proletariat, amid the most terrible sufferings, has found-
ed a new world strongly armed. This armament was a
necessity imposed by the old world—by the armed inter-
vention of four or five Great Powers in Russia, by the perpe-
tual conspiracies and infernal ruses of financial powers seek-
ing to ruin the U.S.S.R.; the U.S.S.R. naturally defends
itself. What can we in the West do? Sit idly by between
the two camps? Advise the U.S.S.R. to sit idly by? We feel
that her ruin would ruin the hopes of the whole world.
Should our labour force go on strike to oppose any action
against Russia? Yes, but then we must recognize that this
means insurrection and civil war. You may say that the
proletarian masses of the West should sacrifice themselves!
But to what? For that they would need to believe in a good
God, and they do not; they believe in an ideal, a divinity
of social justice. This is already a considerable ideal, and
I object strongly when people try to debase this ideal by
calling it materialism; it gives rise to the most heroic of
sacrifices. But these self-sacrifices do not imply non-violence.
I repeat that the problem is one of practical action, action which must be as efficient and as prompt as possible. If obstacles are placed in the way, human or otherwise, they must be crushed, without pity as without anger. I go on to show Gandhi the moral neutrality which characterizes Soviet justice; it is never, in principle, meant to be vengeance, but it aims to destroy creatures harmful to the community. If such a person ceases to be dangerous, whatever his crime, justice does not take revenge on him or kill him; it is content to render him harmless, and if possible it gives him the means of making himself useful. Lenin had no personal hatred, and he had a passionate desire for the good of humanity. He served humanity by the means he considered most effective and energetic. It is up to non-violence to set up against his tactics not only an ideal, which would not be enough, but the value of its achievements.

Such is, in résumé, my statement to Gandhi (omitting most of the 1900-1914 preamble), lasting about one and a half hours. Gandhi listens to me most attentively, usually without looking at me, with his profile turned towards me (this allows me to follow all his expressions), preferring to look at my sister who translates all I say, but at the principal passages he turns his intelligent and intense gaze on me; more than once he nods his head vigorously to signify assent—for instance, when I defend the so-called “materialism” of the Russian masses sacrificing themselves for the future good of humanity, which I describe as an idealism far superior to that of the pseudo-idealists of the West who make no sacrifices to their purely verbal idealism.

At the end, Gandhi writes on his note-pad that he will spend the day thinking about what I said and give me his answer tomorrow. I also give him two written questions sent to me for him by Monatte’s group of French Communist syndicalists; he promises to answer them. I
add that I should also like to speak to him about the visit he plans to Italy after leaving Villeneuve, but will postpone it until another day. He writes in his notebook that he is prepared to listen to me now if it suits me. We take a five-minute break, during which Gandhi is served with a bowl of hot water containing lemon juice; this is his daily habit, every morning at 11 o'clock. I take a cup of lime tea. Then I take it upon myself to make him aware of the dangers awaiting him in Fascist Italy; not aggression, certainly, but underhand attempts to annex him to their cause, as they did with Tagore—for there is not a single brutal dictatorship in the world today which does not seek to mask its true character hypocritically under the aegis of some pure and true idealists. By a few striking examples (Matteotti, Amendola) I show him the true face of Fascism, and since the Italian Consul in India has transmitted invitations to Gandhi from certain cultural groups in Rome, such as the Istituto di Cultura presided over by the former minister Gentile, I unmask some of the people concerned, starting with Gentile himself. Against this Fascist Italy, I show him the picture of thousands of oppressed Italians, forced to be silent or to lie, and suffering bitterly from their moral degradation; I also show him the depressing effect which Gandhi's presence among their oppressors would have on them. Whatever Gandhi does, the Italian press, which is entirely in Fascist hands, is always sure to be able to exploit his presence, without him having any means of replying in Italy. I remind him of Tagore, who innocently went along to Fascist ceremonies and propaganda without knowing what was going on and thinking he was listening to speeches in his honour, and who for his whole stay in Italy was rigidly kept away from any elements not under the orders of the regime. Gandhi listens and notes it down, and our meeting ends shortly after half past twelve. He goes back to the Villa Lionnette, bombarded as he goes by the photo-
graphers, who are spending their days circulating round the villas, in the garden and in the surrounding park.

I forgot to mention that just after the end of the meeting my door was, so to speak, forced open by Miss Muriel Lester, whose guest Gandhi was in London and who is insisting on escorting him as far as Brindisi, which I believe he would willingly do without. She is an intelligent and forceful Englishwoman who works with the poorer classes in London and whose manners are brusque and domineering. I could have forgiven her whim of breaking into my house if she had not had the cheek to bring other visitors in her wake, one of whom I would not have allowed in had I known his identity in time: Evans, a large English policeman, who, with a colleague, has been ordered to escort Gandhi as far as his port of embarkation. Gandhi makes a show of looking at him and introduces him as a friend. (Is this naivety or indifference? I would incline towards the latter, as I now know that there is nothing naive about Gandhi.) But there is danger here. These policemen claim that their orders are to protect Gandhi, but in fact they are watching him, keeping check on what he does and the people he sees. Our big Evans makes so little effort to hide it that he asks Edmond Privat what the subject of our conversations was—and the worthy Privat replies ingenuously that I have been telling Gandhi about Russia. (The result is that some days later the Feuille d’Avis de Montreux, in order to warn little Switzerland against Gandhi’s blandishments, paints a picture of him visiting “the Bolshevik Romain Rolland” and seeking to disarm the valiant Swiss so as to hand them over to Moscow Communism.)

Monday is very rainy until halfway through the afternoon, at which moment Gandhi slips out of the villa and Mira has great difficulty in catching him up, as he walks very quickly. They go for a walk in Villeneuve, as far as the little bridge where the lakeside path branches off among
the reeds. The photographers take snapshots of him in various places, and the people of Villeneuve exchange remarks which are not very charitable; Macha hears things like “He’s hideous”, and “Some people like to make a show of themselves”. The police (Swiss and English) follow at a distance. The telephone is perpetually ringing, and Privat spends two or three hours of the evening in our house answering calls without being able to put the receiver down. Geneva complains of being sacrificed to Lausanne, and wants its share of Gandhi; a meeting is organized for Thursday. Privat does this only reluctantly; he is fearful for Gandhi and is afraid of a hostile audience. But that is exactly the sort of thing which interests Gandhi; he enjoys replying to objections.

On Tuesday (8 December), at 9-30, the conversations with Gandhi are resumed. He wants to talk about the Italian question first, and tells me he has had an invitation from Consul Scarpa, a cultivated man, who knows the Indians and has business in India. He has a good reputation there, based on his so-called sympathy for the national cause, but Gandhi is more mistrustful; he believes Scarpa’s motives are merely interested ones. While he was still in India he received an invitation to go to Italy. . . .

“I should like to go there, to see Mussolini.” (I transcribe the notes taken by Macha.)

“My wish is to see the people and bear them the mission of peace. If they do not accept it, that is not my affair; it cannot make me change my course. I also want to see the Pope, who sent me a kind message; if I see him I shall be able to handle the Indian Roman Catholics better, and I should like to see their leader, in the same way as I see Muslim leaders. I have seen Catholic and Protestant bishops and also Muslims. I knew that there were some bad ones, but there are good ones as well. I had forgotten Italy up till now, but Scarpa did not forget; here is his latest letter. As to my embarkation from Italy, the Lloyd Office
would be willing to delay the departure until midday to allow me to visit Brindisi, but I do not want any special favours. Scarpa has also offered me two first-class compartments from the Italian frontier; I should prefer to travel third class, but I do not want to make a fuss about it. Scarpa wants me to tell him the date of my arrival at the frontier, and tells me that the time I want to stay is too short for the programme foreseen. He assures me that it is a private, not an official visit and that the invitation is his own, but that is only form; the Italian Government is behind it and Scarpa is its instrument. But there are people in Milan and Rome who would like to see me. Scarpa wants me to arrive in Milan on the 9th, in Rome on the 11th and leave on the 13th, but I cannot shorten my stay here; I shall only give one day to Italy. Mme. Toeplitz, wife of the director of the Bank of Italy, wants to receive me in her home. The Istituto di Cultura in Rome, presided over by Gentile, would arrange a reception, and Contessa C. has offered hospitality. I have been asked if I specially want to see any particular institution and to cable my plans. My personal wish is to spend one day in Rome; I do not intend to take part in any public reception. But the Istituto is well known, and I should be willing to say a few words there, and if the Pope wants to see me I shall go. As for Mussolini, I do not think he wants to see me, but if he does I shall go without hesitation. But it will not be in secret; I never see people in secret. That is my position, now it is your turn to speak."

I speak again about the terrible and complicated situation in Italy. The most remarkable men in Italy are shamefully making themselves the servants of the powers-that-be. I remind him of Professor Formichi, Tagore's friend, a great Buddhist and a courtier of Mussolini, causing Tagore to fall into the trap. As for the Toeplitz family, I had some correspondence with the daughter, who was an explorer
in Tibet. She sent me her books, full of flattering dedications, and I was staggered to find in them an apology or Mussolini alongside Buddha and Christ as a God of goodness. I wrote her a severe letter to which, of course, she did not reply, but she still sent me her next book. I speak again of Gentile, a great philosopher and disciple of Croce, who uses refined sophistry to conciliate reasons of state an thuggery with lofty thought. His name puts me in mind of Zanotti-Bianco, who had dealings with him. I describe this pure apostle devoting himself to the service of poverty in Southern Italy, and relate how Fascism tried to annex him and his charitable work, and force all his members to take the Fascist oath; Zanotti went to see Gentile, who held ministerial office at the time; and said to him. “Do you want to prostitute the consciences of these men and make them lose their souls?” Gentile ironically replied. “You know what the Gospel says: ‘He who would save his soul must lose it.’ “ The Istituto is full of remarkable intellectuals, but they have no conscience and they are dangerous, for they lie. How can the danger be avoided?—not for you, Gandhi; that is not at issue, but for what you represent. Think of what you represent for thousands of oppressed Italians reduced to silence! Do you not fear that your apparent consent to the regime which crushes them will complete their demoralization? Remember the other words from the Gospel: “Woe unto him who scandalizes one of these least!” It is essential that you give the impression that you are not in contact with the oppressive regime. You must accept nothing from the Italian Government, pay for your rail tickets yourself and not accept hospitality from people of whom you are not sure. . . . If you want to see the Pope and the Vatican, well and good, but avoid anything official!

Gandhi: I am obliged to take literally what Scarpa says to me (that he is acting as an individual, and not on behalf of the government). I shall accept it (Scarpa's invita-
tion to speak at the Istituto), but I shall make a condition that I can speak about whatever I like in their presence.

R. R.: Then demand that foreign reporters should be present to take down what you say. Though even they may be Fascists as well! . . . It seems very difficult to be sure that what you say won’t be covered up or deformed.

Gandhi: It’s against my nature to make arrangements in advance.

R. R.: You’ll be isolated and shut in. Everyone around you will be Fascists, even the foreign journalists.

Gandhi: I know, but that will not prevent me from breaking through the cordon. . . . I shall make it a condition that I can speak freely, and it will not be about indifferent things; I shall say what I think. This is how I feel. I cannot act otherwise. I didn’t go out of my way to seek this visit, but I have received the invitation, and it seems to me that I shall be able to speak even in this atmosphere.

R. R.: I don’t think anyone will stop you speaking; the problem is that it will be suppressed or deformed in the newspapers. (I relate Tagore’s experiences.)

Gandhi: Let’s suppose it isn’t reproduced, or that it is deformed. Even in England this happened, except in the Manchester Guardian; other papers simply boycotted it. What I said in Paris was deformed as well; disgusting things were written in Le Figaro. But Young India will carry the full text of all I said and anything I will say in the future.

R. R.: But the harm done by these deformations in England and France affects you alone, whereas anything of this nature in Italy would be harmful to the Italians. People would say: “The great saint is with the oppressors against the oppressed.” There’s another danger. You’ll be speaking in English, and translated into Italian. Who will check it? The sense may be changed. You’ll have to ask for a typescript.
Gandhi: If I think it's my duty to speak, I shall do so and trust God. I see the object; I don't know how, but it will be achieved somehow or other. It is impossible for me to take meticulous precautions.

R. R.: Mira and Desai should always be there when you are speaking.

Gandhi: There will never be any secret meetings. That said, let us consider whether or not it is in the interest of the cause that I should go to Rome! Sometimes an action has no immediate effect, but there may be a long-term effect. The immediate effect may be that the press deforms what I say, but the distant effect of a good thing must be good. I believe I must take the risk, as I am sure that I shall not succumb to temptation. Beyond that we can foresee nothing. We have to take a decision.

R. R.: There can't be any good effect as you won't be able to make contact with the right people. You will see no one but the regime's chosen accomplices: Gentile, Formichi and the like; souls full of falsehood under the guise of intellectuals. When, where and how will you see anyone else? Everyone will believe that you've come to pay court to the oppressors.

Gandhi: Tell me your final opinion, then, about my projected stay in Rome.

R. R.: If it were me, I should set conditions; otherwise I fear you may be swindled. You'll have to put things brutally there, not politely and courteously. They'll agree with everything you say (like Mussolini, who said “Me too” when Tagore told him that he found violence horrifying), and they'll all think the opposite. . . . You ought to be able to meet Zanotti-Bianco. . . . If you like I'll send a telegram to my friend General Moris to arrange for you to stay with him. He's an absolutely trustworthy gentleman whose high position and past services permit him to be independent; no one could be better able to look after you
and defend you. He has a high sense of honour and he’s deeply wounded by what’s happening in Italy. There is an opposition against Fascism centred on the King and the army, and there are some highly placed heads that the Fascists don’t dare touch. General Moris is one of them; he founded and directed the Italian Air Force.

Gandhi agrees, as he has not yet accepted Scarpa’s invitation. We speak a little longer about Italy, about the Istituto di Cultura, and about a disciple of St. Francis living near Siena, with whom Gandhi has been corresponding for years and who has adopted the rules of the Ashram. She would like to see Gandhi in passing, but Siena is too far away from Rome. It is finally decided that I should send a telegram to General Moris.

Gandhi: This subject is finished; shall we continue our conversation? What else do you want to talk about?

R. R.: I gave a monologue yesterday. Now you tell me what you think about what I said.

Gandhi: Listening to you yesterday I saw how much you have suffered, and I understood what an immense effort it has cost you to reach your conclusions. But for my part, I was formed in a completely different way. Whatever conclusions I may have come to in my life, I have not drawn them from history, which played a very small part in my education. My method is empirical; all my conclusions are based on my personal experience. Certainly I recognize that there is a risk of illusion in this. I know madmen who believe in certain things and cannot be detached from them, since this is their experience. The dividing line between the experiences of such madmen and my own is a slender one. Nevertheless I cannot but trust them. The sages of the past have noted their experiences based on intuition; everyone now believes that they were right and they have stood the test of history. I like to think that mine, too, are not without foundation.
Listening to what you said yesterday, I wondered how to react, and I said to myself that I cannot say that my faith is the same as yours. The problems you have placed before me are terrible. Whereas non-violence is effective and will continue to be so in India, it may well be that in Europe it will fail. But this does not embarrass me. I believe non-violence has a universal application. But I do not believe that I myself can give this message to Europe. . . . I have spoken with many sincere Englishmen, and foreigners too, and I say to them: You must not budge an inch if you do not have faith within you. But I should still believe even if the whole world did not believe. After having seen the difficulties, after yesterday's conversation, it remains my faith that non-violence alone can save Europe. Otherwise all is lost. What is happening in Russia is an enigma. I have not discussed Russia very much, but I have a deep mistrust of the ultimate success of the experiment being carried out there. It seems to me that it is a challenge to non-violence. It appears to be succeeding, but behind its success lies force, violence. I do not know how long this force will be adequate to hold society within this narrow passage. When Indians are exposed to Russian influence, it leads them into extreme intolerance, and the result is that they are under a system of terrorism. I look upon this experiment with mistrust. All the Englishmen I know who have been to Russia (and the Americans too) seem to be impartial; some speak well of it, others badly. I have discussed it, among others, with Lord Lothian and Bernard Shaw. Lord Lothian is not sure whether this force can remodel society, or how far it can go. Shaw writes on the subject with enthusiasm, but I found no signs of this enthusiasm when I talked with him. In any case I did not discuss the problem with him very much; he was so interested in India that we spoke mainly about that. From what I have seen of Europe, I believe that Europe cannot avoid the need for non-violence. Luckily no extensive
organization is necessary; all that is required is one man
who will be faith and non-violence incarnate. Until that
man appears you must wait, hope and prepare the atmos-
phere.

R. R.: I sent you a copy of my letter to Runham
Brown (about Einstein’s declaration). I said there that if
non-violence were to be organized on a broad base with a
leader, it would achieve its victory in time, but in Europe,
time is the crucial question. We are going through a very
serious crisis in which all human hopes are threatened to be
crushed by the forces of violence, with no hope of recovery.
This violence is weighing on the whole world. The trans-
formation of a whole people in the direction of non-violence,
even if it can happen at all, cannot be fast; it needed a
century for Christ’s ideas to be propagated, and in twenty
years everything will have crumbled if we do not take steps
to stop it at once. So what form must non-violence take in
Europe?

Gandhi: I answered a similar question in Paris. . . .
We live in a really idolatrous world! Christianity cannot
do without idolatry! It needs to see, touch and feel, by one
of its five senses. Before deciding, it needs a visible demon-
stration of non-violence and its success. . . . India is giving
this demonstration. If it succeeds, everything will become
very simple. It is my faith that this will not take twenty
years. If India achieves true liberty, the world will have its
demonstration, and I believe that all Europeans will see how
simple it is, England will be forced to do her duty. But if
violence breaks out in India, if there are clashes between
Hindus and Muslims plunging us all back into chaos,—
Well, I still have my consolation, my faith. So far non-
violence has produced nothing but good results; there’s
no doubt that English opinion has been influenced by it
(though not enough yet!). Everyone can see that if there
had been no non-violence there would have been no
Round Table Conference. The desired result has not been achieved, but the indirect results are very numerous, and when we have been through the ordeal by fire and suffering it will be very easy. Perhaps I am wrong. But even if I do not succeed I shall still not lose my faith, and I shall devote myself to the purification of the small number of people who are devoted to me. In South Africa I had to wait six years. In India I was unable to join battle between 1922 and last year. But one way or another the good word is coming, has come and will continue to come. I believe that you will be able to give battle when necessary, but I have nothing to suggest to you. The situation is too confused in Europe.

R. R.: I am sure that Indian non-acceptance is having an immense world-wide influence. Besides, there have long ago been collective experiments with non-violence in Europe; one of the most remarkable was in Poland in 1860. But we have two or three types of difficulty in Europe; there are national and social questions. Among the peoples suffering under the 1919 treaties non-acceptance finds an understanding audience. But in cases of social oppression, examples of this kind of tactics are either lacking or inadequate. You Indians have been maltreated and you still are, but I doubt whether you have suffered the ignominies known in the Balkans and in Poland. In some European and Asiatic countries (Japan) the exploitation of female and child labour is really shocking. It is to the oppressed classes that the word of liberation must be carried. When we see them organizing themselves in self-defence, can we blame them? Think of the situation in Russia under Tsarist and capitalist oppression. Can we tell Russia today not to offer resistance to Europe, America or Japan if they invade her? It should be among our own proletariat in the West that we organize non-acceptance, in the defence of Russia. The social question has taken over from the
national question in Europe. Basically, the opposing growth of capitalism on the one hand and the proletariat on the other is working in the same internationalist direction. There are two Internationales today, the one set against the other.

Gandhi, whose attention seems less intense when the subject under discussion is not something he has seen and tested for himself, replies off-the-point:

There are 3 million unemployed in England. I spoke to the employers, and their relationship with the workers is good. I told the workers that the remedy is to fight not against capitalism but against themselves. They are asking for capital to supply their needs, but it is not capital that is opposed to them; the trouble is that there is no market. If all the capital of the wealthy were distributed among the unemployed, it would not last long. I said to them: “Help yourselves, and return to your cottage industries.” A few modest experiments have been made in that direction in Wales; a few miners returned to their old trades and discovered that their salvation lay there. No man should live on another’s help.

R. R.: England is a privileged country. The situation is different elsewhere. (This is a theme I later return to, in our fifth conversation.) But there is one more danger in Europe and America, in the existence of a middle class living at the expense of the oppressed peoples of other nations. After the victory, we were told in France that “Germany will pay”. Now all the peoples of the West are being told: “The world—Asia and Africa—will pay.” Armies of coloured men are being trained for the coming wars. We are returning to the system of the Roman Empire with its privileged people, who unloaded all their burdens on to the people they enslaved. At present my people, in France, are still enjoying a well-being based on world poverty. Even our most open-minded intellectuals prefer not to look too
closely; they gain too much from the situation and don’t want the present order, based on force, to be disturbed.

**Gandhi:** Is not the remedy in the hands of the exploited peoples? In non-co-operation with the exploiters? . . .

**R. R.:** For people without religion this is impossible. The workers will be tempted by high salaries to make the arms and ammunitions which will be used against their brothers in other lands. First of all we ought to preach to them a gospel of poverty, selflessness and abnegation, a gospel of love. But it is more difficult to preach poverty and abnegation to victors and conquerors than it is to the vanquished and the oppressed.

Gandhi admits this, and here the notes of the conversation stop. As they leave, I give Mira and Desai the questions sent by Monatte’s group of French revolutionary syndicalists, asking them to translate them for Gandhi and write down his answers.

Present at the meeting with the above, the Japanese sculptor Takata, quiet and forgotten in a corner, modelling his clay.

In the afternoon Gandhi goes to Lausanne, for meetings organized by Edmond Privat and Ceresole. He refuses to use the cars made available by Dr. Niehans and Dr. Perret; he wants to go by rail, third class. But to avoid crowds on his arrival, they get off at Pully, the station before Lausanne, and go from there to the meeting-hall by car.

There are three meetings in succession: at 4 p.m., at 6, and at 7 or 8. Only the second is a public lecture, and it is broadcast on Swiss radio. I can hear it very clearly in my dining room (for I have stayed at home alone with Macha; the rest are all in Lausanne). Gandhi’s voice comes over surprisingly clearly, quiet, firm and well-articulated (about in the baritone register); one realizes even better than when in his presence what a sound instrument he has at his
disposal: he could speak like that for hours without his voice showing a moment’s sign of fatigue. Privat can also be heard very well, translating the English into French, and the reactions of the public, warmly applauding; they laugh at some of Gandhi’s sharp replies. Unfortunately, the most interesting of the three meetings is the first, which I cannot hear, and which my sister reports to me when she returns, about midnight. The 4 o’clock meeting was private; the only ones present with Gandhi and his personal friends were Ceresole and the heads of his International Civil Service movement, also the head of the Swiss Conscientious Objectors. The main discussion is about the “Theory and Practice of Non-violence”, and a report of it can be read in the “Letters from Europa” sent by Desai to Young India. I shall report here only the parts of it relevant to Einstein’s thesis, about which I have written myself, and the objections to it from Gandhi’s point of view. “How to carry out non-violence effectively.” Should one simply refuse to carry arms? Einstein has made an appeal to men not to take part in war. . . . Gandhi replies humorously: “Really, if I may say this about a great man, it seems that Einstein has stolen my method. But if you want me to go to the heart of the matter, I should say that simply refusing military service is not enough. To refuse military service when the time has come is to leave action until the time available for combating the evil has practically passed. Military service is only a symptom of a deeper evil. All those not inscribed for military service still participate equally in the crime if they support the state in other ways. Anyone who supports, directly or indirectly, a state with a military organization participates in the crime. Every man, young or old, participates in the crime if he contributes to the maintenance of the state by paying taxes. That is why I said to myself during the war that as long as I eat the corn which the army is defending, as long as I am carrying out all the other duties of the state apart
from being a soldier, it would be better for me to be enrolled in the army and exposing myself to be killed. . . . That is why all those who wish to stop military service should do it by withdrawing all co-operation from the state. The refusal of military service is much more superficial than non-co-operation with the whole system supporting the state. But then the opposition becomes so sharp and effective that you risk not only being put in prison, but also being thrown into the street.”

Cérésole, extremely moved (the poor man has spent all his energies honourably trying to conciliate his incompatible duties as a good citizen and a good conscientious objector), tries to show that not everything in the state is bad, and that one can co-operate with the things it does which are good and useful to the community; Gandhi firmly replies: “Here you are touching on the most sensitive point of human nature. I have been faced with this question as the originator of the movement of non-co-operation. I said to myself that there is no state, even run by a Nero or a Mussolini, which has no good things in it. But we must reject the whole from the moment we decide not to co-operate with the system. There are in our country great public roads and educational institutions which are real palaces; but they are part of a system which crushes the nation, and I must have nothing in common with them. They are like the serpent in the fable who wears a jewel on his head but whose fangs are full of poison. Thus I came to the conclusion that the English regime in India had crushed the nation’s energy and arrested its growth, and I decided to refuse all its privileges—services, tribunals, titles, etc. The policy to follow varies from country to country, but the essential points are sacrifice and abnegation. What Einstein says can happen only once a year and with a very small number of people, but I suggest non-co-operation with the state as your first duty.”
Cérésole again defends himself, claiming that, there is a profound difference between an independent nation and a subject nation. India may be fundamentally in conflict with a government foreign to her, but how can a Swiss citizen break with a state which he has helped to elect? Gandhi replies: “There indubitably is a difference. As a member of a subject nation I can best help it by shaking off the yoke of subjection. But what you are asking me is how best to liberate yourselves from the military mentality. You enjoy privileges on condition of doing military service for the state. Thus you have to liberate the state from the military mentality. Start by giving up your privileges, by not sending your children to school, not sending your sick to hospital, not keeping your jobs and your salaries, not using the post and the public services, etc. Non-payment of tax is too easy, and should not come until much later. We waited ten years in India before reaching that stage. . . .”

These categorical declarations profoundly shock and disturb Cérésole and his disciples in the International Civil Service, and they cannot bring themselves to support them at once, but it is certain that these men of noble and sincere conscience will be given much painful food for thought. Cérésole shows this by admitting at the beginning of the third meeting (public, but less open to all and sundry than the second, being specially reserved for the small army of Conscientious Objectors) that Gandhi has made them feel the weakness of their efforts. And his lieutenant in the Civil Service, the generous-spirited Héléne Monastier, expresses with touching humility the shame they feel in his presence; they are afraid of everything and everyone, while he fears nothing. “We have our truth,” Cérésole adds, “but you have the truth.”

At this third Lausanne meeting, taking place in a church, at which all the Objectors and Cérésole’s “soldiers” stand hand in hand to sing the song of Swiss comradeship,
Gandhi has further profound ideas to express when asked the question: "Why do you regard God as Truth?"

Gandhi: In my very early youth I was taught that the Hindu scriptures knew almost a thousand names of God, but these thousand names are not nearly enough. I believe that God has as many names as there are living creatures, and this is why we also say that God is without name. And since God has many forms, we also consider him as being without form. And since he speaks to us in many tongues, we consider him speechless. When I came to study Islam, I saw that Islam too had many names for God. With those who say that God is Love, I too say that God is Love. But in my heart I thought that though God may be Love, God is, above all, Truth. If it is possible for human language to give its complete description of God, my conclusion is that for me, God is Truth. But two years ago I made a step further, to say that Truth is God. I came to this conclusion after an incessant search for truth which began about fifty years ago. I felt then that the nearest approach to Truth was made by Love, but I have recognized that the word "love" has many meanings in the English language and that human love, in the sense of passion, can also become a degrading thing. I have also recognized that love in the sense of Ahimsa has but a small number of adherents in the world. But I have never found a double meaning to the word "Truth". Even the atheists do not doubt the necessity or the power of truth. In their passion to discover truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the existence of God,—and from their point of view they are right. It is because of this reasoning that I decided that rather than saying "God is Truth", I should say "Truth is God". I recall the name of Charles Bradlaugh; he liked to call himself an atheist, but knowing him as I know him I shall never look upon him as an atheist. I shall call him a God-fearing man, though I know he would reject the
title. . . . I should disarm his criticisms by saying to him that Truth is God, as I have disarmed the criticisms of many youths. I might add that millions have used the name of God and committed atrocities in his name. This is not to say that scientists, too, do not very often commit cruelties in the name of Truth; I know how in the name of science and truth, all sorts of frightful cruelties are perpetrated on animals by vivisection. So there are a certain number of difficulties on the way, however one describes God. But the human mind has its limitations, and we must work within these limitations when we try to conceive of a Being or an Entity beyond our powers of apprehension. Then we have another saying in Hindu philosophy: “God alone is, and nothing else is.” You will find the same truth emphasized and illustrated in the Kalma of Islam. The Sanskrit word for Truth means literally “that which exists”, “Sat”. For this and several other reasons I have come to the conclusion that the definition “Truth is God” satisfies me best. And when you want to find the Truth which is God, the only infallible way to it is by Love, which means Non-violence. And since I believe that in the last analysis the end and the means are interchangeable terms, I have no hesitation in saying that God is Love.

The point is pressed, and he is again asked: “But what is Truth?”

“A difficult question,” Gandhi replies. “But I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the inner voice tells us. You will ask: ‘How is it then that different people think different and contrary truths?’—Well, we see that the human spirit works through innumerable media, and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all men. It follows that what may be truth for one man is non-truth for another. Those who seek truth in this way have come to the conclusion that certain conditions must first be observed. In the same way that there are indispensable courses
of scientific instruction to be undergone before anyone can carry out scientific experiments, a strict preliminary discipline is necessary before a person can be qualified to make experiments in the spiritual domain. This is why everyone should reach an exact knowledge of his limitations before speaking of his inner voice. We have a belief, based on experience, that those who wish to make their individual search for the Truth which is God must undergo certain vows, for instance the vow of Truth and the vow of Brahmacharya (chastity), for it is not possible to share our love of Truth and God with anything else, the vow of Non-violence, the vow of Poverty and of Non-possession. If you do not impose these five vows on yourself, you will in no way be able to embark upon the experience of truth. There are several other prescribed conditions, but I cannot speak of all of them. It is enough to say that those who have carried out these experiments know that it is not fitting for everyone to claim that he hears the voice of conscience. And since nowadays everyone demands the right to speak of his conscience without having undergone any kind of discipline at all, and since there are so many non-truths in this disorientated world, all I can say to you in all true humility is that truth cannot be found by anyone who has not achieved an abundant sense of humility. If you want to swim in the bosom of the Ocean of Truth, you must reduce yourself to zero. I can go no further along this fascinating path.

The statements made in the first Lausanne meeting were quite serious in character, being a call for absolute disobedience to the state. They could have aroused the official press against Gandhi and caused him to be threatened with expulsion. But since they took place in a private meeting, public opinion at large knew nothing about them—or else officialdom found it prudent to ignore them. It was not the same with some things said at the second public meeting (the one I heard), at which Gandhi lashed
out at the dishonesty of two Swiss newspapers, the *Journal de Geneve* and the *Tribune de Lausanne*. One of them reported Gandhi's words at the meeting in Paris in a form diametrically opposed to the truth. The other twisted things so as to hint at an implication in Gandhi's *thought* that he foresees violent tactics and accepts them in advance, after trying non-violence for a certain time. The two papers were doing their utmost to present Gandhi as a nationalist hiding his trump-cards,—so as to enrol him willy-nilly in the hypocritical so-called neutral nationalism of the Swiss militarists. Gandhi said clearly that this was a dishonest "fabrication"; he did not challenge the good faith of the editor (of the Geneva paper), but considered it the editor's duty to treat his correspondent as a dishonest employee and make him retract his lie. Thereupon the Lausanne public applauded noisily, and at the same time the furious journalists left the room and slammed the doors.

It was thus to be expected that the Swiss press which had treated Gandhi with respect so far, should change its attitude next day. It did so, but in a still guarded ironic tone, as the quarrel still only concerned two individual newspapers. Quite different was the watchword on the day after the Genevan public meeting, on Thursday. But we must not anticipate!

Wednesday 9 December.—Gandhi reserved the morning in advance for audiences he had agreed to give, in which context I ought to note that when he arrived on Sunday evening, at 9 o'clock, after our meeting and the prayer, Gandhi received some journalists—about a dozen of them, all of whom proved to be immeasurably inept; none of them were up to asking him an intelligent question. But I got him to agree to come to my house at about half past eleven to pose for a photographer (R. Schlemmer, of Montreux), a thing which he hardly ever does. Schlemmer took some excellent shots of him with me, also with Mira and my
sister. Charles Baudouin, from Geneva, was there too, and I talked with him afterwards.

In the afternoon, Gandhi wanted to go with Mira to Sepey, above Aigle, to visit an old peasant woman that Mira used to know, who spins in the same way as an Indian peasant; she and Mira had talked about Gandhi together. So a trip by car is arranged, and they take the opportunity to go on to Leysin, to let Gandhi visit Dr. Vauthier's International University Sanatorium. (Neither I nor my sister go on the trip, which takes place between 2 and 4-30, in fine winter weather) Gandhi does not seem to have paid much attention to the intellectuals' sanatorium, except to note how cleanly it is kept (that is the one comment he makes). But he is delighted by his visit to the old peasant lady. He finds her working at her weaving and he sits down facing her for a chat. Her two goats and her two cows are in the next room. He feels as if he is back in India and says things are exactly the same there. The old lady, who was not expecting his visit, is delighted but not surprised; they laugh and chatter together like the best of friends.

When he returns, just before 5 o'clock, Gandhi comes to see me, but I am a little tired, and I must admit that on that particular day I have the feeling that Gandhi's way is so clearly marked out before him and—in many ways—so different from mine that we have very little to discuss together; we each know exactly where we are going, and Gandhi's way is perfect for himself and his followers; I

1 A characteristic detail: a week after Gandhi's departure its director, Dr. Vauthier, makes a worried telephone call about a "Golden Book" of the Sanatorium which he had given to Gandhi to write in. We had not heard the slightest mention of this book from Gandhi, but we finally found it, lost in an odd corner of the villa, without anything by Gandhi written in it.
would not wish it to be different, and I admire and love him the way he is. But what have we to say to each other?—beyond what we did on the first day, taking his hands in mine, looking at each other face to face and smiling, while he laughs his jerky little laugh, his mouth open like a good dog panting. . . . Be that as it may, I am not in a talkative mood this evening, and our conversation on the 9th is the least interesting of the five we have.

My sister starts by asking Gandhi what he thinks of Ramsay MacDonald, and whether he is sincere.

Gandhi: Yes and No. He’s sincere in the sense that he wants to be faithful to his declaration, but he must know and he docs know that this means England losing her central responsibility over India, and he still keeps saying that this responsibility exists; so he wants you to believe the truth of something which is not true. And he seemed insincere in another sense, that he’s not open in his conversation; he’s evasive. I do not have a good opinion of him. But I don’t want to be unjust; he bears a heavy responsibility, which is difficult, he’s overworked and he finds me an awkward customer. He knows I’m a fighter, and I’m asking for so much that he doesn’t know how to get round me. So he can’t be frank. Perhaps it’s weakness rather than insincerity. I have known him a long time. His statements in the past were more favourable to us, but it was easier for him then as he had no responsibility.

R. R.: Your last speech at the Round Table has caused upsets in some quarters. There are papers in Paris and Bulgaria talking about your “Communist threats”. (I read him a press cutting.)

Gandhi: It wasn’t my last speech; it was my speech to the Committee of “Federal Structure” about commercial discrimination. Even my friends were dismayed. But the papers are making me go further than I actually did. I said that I myself make no discrimination on grounds of
race, colour or class, but only on other fields (the social); I said that no existing interests would be hindered unless it should prove to be against the national interest or illegal. When the National Congress takes over the reins of government, if a business concern is illegal, or even if it is legal but against the national interest, it will be confiscated by the state. This will apply to Indians as well as to Europeans. This will not be done by order of the Executive; it will have to be obtained by a judgment of the National Supreme Court. If anyone is to be dispossessed, his case will have to go before the Supreme Court and it will have to be proved that his interest is in conflict with the national interest.

We then talk about recent events in India. Of the new Ordinances in Bengal, Gandhi says: “I told MacDonald that it reminded me of the time before the Great Rebellion.”

R. R. asks if there is any conflict between the central government (London and the Viceroy) and local administration in India, or even between different representatives of authority in the same place, as in Japan, where the militarist parties act against the government itself.

Gandhi: There are frequent disagreements between the Indian Government and its officials; the main example is the tax-collectors who take no account of liberal orders, which in any case are rare; but subordinates always enforce harsh instructions when they come, which makes them look as if they are well-disciplined (in general they only disobey the infrequent liberal directives); the central government cannot fight back as the whole machine will break up if it sacks its subordinates.

R. R. speaks of the Intelligence Service and the occult powers attributed to it in Europe.

Gandhi replies that the worst is the English Civil Service in India: “it’s like a snake holding the whole nation in its coils.”
R. R. tells of a letter he received last summer from a former official of the English Civil Service in India, who had been a colleague of Aurobindo Ghose for a short time and had lived thirty years in India alongside the great men I wrote about in my books on India (Vivekananda, etc.) without paying any attention to them.

He is now retired and reading my books, and he says with noble and naive sincerity how ashamed he is at having wasted his life in this way.

Next Gandhi gives me advice on my health; he is worried to see me shut up like this in overheated rooms. (I am still a little feverish after a recent bout of ‘flu.) He thinks the Villeneuve climate is very bad for me. (This is the worst time of the year here; he will leave without knowing how splendid the light can be on some evenings.) He advises me to come to India, and assures me that I shall feel better there. I plead my work which keeps me here, my duty in Europe, where I am almost alone in playing a role in which I have no substitutes or helpers, the war having created a ruinous misunderstanding between myself and other Frenchmen.

In that case, Gandhi says, I should live in a different way and in a different part of Switzerland; I should take a “natural cure” of air and sun. Gandhi has kept his mistrust of doctors, but he is in no position to appreciate how much my whole constitution has deteriorated since the 1918 influenza epidemic and the accidents following it; I choose not to waste my time and his by telling him about it, and pass on to other subjects.

I ask him if he is aware of the differences between young people in the different countries of Europe and the world, and I try to describe them to him, starting with the state of total relativism dominating modern German youth; it is not surprising that Einstein’s theory should have come from this environment. France, on the other hand, appears
to German youth like the land of established Order, of pig-headed and self-confident conservatism. German youth is ready for any change: war, revolution, Fascism, anything is possible. There is a sharp sense of irritation with France, which they, see as a dead weight, a ball-and-chain from the past. This fluidity in Europe today may take any form, and it is the same in modern China, where youth is in a state of flux. ... Gandhi listens, and can only answer: “It is so.” I ask him if things arc the same in India.

Gandhi: In India also. But the non-acceptance movement more or less succeeds in keeping young people under some kind of moral control. Maybe not to the point of sacrifice or heroism, but at least it prevents them from doing anything stupid.

R. R.: You in India have a clear mission obvious to all, a common ideal, but Germany has nothing to do, either morally or materially; its young people coming out of school find themselves faced with an utter void, a total material and moral unemployment. This is why it of all European youth is most likely to be open to great influences. It is a pity you were unable to make any personal contact with it. Have you any links with Germany? There are thousands of people there with unused spiritual forces. In the Latin countries the old frameworks still exist and hold minds within them. Your influence would be much less likely to spread there at the moment.

Gandhi speaks of a German friend (or disciple) who was with him in India and is in one of the main German youth movements. He says that the Germans who came to his Ashram calmly accepted all the rules of the Ashram which other Europeans had difficulty in following. He says he would have been willing to go to Germany but he has no time.

Romain Rolland dwells on the despair widespread in Germany. Literature no longer answers the needs of young
people or the nation as a whole and the intellectuals always form a class apart, alongside the rest of the suffering and struggling nation. (I refrain from adding that it may be in me that they find their best support)—I say that Asia must expect the various European nations to play a part in Asiatic conflicts, and I say how sorry I am that India knows Europe only through England.

Gandhi agrees, saying that his quick journey through the Continent has struck his Indian companions and shown them how separate England is from Europe.

Our conversation ends at 6 o’clock, since I have asked to share in Gandhi’s evening prayers, but instead of holding them in his room in the Villa Lionnette, Gandhi wants them to be in my ground-floor living room in the Villa Olga, to save me going out across the garden. At 7 o’clock he returns, followed by a procession of friends and disciples, both Indian and European. The gathering squats down on the floor (apart from Macha, my sister and myself, sitting on the divan); Gandhi is next to the recess with the bookshelf underneath the terracotta group by the Azores sculptor; Mira is almost against my knees; the rest up against or underneath the furniture. The light is switched off and the beautiful chants are resumed. Then Gandhi goes back to the Villa Lionnette and the gathering disperses.

I sent a telegram to General Moris in Rome on Tuesday, at about 2 in the afternoon, to ask if he is willing to receive Gandhi and two of his followers in his house for one night. I have been waiting for the reply for nearly 30 hours, and am beginning to think that the Fascist censorship must have intercepted my message. But finally at about 8 o’clock on Wednesday evening, Moris’ “grateful” acceptance arrives. (I later find out that he first had to check in high places in Rome whether the visit would be accepted and would not involve any unpleasantness. Sofia Bertolini writes that he was completely satisfied in his enquiries.)
In the evening I have another conversation, short but pleasant, with Gandhi’s first secretary, Mahadev Desai, a handsome Indian, 35 to 40, tall, well-built, with an intelligent face. My sister has had longer conversations with him, and I know that he left his career as a lawyer to devote himself entirely to Gandhi, which has brought him a never-failing happiness. But I also know from Mira, and he tells me himself this evening, that my writings and thought have their place in his life. He was delighted when Mira came to the Ashram, as they could talk together about me, and Desai asked Mira to teach him French, so that he could read my works in the original. But when Gandhi heard about it he reproached both of them severely, saying, quite rightly, that at a time like the present they should not be reading works of art, but devoting themselves entirely to the cause of India. This did not stop Desai from continuing his studies, as he tells me he now knows enough French to realize how often the English translations are unfaithful to my text; he asks me to give him Jean-Christophe in French, as well as my Vie de Tolstoi: he hopes that he will soon be sent to prison, back in India, which will give him time to read my books. The emotion in his eyes and his Indian gestures of devotion tell me of the affectionate gratitude he feels towards me. He and Pyarelal have been longing for this meeting for years; twice already it should have happened and it fell through; he says that it now feels like a dream. Everyone works to exhaustion in Gandhi’s circle. When the Master himself has gone to bed, Desai and Pyarelal very often stay up late at night making the fair copies of notes taken during the day. Desai has the job of editing them for publication in Young India.

Thursday, 10 December, is the day of the meeting in Geneva, in Victoria Hall. My sister sets off there with Gandhi and his secretaries in the morning, as the meeting opens at half past midday, but Mira stays with me. She
has lunch and we have a good long conversation. (She spends the morning doing the washing, hanging it on lines in the garden and getting the luggage ready for departure.)

She speaks intimately about life in the Sabarmati Ashram. Like everyone in Gandhi’s circle she has a passionate veneration for him, but she says that this man of gentleness can be terribly hard, particularly with those closest to him. The dearer they are to him, the more he asks of them. He keeps an inflexible control over them, going beyond their words and their actions to their very thoughts. In fact he is most pitiless of all with their bad thoughts, and he does not need to have them confessed to him; he reads in their minds and tears them from the depths of their souls before they have time to say anything. Everyone fears him, but they cherish him too, and the implacable discipline he forces them to impose on themselves is very good for them. There is no lack of difficulties in the Ashram, either, where so many people and so many different families are gathered together. There is a never-ending series of clashes and friction, which only the “Bapu’s” firm and calm control can settle and humanize. Admittedly they are all men of recognized moral value, and the general atmosphere of the Ashram is one of exceptional purity. As to Gandhi’s family, it has not given him entire satisfaction. Of his four sons, one has frankly gone to the bad. Another, Devdas, who is here with him, is a nice lad but very much a lightweight, with no idea of the seriousness of his father’s mission. A third is still very young, and the fourth (is it the first—or the second-born?) is conscientiously working in Gandhi’s footsteps in South Africa, at Phoenix, but there seems to be nothing exceptional about him. Mrs. Gandhi is a faithful wife who has sacrificed herself to her husband’s mission, but without ever quite identifying herself with it; (though she seems in the last few months to be taking part in the campaign of non-co-operation, and has spoken in one or two
meetings, which is almost incredible for her). She is a housewife above all else, and cannot get used to the public character of life in the Ashram, where everything is open to all and sundry. Gandhi is no less on show, day and night, than a king in his court, but he never stands on ceremony and simply carries on as if he were alone. (Mira has sometimes asked him when he finds the time for meditation in this ceaseless hustle and bustle; he replies that the best school for meditation is to practise it among hundreds of people, and he has completely succeeded.) So the inconsolable Mrs. Gandhi shuts herself up in the kitchen, and there at least she means to rule the roost. She looks askance on outsiders, and Mira had a hard time at the beginning with her. When Mira went into her kitchen to prepare her meals, she would arrange for there to be nothing left but the things most likely to revolt her, so as to make her leave the Ashram. Gandhi had to intervene; he ended up saying to Mira: “This is intolerable. Do your cooking separately in your room!” But Mira has not kept any bitterness about it, and says it is impossible to bear a grudge against Mrs. Gandhi, who is just like a child. She changes her mind between the morning and the evening; after giving way on every point, she will suddenly be repossessed by the desire to give orders and scold everybody. She is allowed to have her say, and the mood passes as easily as it came. But she is still an excellent and respectable woman, and now that she knows Mira’s sincere and selfless character they have made friends. Mira has been through all the tasks in the Ashram, starting by the most revolting, cleaning out the latrines (which, she says, is no small task!). Gandhi always tests his disciples in this way at the outset; Pyarelal went through it too. Gandhi has also kept a severe watch over her passionate affection, and has forced her to do difficult tasks and spend months on end away. She has often lived alone in Indian villages, teaching the peasants cotton-card-
ing or other weaving techniques. The admirable thing is that she has never for a day, or even an hour, felt any anxiety, boredom or nostalgia. It has turned out that India is her predestined country. (We know that she attributes this to her origins, which she can trace through her Russian great-grandmother who married an Englishman, to that strange race, the gipsies, who seem to have originated in India.) She has always felt at home among the Indian peasants, particularly in the United Provinces and Bihar; she is at a loss for terms affectionate enough to speak of the kindness of these people, their dignity and the perfectly intimate relationship they have always had with her, treating her as an equal like a member of the family; and these illiterate people are full of fine poetic songs embodying all the wisdom of the centuries. Mira speaks with less sympathy of the Muslims, whom she sees, contrary to what is usually said, as quite a different race, even in physical appearance; like Gandhi, she has very good friends among them, but in general the atmosphere is less trustworthy and pure. Mira says more about the population of the Ashram, which is not limited to humans; all the peoples of the jungle are allowed to come in, and as she describes the scene I seem to see again the ascetics of Sakuntala. Since no animal or insect may be killed, they all frolic around, both outside and in. Mira’s room is constantly being crossed by columns of ants of all sizes, who share her food with her; lizards and huge spiders run across her walls, and snakes come and go all the time, most of them very venomous. But there seems to be a secret pact between animals and men; the former recognize that the latter are doing them no harm, and they return the compliment. The fact remains that one constantly risks treading unintentionally on some reptile, which may in a moment of impatience show its displeasure with fatal results, so Mira always takes her lantern when she has to walk about at
night. She very often sees a long snake of a dangerous breed gliding in front of her doorway, but it has never done anything to her, and there are few accidents. I ask if Gandhi has taken the precaution of keeping serums against snake venom in the Ashram’s medicine-chest. Mira says no, but he does not stop other people, strangers in the house, from using these means. All he himself recommends is a little surgery in the affected area, opening the wound in the form of a cross and applying a corrosive substance (Mira does not give its name, but it is red in colour), then a clay poultice on top and a bandage. But she adds that this is not strong enough for some types of snake (the cobras, no doubt), whose bite invariably causes death within ten minutes. She does not seem to be worried about it; like all Gandhi’s disciples, she seems to entrust herself to the grace of God and put herself under his protection: “Whatever happens is His will.”

Another pleasanter aspect of this life shared with the animals is their familiarity with the tribe of birds, who are constantly settling on the head or shoulders of Gandhi and Mira, and some of the species are delightful. Mira artlessly makes the striking reflection that since her return to Europe the absence of insects and animals, particularly in the big cities, sends a shiver down her spine and gives her a feeling of emptiness; she feels as if some great epidemic has passed over Europe and exterminated millions of living creatures who were there to animate and gladden the world. (I forget to tell her that the walls and roof of my house sheltered millions of ants who were eating it away, and that without last year’s repairs its beams would have fallen about my ears. I cannot understand how the buildings over there can put up with those myriads of swarming little creatures.) Be that as it may, Mira will be glad to be back in India. Her return to England (where her mother died some months ago, alone and far away from her), instead of awakening
an old attachment, made her feel more strongly how foreign her native land was to her. She had a hidden anxiety that she might be forced to stay there—even if dead. We talk again of the early days of our acquaintanceship, and of how she discovered Gandhi through me. She is still deeply and tenderly grateful to me for it, and when she takes leave at the end (when we are told of Gandhi’s return), resting her brow on my shoulder, she bends down and unexpectedly kisses my hand. (I know that this is not meant for me, but for the miracle of which I was the instrument, which made her find her way and her master.)

Meanwhile the meeting takes place in Geneva; huge crowds in Victoria Hall, the main boxes booked by the Genevan haute bourgeoisie (hostile), the Journal de Genève, the League of Nations; the pit and the galleries packed with enthusiastic supporters or Socialists; two opposing camps. Gandhi, simple and calm as ever, answers the questions chosen with a clarity which staggers his adversaries who are watching his every word and setting him traps. I shall give no account of this meeting,¹ important as it was, at which I was not present; there was not even a broadcast for me to listen to, as this time the Swiss radio service shut its doors; an announcement was made that as a result of some difficulties caused by the broadcast of the Lausanne meeting, the planned broadcast of the Geneva meeting would not take place. This is obviously on the request of the Journal de Genève. But the Swiss bourgeoisie was wrong if it thought that this would be enough to smother Gandhi’s dangerous voice; even after Lausanne it did not foresee the calm audacity of his words before the public in Geneva and its repercussions among the thousands who heard it. (They must have kicked themselves afterwards for the licence they gave him by allowing him to speak

¹ An account appeared in the Ligue’s journal, January 1932, Geneva
in Geneva.) So I shall not try to reproduce what he said, as the International Women’s League for Peace and Liberty, which organized the meeting, took the wise step of having it taken down in shorthand; I shall get myself a copy . . . .

All I shall relate here is the impression he made, as reported by my sister. Gandhi tackled squarely and openly the two burning questions of capitalism and militarism, pursuing the latter on to grounds which the Swiss bourgeoisie tries to pass off as sacrosanct (a “private hunting ground”), namely the problem of the armed neutral nation. On the first score, he said that Labour does not know its power, and that if it did, all it would need to do would be to stand and show itself for the whole of capitalism and the world built on it to collapse, since Labour is the only real force in the world. On the second, he said that all militarisms and all armies were to be condemned, and more than all the rest those of a nation claiming to be neutral and without aggressive intent. When someone raised the insidious objection: “If a foreign army wanted to cross Switzerland in order to attack another nation, would it not be the duty of Switzerland to stop it and block the way with its own army?” he replied: “Certainly it would be your duty to stop it. But the only true way of doing so would be by a wall of your own people, men, women and children, without arms. No army would dare to pass over their bodies, and if it did so once, it would not do so a second time, as it would be overwhelmed by the revolted conscience of the whole universe; thus your sacrifice would bear fruit.”

He also spoke with scornful indifference (as if he had never heard of it) of the League of Nations, and recommended in its place an International Civil Service, broader and more comprehensive than that of Cérésole, extending to all the sufferings of the universe.

Applause from one part of the hall greeted the trick
questions, but the acclamations of the other part replied to Gandhi’s calm and decisive rejoinders. There seems to have been no kind of hostile demonstration, but the upper bourgeoisie of Geneva left in a state of unspeakable rage, and I have heard many echoes of that. It is just as well that the meeting took place the day before Gandhi left Switzerland, for if his stay had been longer, measures for his expulsion might well have been taken. In any case, another public meeting would have been forbidden. Furious articles appeared in the Swiss press next day. The *Courrier de Montreux*, which so far had felt obliged to be tactful, both to him and to me, carried a leading article to the effect that of all the things Gandhi did in these five days in Switzerland, the best was to get out, and he was denounced as an instrument, conscious (why not?) or unconscious, coming to Switzerland to disarm and destroy, so as to deliver her people unarmed into the hands of Communist aggressors. And they were not far off finding further proof of these treasonable tactics in the fact that Gandhi had been staying with “the Bolshevist Romain Rolland”.

Gandhi stayed at Geneva only the exact time necessary for the meeting; he left immediately afterwards without seeing anybody. He merely answered two requests, from Albert Thomas and Guglielmo Ferrero (who teaches at the University of Geneva), with truly regal informality, by assigning as place and time for their meeting—for Ferrero, on the train between Gland and Lausanne, and for Albert Thomas, between Lausanne and Montreux. The Ferreros (he and his wife, Gina Ferrero Lombroso), who are elderly and respected, might well have taken offence at this, but Gandhi replied to Privat’s timid observation to that effect with a gesture of indifference; as it turned out they did not come to the rendezvous, but Mme. Ferrero made a point of excusing herself in a letter to me some days later, claiming that Gandhi’s summons had not reached them until
after he had left. As to Albert Thomas, who tried in vain to catch Gandhi at the station, he sent me a frantic telegram, asking Gandhi to see him in the evening at Villeneuve, which in Gandhi’s absence I took upon myself to grant him. While on the subject, it is worth noting what Gandhi and Mira told me later. When Thomas visited him in London, Gandhi asked him: “Do you see Romain Rolland in Switzerland?” Thomas, embarrassed, said no, he didn’t. “Ah,” said Gandhi, “now I don’t like that! . . . No, I don’t like that at all. . . .” And he amused himself by embarrassing his visitor and pressing the point: “I want you to go and see Romain Rolland in Villeneuve.” (Gandhi was still chuckling mischievously about it as he told me the tale.) (Truth to tell, I have no desire at all to be visited by Thomas; though I appreciate, as everyone does, his intelligence and his documentary activity in the International Office of Labour, I have little esteem for his character, which lacks independence and dignity.

Gandhi is hardly back (having travelled, as usual, by third-class train) when he comes up to see me, without taking any time to rest, and we converse again from 4-45 until after 6 o’clock.

I say to him: “I’ve been thinking about your answer to the question in Lausanne when you said “Truth is God”, and I remember what you have said and written about this being a natural feeling with you ever since childhood (which Satyagraha, non-violence, was not! . . .) I have been examining my own conscience. I have recognized in myself, ever since childhood, that truth to oneself is a vital thing, without which everything is rotten and there is nothing to build on. But there’s a difference between truth to oneself and truth to others. In the stifling atmosphere of the little provincial town where I was living, I felt it quite impossible to express this second truth. Everywhere there was an oppressive sense of constraint, from the family,
the church, school and society. Being a weak little boy, I suffered from it, but since everyone else accepted it, I tried to believe that things were the way they should be. I was most distressed that I couldn’t bring myself to believe the religious mysteries which were taught me; I saw the others believing, and I couldn’t imagine that they were lying (or lying to themselves). When I was about 14 or 15, in Paris, it was worse still; there was the struggle for life, examinations, school, and there were many cases where it was impossible to express one’s true thought, even in the intellectual field. For instance there reigned at that time in the upper echelons of the University an official spiritualism to which one had to make a show of adhering in examinations. I liked philosophy and had intended to specialize in it, but I gave it up at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, so as not to have to write compositions or make declarations in which I would have to lie. When I finally started to be independent (which I bought very dearly, at the cost of almost complete solitude for ten years or thereabouts), I found myself faced with another difficulty even worse than the others: I saw the harm which might be done to the mass of humanity by the truth which to me is good and necessary. This was my greatest difficulty. I saw later that Tolstoy had known it too, and had never known, how to free himself of it. For the whole of his life he was torn between truth and love, and he was never able to strike a balance between them; too often his emotional nature led him to half-betrayals of truth (particularly in his life). For my part, I found myself faced with the artistic problem of how to express completely the truths I conceived without them shattering or maddening those who were too weak to receive them menfully. The ancients got out of it easily by setting up classes of initiates who were the sole trustees of the whole truth. The democratic societies of today do not lend themselves to such barriers. I have never betrayed.
my truth, and my worries about its danger have been partly diminished by my discovery that the "unpleasant" truth is not understood or not heard; people arrange it in a way to suit themselves. But this discovery gave me no joy, and a truth betrayed in this way, if not by those who speak it, at least by those who listen (or rather do not listen) to it, is equally joyless. If it is true that "truth is God", it seems to me that it lacks a very important attribute of God, which is Joy. For—and I insist on this—I cannot conceive of a God without joy. If I have been made out to be an apostle of grief because I have extolled Beethoven's conquest of joy through suffering, then my thought has been misunderstood and so has Beethoven's; suffering cannot be an end in itself, merely a road to something else, a road which is forced on us, which we do not go out of our way to seek. I found this joy, which truth was not sufficient to prove to me, in beauty, and this is where I found myself in opposition to Tolstoy; I attribute a capital importance to art and beauty. By this I mean true art and healthy beauty. Great art has harmony as its essence, and it brings peace, health and equilibrium to the soul. It communicates them at once by the senses and by the mind, for both senses and mind have the right to joy. Beauty manifests itself in many ways; beauty of line, beauty of sound, beauty of colours, etc., and at the bottom of them all, the inner order, the hidden harmony, which is in essence moral. The troubles of the soul are filtered and sublimated through it. Art is the bread of thousands of souls, above all in some refined races, who without beauty (either in nature or in art) would be destitute. All the different routes leading to peace and harmony are good; none of them must be closed, and the ideal would be to associate them all:—which happens in history at some supreme moments when all the inner forces of a people run together, producing books of religion, beauty, science and dreams for whole peoples.
All this exposé has an unexpressed double aim: to fight against the notion attributed to Gandhi that suffering is pleasing to God, and to assert the rights, which he seems sometimes to neglect, of beauty and the natural and exalting love which healthy men have for her.

Gandhi replies: For me, the definition of truth is a universal one. The truth is made manifest in many ways. Any art which is inconsistent with truth, which is not linked to truth, is no art. I would not classify art as a thing distinct from truth. I am against the formula “art for art’s sake”; for me, art must be based on truth, I reject beautiful things which pass for art if they express non-truth instead of truth. I would subscribe to the formula: “Art brings joy and is good”—but on the condition I have stated. By truth in art I do not mean the exact reproduction of exterior objects; it is the living object which brings living joy to the soul and which must elevate the soul. If a work does not achieve this, it is worthless. If truth does not bring joy, it is because truth is not in you. . . .

Then he speaks of a Hindu religious song of morning, and the holy formula “Sat-Chit-Ananda”: “Sat” meaning “truth”, “Chit” “that which lives” and “true knowledge” (i.e. not a knowledge void of true perception), and “Ananda” “ineffable joy”. In this conception truth is inseparable from joy. “Yet one must suffer in the search for truth; one must undergo disappointments, fatigues and afflictions without number; but despite everything you draw joy and felicity from it. We have among our classics the story of Rishananda (?) who personifies truth; his life of suffering is a life of eternal joy.”

He also quotes a Persian novel in which Sirin, the beloved, represents truth. Her lover, in order to reach her, has to cut through a mountain with a blunt instrument; he has to spend years at the task but he does not complain; his effort is joy, and he knows that at the end he will find Sirin.
Romain Rolland: I understand that, and it is my opinion too. But it’s not only about difficulties facing the seeker after truth that I spoke; these difficulties I accept and love. I am thinking of another kind of suffering, that of responsibility. The thinker who does not fear the truth on his own account is worried about its effects on those who will be shaken by it. The great scientific discoveries made by Copernicus and the heroes of thought who followed him shook millions of people in their faith. Truth is always marching on, and not everyone can follow it without becoming breathless and apprehensive. Truth in transition is often very hard for the majority of men. This is the pain of which I speak, not my own.

Gandhi: Even in this case I would say that there must be a secret satisfaction, because that is the necessity of the thing. This is why we see in the writings of those who have gone through tortures (Kalidas?) that “the seeker after truth has a heart tender as the lotus and hard as granite”.

I read to Gandhi two thoughts of Goethe which harmonize with his:

“I prefer the harmful truth to the useful error: the truth cures the pain that it may cause us.” (Poetry)

“A harmful truth is useful, because it can harm only for a moment and it then leads to other truths which will be ever more useful; whilst a useful error is harmful, because it can be useful only for a moment and it leads us astray into other errors which will be ever more harmful.” (To Frau von Stein, 1787)

And another:

“All laws and all moral rules can be reduced to one single truth.” (A. V. Muller, 1819.)

Gandhi listens and nods in satisfaction.

Romain Rolland: I agree too, but I still say that it is often hard.

Gandhi: There is joy in this hardness.
(Mira and Desai smilingly hint that “Bapu” practises this joy; Gandhi laughs and admits that he can be, as people say of him, at once “gentle as the lamb” (or as the cow, as they would say in India and “hard as the tiger”).) *Romain Rolland*: Someone is always sacrificed. I’m not sorry for the leader, only for the weak who follow him.

As the conversation goes on, we speak again of truth in art and its multiple forms. I say that I should like art always to be accessible to the great mass of people, and, returning to the cathedrals, I say that at the time they were built Europe was closer to the thought of India—which Gandhi admits. “At present,” I add, “the truth is best expressed by the scientists; they are the greatest poets.” I then allude to recent astronomical discoveries which have broken through the envelope of our universe to see other-universes floating beyond the Milky Way.

Fifty years ago, in my youth, the triumph of materialism was related to that of science; now it turns out today that science itself is explaining matter in terms of energy, in other words a spiritual principle. We are living in a fine age, despite all the disorders it brings with it. Happy the man who can live in it with a healthy body and a strong heart!

Gandhi assents, his eyes shining. And we touch on the underside of scientific grandeur, the dizzy whirlpool of murderous inventions, machines of destruction, poison gas, etc.

*Gandhi* (confidently): This will kill itself. If such a war and such destructions take place and meet with no resistance, there will follow a revulsion against the horrible acts committed. It is not in human nature to advance without resistance and to fight, so to speak, in a vacuum. If a nation is heroic enough to submit to violence without responding to it, it will be the strongest possible object-lesson. But it cannot be done without absolute faith.
Romain Rolland: Nothing must be done by halves,—neither in evil nor in good.

Gandhi speaks of the faith of Christopher Columbus. Without it he would not have discovered America. . . .

An hour later, the evening prayer is held (the last among us) in the downstairs drawing room in the Villa Olga. After the chants in the darkness, Gandhi tells the little gathering that I am on his request going to go upstairs to play him a piece of Beethoven, but since the room on the first floor is too small, he alone will go upstairs with me (also my sister and Mira); the others will stay below. This is done, and I play the andante from the Fifth Symphony; Gandhi expressly asked for Beethoven as he knows that Beethoven was the intermediary between Mira and myself, and hence that he owes Mira to Beethoven. His disciples and secretaries as well, particularly Pyarelal, are profoundly imbued with the cult of Beethoven (they can hardly have heard much of him other than on the gramophone, but they know him by my books). After playing, I go to the divan where Gandhi is sitting and explain to him in a few words the inner conflict and victory which I can read in the pages he has just heard. Mira is very moved, for in all the years since she said goodbye to Europe she has not heard a note of Beethoven. (Gandhi, when we ask for his impression, replies with a mischievous and candid little laugh: “It must be good, since you say so!”)

Then on Gandhi's request I return to the piano and play the Elysian Fields scene from Orfeo, the first orchestral piece and the flute melody. There is no time to take the repeats; Privat comes to collect Gandhi at the arranged time to go to the English college (Chillon), where Gandhi agreed to speak for half an hour. He meets Albert Thomas at the bottom of my stairs as he arrives, and takes him with him. When he returns half an hour later (his chat with the young English boys went very well, they tell me;
they asked him intelligent questions), a delegation of little girls from the Villeneuve schools and choral society comes to give him an aubade (at about 9 p.m.) under his windows at the Villa Lionnette. They sing him the *Ranz des Vaches*, and the delighted Indians are convinced that the singers are genuine cowherds. (We refrain from disillusioning them, nor do we tell the singers of Villeneuve who do not know that in India Krishna was the divine cowherd.)

Meanwhile I have quite a long conversation with Pyare-lal. My sister found herself with him in the railway compartment between Villeneuve and Geneva, and managed to win the confidence of this highly intense young man who finds it difficult to talk about himself and whose features show little of the sensitive and tender soul within. (He himself sadly says: “I’m not attractive, I put people off. . . .”)

He was so grateful to her that he told his whole life-story, and now that he has been set in motion he tells us everything openly: his childhood upbringing by an uncle who was as kind to him as a father and whose heart must have bled when he broke with his planned career and gave up hopes of a good job to follow Gandhi, to whom he is devoted body and soul. But I believe the uncle has finally come to understand, after many years of estrangement. Pyarelal also tells me (and my sister translates) what my books have meant to him; first my *Vie de Tolstoi*, some passages of which had a decisive influence on him, real illuminations. Then *Jean-Christophe*, and the *Beethoven*. I am struck by the deep love of art among these young disciples of Gandhi; this makes all the more impressive their renunciation of all the enjoyment which art might bring them; but the flame still burns within them. Mira, on my request, has chosen some books from my bookshelves for me to give to these young people: for Pyarelal, my *Goethe et Beethoven* in English; for Devdas the *Vie de Tolstoi* in English; I give Mira herself the big French edition of *Beethoven: les Epoques créatrices*; for Takata, present
at the conversation with Pyarelal, the new French edition of Goethe et Beethoven. We all feel much sympathy for our dear Takata. He is even more intense than Pyarelal, but more unpolished, violent and stormy by nature, and he finds it very difficult to say anything; he emits jerky syllables, bursts of laughter and stifled sighs; one often feels he is on the point of bursting into tears and sobbing, and then he represses it all and gasps: with his thick black mop of hair he looks like some lion of unknown breed drawn by Hokusai. His life in Paris (or rather Clamart, on the edge of the woods) must be one of grinding poverty, moral distress and savage enthusiasm for art. Some years ago he was imprisoned in Japan as a Communist; he was even tortured in prison, and he shows with a nervous laugh one of his fingers which still bears the deforming scars of the steel wire tied round it to crush it. He left his wife and children in Japan, and their situation must be as critical as his own. He dare not mix with the literary circles in Paris which would be closest to his thought, as he is closely watched by his own Embassy, and at the least suspicion of Communism he would be denounced to the French police and expelled. So he is completely isolated in his art, and I have no idea how he manages to live; I think he very occasionally receives a small sum of money from Japan, but for some months the crisis there has stopped anything from being sent. Alongside this he is very proud, and refuses my offers of help. I slip a bank-note into his pocket by force, and he nearly suffocates with emotion; he swallows his tears, says nothing and sighs deeply. I say goodbye to him and we arrange for him to come again in spring to do my bust. He took three sittings over Gandhi’s and he seems satisfied with his clay model.

On Friday, 11 December, the day of his departure, Gandhi comes to see me early, just after 9 o’clock, and we have our last conversation, rich, affectionate and varied.

First we discuss Italy. Gandhi has sent Scarpa a tele-
gram saying that he will not agree to come to the meeting of the Istituto di Cultura unless he is free to say exactly what he wants about anything. Some hours later, as if by chance, he received a telegram from Gentile, who was to have chaired the meeting, apologizing for having to be away on exactly the two days Gandhi had said he would spend in Rome. They have realized that they cannot exploit Gandhi for the benefit of Fascism, and that his words would be more dangerous than useful.

I finish briefing Gandhi by telling him of the oath demanded by the Fascists from university professors, and the protests published against this oath by a dozen of them, the main names in university science in Italy. I also speak of the Vatican, which now accepts the oath, with Jesuitical reservations.

Then my sister talks to him about Oxford, which she knows well and loves. Gandhi tells her his impressions of his visit to Oxford. "Fine young men," conservative but of generous spirit, who will be of some help to him in the battle. He says that the beauty of the Oxford colleges, the buildings and works of art, was dimmed in his eyes by thoughts of the world-wide exploitation which caused these riches to flourish.

In Lancashire, Gandhi much appreciated the textile workers; he found them very intelligent: "They spoke with fine detachment. They might have seen me as their enemy, since my campaign of non-co-operation has ruined them, but I explained to them that the real cause of their ruin was world-wide, not the Indian boycott, and we separated the best of friends. The employers were very nice as well; a friendly atmosphere everywhere."

"Miss Lester showed me the poorer quarters in London, the slums. But by my standards these poor people were wealthy; their furniture was worth all of £ 50 (!!!), and some of them even had a piano."
(I strongly suspect Miss Lester, whose British sense of pride is well developed, of having hidden the real poverty from Gandhi—in the same way as in Chicago the American branch of the Women’s League for Peace and Liberty hid the immigrant quarters from the foreign delegates, and even showed signs of offence when some of them, Mme. Jouve and Mme. Duchêne got away and went in search of them.)

I am astonished by the description of these slums, but I do not want to argue, and I contrast them with the precise descriptions of poverty in Paris published by the Oeuvre du Moulin Vert, which specializes in aid for large families. I have terrible facts to quote, and I also use the enquiry made in the Paris suburbs by a young Protestant student among unskilled labourers whose lives he shared for six months. I show him the depths of poverty to be found there, and I do not believe it possible for India to fall much lower. Gandhi adds a few observations on the situation of workers in Wales, which seems to be very bad.

I speak of the United States and the antagonism which has grown there between American workers and unprotected foreign immigrants,—as in Europe, between skilled and unskilled labourers.

I throw out the idea that Europe seems to be moving towards a privileged class of labourers with a sort of sacrificed proletariat below it for hard and repulsive jobs. This proletariat, recruited among foreigners and the conquered races of Africa and Asia in particular, would end up by forming a class of slaves, as in the time of the Roman Empire, when the Roman plebs unloaded its labour—and also its military defence—on to the plebs of the rest of the world. I also speak, uncomplimentarily, of Kalergi’s “Pan-Europe”.

Afterwards I ask Gandhi to reply to the questions given to me by Monatte’s Revolution Prolétarienne. This is Gandhi’s reply (the text was taken down by Macha and Pyarelal):

First question : Let us admit, with you, that for a peo-
ple under a foreign domination, the necessity for first freeing themselves from the invader forces them into a provisory union of classes and to the formation of one single national bloc. But events move quickly, and a native bourgeoisie and capitalism are developing. Your good advice to the Parsees (23 March 1921) will not stop capital from becoming concentrated, in your land as elsewhere, in the hands of a small number. The fight against the British oppressor will be followed inevitably by the fight against the Indian oppressors. Will you then continue to ask the workers to “further the interests of their employers?”

Gandhi replies: I make no distinction between the European and the indigenous capitalist. My works treat of the struggle between the workers in factories and the owners of those factories apart from the national struggle. It is true that I do not consider antagonism between capital and labour to be inevitable. Though it might be difficult, I think it would be possible to establish a harmony between them. But if it were proved that such harmony were impossible in one factory or another, I should not hesitate to increase the power of labour (that is to say the organized workers) to such an extent that the destruction of capital would result, or its complete transference into the hands of labour. In this case as in every other, Satyagraha would force capital to the wall so that it would destroy itself on the day when its destruction would be judged to be inevitable. And even if capitalism should come into the national struggle, I should not consider its interests if they were proved to be in opposition to those of the community. But I do not wish to raise a quarrel with capital at this juncture, unless it becomes absolutely necessary to do so. It would make the difficult problem of the moment still more difficult.

Second question: You have just renewed your contact with the countries of Western Europe, and in England you have seen the mass of workers, or rather unemployed, who
are the victims of the crisis in capitalism. They are not faced, as you are, with the need to form a united front against the foreign yoke. After making contact with the Western proletariat in these troubled times, would you blame it for practising class warfare?

Gandhi replies: My observations have led me to the conclusion that in England's case the unemployed have not many reasons to complain of the capitalist. I am convinced that if the capitalist arrived at the end of his resources and gave away all his capital today to be distributed among the workers, reducing himself to the rank of worker at the same time, this sacrifice would not help the working class at all. The real remedy at the present time, as far as distress in England is concerned, is to reorganize the whole of life. Since England now shares world trade with America, Japan, Italy and other nations, English capital cannot usefully be employed in many existing English industries. In these circumstances the unemployed must first revise their standard of living, and secondly find work in some domestic craft which they can do in their own homes, or else return to agriculture. The capitalist has hardly any role to play in all this rearrangement. The capitalist is of no use to the unemployed, either by becoming a philanthropist or by transferring his capital abroad.

Romain Rolland: England is still enjoying a privileged insular situation even in its economic crisis, and one can't draw any conclusions about Continental Europe from her example; in fact it's precisely the English way of treating her unemployed which has caused worry and indignation among the Continental bourgeoisie. In Germany there's no question of a "dole", merely the exploitation of unemployed labourers at the lowest possible price. As to those workers who don't seem useful to the exploiters (such as the young intellectuals), then the exploiters don't care and are content to let them starve. There's a supreme scorn for human life
in the whole of post-war Europe, particularly in the German countries. Since the peace treaties thousands, perhaps millions in Germany and Austria have died of hunger, malnutrition and poverty, and all in total silence. In this black winter of crisis, there’s not a week that passes in Germany without suicides caused by hunger, lack of work, or despair. The exploitation of low-price labour is completely pitiless; if nationals don’t agree to low salaries, foreign workers are brought in. The situation in Continental Europe is different from that in England. Our French bourgeois press is furious at the Labour Party and the corrupt example it’s giving the world by handing out a dole to the unemployed.

Gandhi (resuming): If, nevertheless, there are circumstances in which the capitalist seeks to take advantage of poverty and a surplus of labour by offering the lowest possible salaries, although he is in a position to pay much higher salaries, then Labour undoubtedly has a remedy at its disposal. If there is perfect unity among the workers, I am certain that Labour can dictate its own terms. It would be enough for it to withhold labour on any conditions but its own, and if it is well enough organized to block the entry of foreign labour, capital will have to give in.

Romain Rolland: You say that if Labour achieves perfect unity among labourers it will easily gain the upper hand over Capital. I agree with you, but you have to take account of human weakness. In reality the workers are not united, as the capitalists have their intrigues; they foster divisions and buy “blackleg” labour. In this case, the minority of perceptive and energetic workers who understand the situation feel justified in forcing the masses to form this unity. This is the dictatorship of the proletariat, the conscious proletariat in the interests of the proletarian mass whose support it obtains by force.

Gandhi: I am totally against this, as it would mean
Labour seizing Capital, and seizing Capital is the wrong way of going about it. If you set a bad example to Labour, then Labour will never make the most of its strength. I started in India with very few workers. The union of textile workers in Ahmedabad was torn by dissensions, but I was inflexible; I laid down rules to direct the workers and prevent all violence, and the result is that this union now contains 66,000 workers; most of them are illiterate, but they understand that their destiny and their security are in their own hands. I would not want to make them believe they are a powerless and dependent class; I teach them that they are the true capitalists, for it is not metallic coin that constitutes capital, but the will and the abilities of Labour. This is their unbounded source of capital. At present there may be evidence of disorganization, and it can be seen that Labour is exposed to the danger of being exploited by Capital. But I shall continue to teach them the dignity of Labour. I shall wait for years, if necessary, to build this organization, but I shall not accept the idea of a dictatorship based on violence. We have seen Labour organized on this violent basis in Bombay, and Labour was defeated there. But if they were willing to act on my advice, Labour would have the upper hand over Capital; otherwise Labour will destroy itself, and there are threatening signs of it happening in Bombay. But so far Labour in Bombay has not gone as far as murder; the parallel of our example of non-violence in Ahmedabad is holding them back. A small group of Communists exists in Bombay, trying to exploit the workers for their own ends; so far they have not succeeded, at least not before my departure from India; I am not well informed of what has happened since. I am teaching Labour this one lesson: that there is no need for them to stay attached to a factory. In Ahmedabad we have tried to teach the workers to make themselves absolutely independent of the factory. If they cannot earn there what they consider to
be their due, they should be satisfied with the modest gains they can make from hand-spinning or stone-breaking! The skilled worker must not look with scorn upon non-skilled work. It is better to leave the factory for low paid independent work than to accept dishonourable wages from the factory. The workers’ task is to become independent and able to dictate their conditions when there is not a surplus of labour. As to blacklegs, we try to take command over foreign labour as well. Labour has its process of evolution, as does everything else, and I have no desire to interrupt it by introducing the disturbing factor of violence.

Romain Rolland does not pursue this subject, preferring to ask a question about certain methods of non-violence: “Acts of crime and cruelty among men are sometimes caused by a morbid, pathological state. In all society there are men who do harm to others and are really in need of treatment. What should be the attitude of the non-violent towards these sick men and madmen in order to protect society against them? How can one act here without violence?”

Gandhi: I should keep them under constraint, and I should not call it violence. If my brother went mad, I would put irons on his wrists to prevent him from doing any harm, but I would not use violence against him, as there would be no motive for using it. Nor would my brother feel that violence was being used against him. On the contrary, when he comes to his senses, he will thank me for having contained him. I must not take account of his resistance during his state of disequilibrium, as my action would be inspired by unadulterated love. It has no egoist motive behind it, not even the desire to protect myself against him. I know that if, in binding his hands, I risk being struck by him, I will pay no attention to it. I am binding his hands so that he may resume his mental equilibrium. If I bind them it is not to save myself; if I
could save him by allowing myself to be wounded by him, I would do so. I would act in the same way towards these half-mad people of whom you speak. I would put them in infirmaries, not under the guard of harsh gaolers, but surrounding them with care; I would have them looked after by specialists in these sicknesses and their treatment. But all this is only symptomatic treatment; I would go deeper and try to treat the causes. It is present-day society which gives birth to criminals of this type. In my opinion the root cause is the race for profit, competition and forced levelling ("the destruction of distances"). This is why I would reorganize society. I would appoint experts to find out the special and underlying causes, and then we would investigate how to treat not only these crimes, committed in a morbid state of mind, but all sorts of crimes.

I then submit to Gandhi some questions given to me for him by a German teacher of religion, Erich Schramm, of Offenbach:

First Question: What do you call God? Is he a spiritual personality or a force reigning over the world?

Gandhi replies: God is not a person, but an immutable law. And in this case the law and its Maker are one. In ordinary experience the word "law" means books of law, but here when I speak of law, I mean the living law. That is what God is. And this law does not change; it is eternal. It is not a personal God who changes with changing circumstances. God is an eternal principle, and that is why I have said that Truth is God.

Second Question: What do you think of Christians?

Gandhi has already replied in Lausanne, and he repeats his formula: "Christianity is good, but the Christians are bad."

Third Question: Would Gandhi agree to join an organization for universal humanitarianism, holding the view that the Universe is a great secret and that all that is
necessary is to listen to the small voice which speaks within each one of us?

_Gandhi_ replies: I have often been asked to associate myself with organizations and I have always said no! For I have usually found that the people in these organizations are either honest simpletons, or charlatans speculating on apparently praiseworthy objects. In London, there is a league calling itself the “World League of Ahimsa”, headed by a pastor and his wife. I saw that there was no more Ahimsa in them than in the table in front of me; they were working for this organization in order to live from it. I refused to allow my name to be associated with this league; I even refused to put my signature to the journal they published. I told them that they should find other means of earning their living. If this question (Schramm’s) means whether I would agree to join an organization founded by the questioner, my answer is no!

At the end of this conversation, Max Kettel, the press photographer from Geneva, who has taken an excellent series of snapshots of Gandhi and Mira at Villeneuve (out walking, or in the villa garden), is allowed to take two poses of our little assembly in my room. (In one of the two, which has since been published, I have three arms; mine and one of Macha’s, hidden behind me, wearing a wrist-watch. . . . But there is no sign of the watch which holds such an honourable place in Gandhi’s attire, since it is the only thing he keeps on, with his loin-cloth, when naked; here he hides it in his hand under his burnous. He never takes it off; he is a man of punctuality to the minute.)

We take our leave even more affectionately than on the other occasions, since this is the last time. The weather is cold and bright, and I do not want to let my guests go without taking them to the station. This is the first time I have been outside for a fortnight.

The cars carry the numerous pieces of hand luggage and
the women, but Gandhi, as usual, goes by foot. On the way he stops to please a deformed little man who keeps a drinks stall (non-alcoholic!) in a tiny chalet suspended over the railway, at the corner of the Chemin Byron and the main road; he even goes in for a moment. On the platform at Villeneuve station, a large crowd presses round us, curious but sympathetic. An old woman holds out her hand to Gandhi and they exchange a few words, only their eyes understanding each other. As usual Gandhi’s head and skinny legs are bare, but he is well wrapped up in his toga-like robe. The Dent du Midi and the snowy mountain peaks in the sun give him a last belated greeting. The train arrives. A third-class carriage has been reserved by the railway company for the Indians and their suite (for they are being escorted to Milan, and perhaps to Rome, by a few faithful followers: Edmond Privat and his wife, Miss Lester, Louisette Guieyesse, an Austrian lady from Graz, who shows off to all comers a book by her in which Gandhi wrote a few indulgent words some years ago (Frau Standemath) and others, plus the inevitable English and Swiss policemen, who never take their eyes off the dangerous man in his passage across Europe, a situation which Gandhi tolerates with friendly irony; what does it matter to him, as he deliberately says everything openly? Far from having something to hide, he is pleased to be heard. . . .)

At the moment of hoisting his heron-like feet nimbly on to the carriage’s high step, Gandhi embraces me again; for the last time I rest my cheek on his close-cropped, stubbly pate; then Mira and the rest, with filial respect. Mira leans out of the window of the moving train and we wave goodbye until the train is out of sight. And I go home to my villa in Dr. Niehans’ car.
194. Extract from Mahadev Desai’s Diary

Villeneuve
December 6, 1931

Gandhiji: I would have to take Scarpel\(^1\) literally and what I would want to do is to speak in their presence to the people the very things I should speak out.

Romain Rolland: Then you should have with you American reporters.

G.: It would be against my nature to make these arrangements beforehand.

R. R.: They will surround you with people, English and American, who are Fascists. Your voice must break the cordon for the people of Italy.

G.: I would make it a condition also that I would not like to speak to them about neutral matters. This visit has come to me unsought. Let us take it for granted that in Italian press every word will be distorted. In Free England too my words were distorted and message boycotted. In France too wild things have been written in *Figaro*.

R. R.: The other danger. You will speak, but others will speak against you and you will not understand it.

G.: I would do my duty and leave the results.

R. R.: You have a duty to speak to the poor people.

G.: I feel that it is impossible for any person to take these meticulous precautions.

R. R.: Always you must have someone with you.

\(^1\) It had been suggested that Gandhiji should visit Italy and see the Pope and Mussolini.
G.: The immediate effect will be that Italian press will misrepresent me, but the distant effect of a good word spoken or a good thing shown must be good. We must run the risk provided we are sure that I would not fall a prey to temptation.

R. R.: You will meet intellectuals—people with intellectual mask, but not the people like Formichi, Gentile, etc.

G.: I saw your great pain and I realized with what enormous labours you had reached your conclusions on the situation. On the other hand I have been built differently. Whatever conclusions I have reached have not been through historical studies at all. History has played the least part in my make. A scoffer would say that I have been empirical in my methods and all my conclusions are based on my so-called experience. I call it so-called because there is a danger of self-delusion. I know many lunatics who believe in certain things as if they were their own experiences. But he has some belief as regards his wife and children, and it is impossible to dislodge him from what he calls his experience and the dividing line between his experience and mine may be very thin. Nevertheless my experience has precedents. Saints have based their institutions on experiences and, after all, the world now believes that the experiences they had recorded were correct and also that they had been tested by the historical and analytical methods. My experience has not altogether been baseless and the whole experience regarding non-violence and non-co-operation has a foundation of this character and so, whilst I was listening to yesterday's penetrating discourse, I said, "How can I react to this?" I said: "I should say such is my faith and I must work for it." It was an awful problem. Whilst non-violence may work in India, it may not answer at all in Europe. It does not baffle me for the simple reason that I should not be able to deliver the message of non-violence to Europe, except
that it may percolate through India. I may never be able to deliver such a message, but God may have many things in store for me. I have met many enlightened Englishmen and also foreigners and I have said that you must not move unless you have faith to such an extent that you would have faith in you even if the world was against you; and you will then have ways and means coming to your rescue. It is, therefore, my firm belief that non-violence alone will save Europe; otherwise I see nothing but perdition. A process of disintegration is going on in front of me. Things in Russia may be a puzzle. I have spoken least about Russia, but deep down in me I am full of the profound distrust of things happening in Russia. It seems to be a challenge to non-violence. Just now it seems to be working well, but the basis is force. I do not know how long that force is going to be effective in keeping that society, that country to this narrow path. The Indians who are under the influence of Russian methods are betraying intolerance of an extreme type. The result is that those who are under it are under a system of terrorism. So I follow the Russian experiment with a fundamental distrust. I have cross-questioned every Englishman and American who has been to Russia. They have seemed to me to be impartial observers. The other day Lord Lothian and Bernard Shaw went to Russia. Lothian's testimony is decidedly that he does not know how far force is going to remould society. Bernard Shaw has written enthusiastically. In his conversation with me, I missed that enthusiasm and I did not draw him out completely. On the contrary he was interested in Indian matters. So I see that even for Europe there is need for non-violence. It needs no big organization. It somehow or other organizes itself. There ought to be at the head someone who is non-violent in character, with faith immovable as a mountain, and so long as this man has not come to the surface we must wait and watch and pray.
R. R.: I sent you letters addressed to Runham Brown. Non-resistance will be successful in the distant future. But the question is immediate. In 20 years European civilization may perish. I have doubts about the method of non-violence. In 20 years’ time everything would be decided. What should we do in the interval?

G.: I said somewhat to this effect. The world is really idolatrous. Islam is idolatrous, and so is Protestant Christianity. It wants to see something through one of the five senses. That is what I call idolatry. It wants an ocular demonstration and, if India can successfully give the demonstration, the thing becomes easy. I am clear India should not need 20 years and, if India can come to real freedom through non-violence the world would know non-violence, and then the whole world would take it. I want to develop world opinion so that England will be ashamed to do the wrong thing. But whether that can come about, or whether this war others will fight or not, I do not know. But I am certain that out of intense non-violence only good can come. There is no doubt about it that English opinion has undergone a revolutionary change—not to a satisfactory degree. I attribute it to non-violence. Some brilliant Englishmen—Gilbert Murray [for instance]—do not agree and don’t make admission. I do not want it. The thing is there and anyone can see that, but for the fight of non-violence, the so-called R.T.C. would not have met. So I have a hope that after we have gone through . . .\(^1\) I should have no difficulty in covering the rest of the ground. I know the difference, but I cannot lose faith. I have to build on the self-dedication of the few who have given their lives to it. The same thing happened to me in South Africa. The same thing happened in India where I did not know that I could give a definite battle. We would be able to give that

\(^1\) A few words that follow are not clear in the source.
battle. Beyond that I am not able to suggest anything further. If you can deal with the Indian situation in the correct manner, the European will be and cannot but be corrected.

R. R.: Non-resistance has been applied in some cases, but our difficulties are double and triple. Indians have been ill-treated, but I do not think that they have been as ill-treated as [people in] Italy. Forced exploitation through work by children. There must be a gospel to preach to the miserable people.

In Russia you must know what the conditions were. What could non-violence do in Russia? Have we the right to ask them to be non-violent to Europe? Should we force them to yield to Europe?

G.: With reference to European proletariat, the relations between employers and employed were fairly happy. But I said that the remedy did not come through giving battle to capitalists but in giving battle to themselves. They would then become their own employers. They look to capital to find their labour. If the capitalists gave them all the capital, they would not be happy and they could not make use of it even for one full year. I said to them, therefore, “revive your cottage industry”. It is being adopted in Wales. Brave, stalwart minds and majority of them unemployed—and unemployment will increase as oil wells increase. Not one of them should be living upon doles.

R. R.: The danger in Europe is in a large middle class which lives in comfort at the expense of others. After the war France was told Germany would pay. In France they are trying to prepare an Asiatic Army and go back to the times of the Roman Empire.

India is right—you are acting in the interest of mankind. Poverty has not yet come to France, though it has come to Germany. Our part is to be with the oppressed.
G.: There, too, does not the remedy lie with the oppressed? If they ceased to co-operate with the exploiter, deliverance would come.

Those who have no deep religious feeling are tempted by salaries and material comforts. World’s greatest works are chemical industries which have for their object violence. The gospel of poverty and self-abnegation must be preached.

195. Extract from Mahadev Desai’s Diary

Villeneuve
December 9, 1931

Gandhiji: I believe and don’t believe in the sincerity of MacDonald, as in a sense he means to stand by the declaration he has made, but he must also know that the declaration does not mean responsibility at the Centre and yet he says it contains responsibility at the Centre and wants you to believe what is not true. There is another sense also in which he has appeared to me as insincere—not open but evasive in his conversation—and so I could not form an altogether good opinion of him. He carries a responsibility on his shoulders which he can ill afford to bear. He is overworked, and in me he has a difficult subject to deal with. He finds me a fighter; on the other hand, my demand seems to be pitched so high that he cannot circumvent me and so he gives me the idea of an insincere man. It may be weakness and not insincerity.

Romain Rolland: He wrote beautifully about India. G.: His views are favourable even today, but then he had no responsibility. Today he has.

R. R.: His statement was impertinent. Your last speech at R.T.C. has much moved many people.

G.: “Extraordinary speech openly inspired by Bolshevik ideas.” That was the speech at the Federal Structure
Committee on commercial discrimination. It did create consternation among my friends.

I said I or Congress would not discriminate against a person because he was an Englishman, but there would be discrimination on other grounds, and I presented him with the formula: any interest in conflict with the national interest or not legitimately acquired, I said, would be taken over by the State and I said that it would apply to Europeans of India. This, I said, would not be done by an executive order but by the order from the Federal Court.

[The Ordinance] is an inhuman document, worse than the Rowlatt Act. The menace to the Government of India from its own subordinates is of a different character. They disregarded instructions of a liberal nature, which are rare, but they are ready to carry out all instructions of a destructive character. Whereas the Central power is not able to exact discipline. I have called the Civil Service of India the greatest political freemasonry. The Secret Service is nothing before this snake-like coil of Civil Service. . . .

R. R.: The German youth is quite different from what he was before war. Before war they believed in the concrete value of power. They have seen it crushed. The new youth lives in a state of relativism—no wonder they come from Einstein’s place. To the German youth France seems to be a country of old values, so that German youth is ready to follow new ideals. They are angry with France which is a dead weight on the past. We can’t judge Europe by the victor.

G.: The Indian youth may not be capable of heroic self-sacrifice, but it is coming under the influence of non-resistance.
196. Extract from Mahadev Desai’s Diary

[On or after December 10, 1931]¹

R. R.: Cruelty or wickedness in man is not caused by will, but by morbid taste. What would non-resistance do to preserve society from these half-responsible people?

G.: I do not need to use violence at all. But I would need to keep them under restraint. I would use some social force. I would not call it violence. My brother becomes a lunatic and I put iron on his hands.

There is no use of violence when the motive is lacking. Nor would he feel the violence. On the contrary, when he comes to his senses, he would thank me for it. In his lunacy he would feel the violence, offer resistance to it. I would not mind the resistance because my action would be dictated by unadulterated love; there is not even the selfishness of loving behind it. If I am tying his hands, it is not in order to save myself from being hurt. If I felt that I should hurt myself by trying to save him, I should subject myself to being hurt. In the same way I should treat these half-crazy men, treat them as sick men, put them in an infirmary and put them [not] under heartless jailors but under medical men who have studied their conditions and surround them by kind nurses. That is only dealing with the system.

¹ The source mentions no date, but this was recorded after the meeting in Geneva on December 10.
197. Romain Rolland to General Moris

Telegram, 11 December 1931

General Moris Monte Mario Rome. Gandhi arriving Rome Saturday afternoon leaving Monday stop could he possibly stay with you with two disciples stop friendly greetings.

Romain Rolland

198. Extract from Gandhi’s Diary

Rome, December 12, Saturday

Spun 204 rounds. Arrived at Rome at 8-30 in the morning. Received letter to the effect that the Pope could not receive me. Three of us stayed with General Moris, the others in a hotel. Went to see the Vatican in the afternoon. At 6 o’clock Mussolini. £ 20 to Maud.

On Way to Brindisi, December 13, Sunday

Spun 180 rounds. Tolstoy’s daughter came in the morning; schools for young people, concessions to women, the forum, a gathering at Scarpa’s, the Princess called and Amanullah’s secretary. Left at 10-40 at night. The Privats are with me.

199. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1931.—From the news sent to us (prudently, because of the Fascist censorship) in letters from Mme. Privat in Rome and Mira in Brindisi, then, more freely, from Miss
Lester on her way back through Switzerland, this is what we learn:

At Milan there was a huge crowd awaiting Gandhi’s arrival which greeted him with warm sympathy; it seems to have been a body distinct from the Fascist groups, which were there on the alert. A first-class carriage was made available for Gandhi’s journey across Italy, and going against his habits for once (why I do not know), Gandhi got into it. The same sympathetic crowd in Rome. General Moris took Gandhi, Mira and Desai in his car to his Monte Mario villa; the others went to a hotel. Gandhi and the Indians were delighted by General Moris’ hospitality, and in general, as all Indians do, they felt “at home” in Italy. My friend Sofia Bertolini, related by marriage to the Moris family, tells me of an evening spent with them in the lovely calm villa, surrounded by parasol pines and overlooking the whole Campagna, framed in the distance by the harmonious chain of the Sabine hills. (I can still see it clearly after forty years. . .) It was the hour for the prayers; the lights were out in front of the olive-wood fire; a young royal princess paid a visit, quite contrary to etiquette, and as always it made an acute and deep impression on everyone there. Gandhi was very gay and very mischievous. Mussolini said he wanted to see him, and since this desire was reciprocated (the holy man has kept one little demon, that of curiosity; I understand and share it—and at times it gets the better of me—but I resist it, and I could have wished Gandhi had resisted on this occasion), Gandhi went to see the Duce, with Mira, Desai and General Moris. Mussolini made himself pleasant; he advanced to meet him as far as the middle of the room and made Mira sit down with him, but he let Desai and the old General remain standing, so as to make clear his authority, as the latter gently remarked. The conversation lasted about twenty minutes, and we do not know what was said, but I am sure Gandhi calmly affirmed
his “unpleasant” truths, and probably the Duce cynically acquiesced. What I do know, from Miss Lester’s amusing letter, is that Gandhi’s eyes were sparkling with mischief when he talked to her later about Mussolini’s eyes. “They’re like a cat’s eyes,” he said, “always moving. . .” “How,” asked Miss Lester; “like this (rolling her eyes up and down) or like this (rolling them from left to right, enough to hurt herself) ?” “Like this, like this,” said Gandhi with a laugh (indicating the latter kind, the perpetual agitation of worried eyes on the lookout). He went on: “In general he does not look a man of humanity. But I must say that he was charming with me. And when I told him that the Pope couldn’t receive me, I saw a little glint of mischievous satisfaction.”

For lack of the Pope, Gandhi fell back on his shell; he got himself into the Vatican and acted the tourist—which is not like him (at least, not what I thought I knew of him. . . I am sorry not to have seen him in Rome; he must have been a bit like a schoolboy on holiday). He did the rounds of the art galleries, and he says himself that he was so moved in front of a picture of the Crucifixion (?) that tears came into his eyes. He also visited two of Mme. Montessori’s schools (the Italian papers said the “Balillas”) and he made the mistake of visiting Starace, the new secretary of the Fascist party. As I thought, his visit to Rome was exploited by the Fascists. The press report dwelt on his visit to Mussolini and the Fascist institutions; a photo in L’Illustration, which must have been faked, shows him watching a march-past of Fascist youths; he looks as if he is inspecting them, while he may have been a mere onlooker. The Italian press, generally sympathetic, carefully eliminated the word “non-violence” from his statements and from any allusions to his name; on the contrary they attributed to him all sorts of violent and threatening remarks about England which he had to deny by cable on arrival at Port Said. The
anti-Fascists were very hurt by it all. I have had several letters from worthy people asking me to explain it, and La Libertà, mouthpiece of the Italian émigrés in Paris, featured in its weekly issue a bitter remark on the Gandhi-Mussolini meeting, adding the one word “Ingenuità?”

But it is not ingenuousness. I have seen enough of Gandhi now to be sure that he has not been taken in; he misses no political sharp practices. But he counters them with his calm ironic indifference which goes its own way whatever happens. I was never the least worried for him when I saw him heading for Rome; nobody can ensnare him, and nobody will. . . . But it was not only he himself that mattered. What mattered was those suffering Italians whose torturer he went to see. I told him so very clearly, and I blame myself for not having pressed the point further. When he asked me to decide, after we had both stated our points of view, I should have said to him: “Very well, don’t go. On no account should you give your hand to the murderer of Matteotti and Amendola.” I have too much respect for the freedom of those I respect. After putting all the facts before him, I let him decide himself; I should have decided for him. I did not take enough account of the “demon of curiosity”.

Anyway, the bad impression will be transitory, and Gandhi will efface it in his usual way, by action.

A telegram from General Moris tells me (Monday 14 December) that Gandhi has left Rome for Brindisi, and is taking the Privats with him to India.

A few more forgotten notes from the Conversations with Gandhi. On the last morning we talked about many varied subjects, and Gandhi spoke with more verve and openness than in the other conversations.

We discussed, among other things, the question of the “Untouchables”. Gandhi thinks this was originally a corrupt application of Ahimsa. Men and women guilty of serious
crimes, instead of facing the death penalty, were excluded from the community. But by a process of social degeneration this penalty has become even more barbarous than death. (I relate this to the cruel hypocrisy of perpetual imprisonment in the West, more implacable than death, which shuts up the condemned criminal in isolation and finally drives him mad.)

There are worse things even than the “Untouchables”, contact with whom is polluting; there are also what one may term the “Unseeables”, on whom it is forbidden even to look. There are not very many of them; 200 or 300 in the whole of India. Naturally Gandhi and his followers have done much to fight against this infamy, and they have partially succeeded, but they sometimes have to fight against the oppressed as well as the oppressors, for they cling desperately to their abject state. Gandhi tells of the difficulties he has faced in speaking with some of these untouchables, who run away and hide, or then, when found, grovel with their faces in the dust and with hay in their mouth. On the other hand Gandhi does not agree with the emancipated untouchables who demand a separate organization in the future constitution of India. He looks upon this so-called privilege as the stubborn prolongation of a stigma; he demands absolute equality for all Indians without distinction of caste and non-caste.

I also ask Gandhi about the Ramakrishna Mission. Gandhi did not know Ramakrishna but he honours him; when he first returned from Africa to India he tried to see Vivekananda and went to his Ashram, but Vivekananda was not there, and they never met. He says that the Ramakrishna Mission is very estimable and that he has always found it an ally in his efforts, but it has confined itself too narrowly to a few limited types of social work, particularly hospital work (help for the sick, etc.), in which it has done a lot of good all over India. But it is far from having kept
Ramakrishna’s broadness of heart, and it keeps itself too timidly separate from social and political action.

I also find in a small Swiss religious journal, *Le Semeur Vaudois* (19 December) a few notes which I lacked on his conversations at the International University Sanatorium at Leysin. He was asked what he thought of sickness. Gandhi replies:

People make a fetish out of sickness. In this life so full of dangers, we must have the courage to brave the dangers of sickness, and they must be countered with the minimum of treatment. Should lots of hospitals be built? No. All the riches of all the millionaires would not suffice to build enough hospitals to care for all those on earth who are sick of body. Now those who can have themselves cared for in hospitals ought to think of all the others who cannot, and should not accept for themselves cures of which millions of human beings are deprived. To fight against sickness through the world, it is better to promote certain very simple principles for living a healthy and frugal life, principles of elementary hygiene accessible to all. In any case there will always be sickness, and man may well allow himself to suffer something in his body; what he must not allow is sickness in his mind. Gandhi added that the spirit has power to chase away physical sickness. One must not attach too much importance to sickness by thinking and worrying about it; a healthy mind leads to a healthy body. Gandhi has learned this by experience for more than thirty years.

He also spoke of manual labour, and said that the man who eats food which he has not earned by the work of his hands is stealing his food. Finally, *La Revolution Prolétarienne* in Paris (the syndicalist revolutionary review of Monatte, Louzon and others) gives an impartial publication in its December number of a review by D. Guerin of the Magic City meeting in Paris and Gandhi’s replies to twenty-three
questions. He says that “at no time during this long interro-
gation was Gandhi at a loss. He seems to have been aware
in advance, for all eternity, of the questions asked him. Al-
ways unmoved, calm and methodical, with the authority
of a leader and also the prudence and subtlety of a crafty
peasant, he has an answer for everything.”

These revolutionaries, more intelligent than the regi-
mented Communists of L’Humanité, instead of passing judg-
ment on the value of Gandhi’s tactics, hold back and wait
for the supreme test of action.

Letters sent by Mira on the journey—from Brindisi,
then at sea from the liner Pilsana—show that Gandhi is
thinking about what I said to him about Russia. My friends
in Rome—General Moris, Sofia Bertolini, Tolstoy’s grand-
daughter, recently married to a man called Albertini (son
of the former director of the Corriere della Sera), are also think-
ing about the problem. They asked him what I think about
it, and each member of the Indian group gave a different
interpretation. So Gandhi asked Mira to get me to write
to her exactly what my opinion is.

200. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

On the train just
before reaching Brindisi
14 December 1931

Beloved Friend and Brother,

Words seem so weak when the heart is so full!
Those five days at Villeneuve we carry like a priceless
jewel in our hearts.

All has gone well here in Italy. There was no attempt
made to “run” Bapu. We saw Mussolini (Bapu, Mahadev
and I with the General). He was very gracious, and asked
many questions about India.
To watch the faces of the two leaders, as they talked, was a unique study in contrasts.

. . . We owe you deepest thanks for introducing us to the Moris family. We have all fallen in love with one another.

Last night Madame Bertolini came up to the house, had a talk, and also attended the prayer.

. . . The daughter of Tolstoy also came, and had a good talk with Bapu. They talked much of you, and Bapu reproached her for not keeping up her correspondence with you, and has told her she has got to write to you and explain the things about which she is uneasy. She has promised to do so.

The King's young daughter of 18 also came up and attended the prayer.

Bapu is quite in love with the Italian people. And they seem to be equally in love with him.

Mira

201. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

S.S. Pilsana
In the Mediterranean Sea
16 December 1931

Beloved Friend,

Since we left you there has been one question coming up time after time, namely, your exact attitude towards the Russian regime. While we were in Rome Madame Moris, Madame Bertolini and Tolstoy's daughter were all full of questions on the subject. We ourselves seemed to have some slight variety of opinion as to your real feelings, so Bapu thought it would be best if you will make your position clear to them yourself. And he told me to write and tell you this.
I wish we could have gone to Russia. Since a long while Bapu has been anxious to go there. But this time there is nothing for it but to hurry home. . . .

Mira

202. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

S.S. Pilsana
20 December 1931

Dear Friend and Brother,

I had your cable.¹ I shall duly get the letter referred to by you.

You will please write to Tolstoy's daughter² and satisfy her as to Bolshevism. General Moris and Madame Moris were extraordinarily kind to us all. We felt as members of a family immediately we reached their house.

Mussolini is an enigma to me. Many of the reforms he has made attract me. He seems to have done a great deal for the peasantry. Of course the iron glove is there. But allowing that force is the basis of Western society, Mussolini's reforms deserve an impartial study. His care of the poor people, his opposition to overurbanisation, his attempt to bring about co-ordination between capital and labour seem to me to demand very careful attention. I would like you to enlighten me on these matters. My own fundamental doubt of course abides in that these reforms are forced. But that is true even of democratic institutions. What strikes me is that behind Mussolini's ruthlessness is the motive of serving his people. Even behind his bombastic speeches

¹ This telegram has not been found.
² The reference is to Soukhotin Tolstoy, whom Gandhi met in Rome on December 13, 1931.
there is a ring of sincerity and burning love for his people. It also seems to me that the bulk of the Italians like Musso-
lini’s iron rule. I do not want you to trouble to answer this at once. Do please take your own time. Needless to say I do not propose to write publicly just now about these matters. I have simply put these things before you as one knowing infinitely more than I do of them.

And now about your projected visit to India. I feel that if you came dining the cold season i.e. between January and March, you could easily bear the climate and probably even benefit by it. Of course you could fly but I would advise the ocean route. If you will seriously consider the proposal, a tentative programme can be submitted to you.

With deep love,

Yours,
M. K. Gandhi

203. Gandhi to Madeleine Rolland

*S.S. Pilsana*

20 December 1931

Dear Sister,

What shall I say of you and your good brother’s affection for me? The visit to Villeneuve was truly a pilgrimage for me. I wish I could have stayed longer than I did. However, the memory of the few days’ communion with you will be among my richest treasures.

Now one word about your brother’s health. You must shed the fear of fresh air, no matter of what season it is. If damp air is feared, a drier region has to be chosen. The artificial drying does no good at all unless one uses most expensive machinery for continuous drying of continuously admitted fresh air. They do this in the British House of
Commons, I am told. But I feel sure that if you keep the windows continually open in the unused part of the room, it can do no harm. As it is, you are not getting the benefit of the magnificent air of Villeneuve. I have now done. You will pardon this writing prompted by love.

You will now write freely and fully whatever you feel.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

204. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1931.—On the morning of departure I gave Gandhi a gift; he had jokingly complained: “You’ve given things to all the others; I’m the only one not to get anything.” “But what can I give you?” I said. “There’s nothing you want. If the gift is of any value you leave it or sell it for your work.” (For instance he left me a gold medal struck in his name by Otlet, director of the Brussels Palais Mondial.) I made him a gift of a pretty painted lacquer box from Palekh (U.S.S.R.), portraying a shepherd playing the flute in a meadow. He turned it over and over, saying, “But what will I be able to do with it?” “You can put your Pastilles in it,” someone suggested, “for when you have a cold.” “So I shall have to have colds for the rest of my life?” he said.

He arrives in Bombay on 28 December.

205. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

January 1932—My first letter1 of the year (1 January 1932) is to Mira; I quote only the parts relating to the Russian question (raised in Rome in discussions between Gandhi,

1 The full text of this letter has not been found.
his followers and my Roman friends): once again I have to clarify my position:

"... My position is clear: I support Soviet Russia against everything threatening her in the West—including my own country. If there should be a conflict, I would not hesitate; and this conflict is always latent. The system of capitalist exploitation run by the ruling bourgeoisie in Europe (a system which extends from Europe over the whole world) and the powerful expansion necessary to the Soviet state based on Labour cannot live long together, and the underlying murderous immorality of the first system must disappear. This is a matter of life or death for the whole of human society. Though there may be room for discussion on the various methods used by Labour and its elected powers which are called upon to succeed the capitalist system of today, there can be no doubt in a healthy and disinterested mind about the urgent need for the capitalist system of today to be destroyed. Now the U.S.S.R. represents the only force, the only new social faith in Europe (or America) which is profoundly alive and fertile. It animates and unites nearly 150 million men of different races, languages and religions. It has kindled in the hearts of a youth movement with which I am in contact, a fire of collective action, of passionate hope for the future of humanity and sacrifice for the happiness and well-being of this humanity to come. Even if I do not share this faith, I bow to it, I love it and I shall defend it, as I would any powerful light, against all those who would seek to put it out.

As to questions of economics (such as mechanization and industrialization) or tactics (such as the problem of non-violence or violence in the defence of the community), they need a separate discussion, and can't be dealt with in the short space of a letter, or even one or two conversations. As regards mechanization and industrialization, I consider they are as much linked up with the particular condi-
tions of Russia as the domestic industry of the spinning wheel is linked up with those of India. If you read a recent book by Boris Pilniak, about “the Seventh Republic of Tadjikistan”, you will see that in the task of conquering deserts (untouched for 2,000 or 3,000 years) and transforming them into fertile lands in the space of 5 or 6 years, human arms would always have been powerless if they hadn’t used the heaviest possible machinery. In this case the machine has killed death and caused life to spring forth. In itself it is neither moral nor immoral; it is a force, and everything depends on the use made of it.

But I am sorry to speak of such questions at a time when Bapu (Gandhi) is entirely taken up with the tragic problem of Indian action. . .”

206. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Villeneuve
2 January 1932

My very dear Friend,

Your affectionate letter from the ship reached me a few hours after I posted my letter to Mira. My sister and I thank you for your good wishes.

The circumstances in which you find yourself today are too serious and absorbing for me to discuss anything else with you, so I shall leave until later the explanations you want on Italian Fascism. Today I merely want to put you on your guard against the much too hasty and (if I may say so) mainly erroneous impressions you give in your letter.

You spent three or four days in Italy at the most—two of them in a first-class carriage between Domodossola and Brindisi. How can you possibly have formed even the most approximate idea of the feelings of the “mass” of the population (as you put it) about the regime imposed on them?
How much did you see of them? Only those who support
the regime, and that indifferent crowd in the large cities,
which even in Imperial Rome acclaimed men like Nero and
Caligula provided they gave them “panem et circenses” (bread
and circuses)! Did you see those who could not speak, those
who have to fret hidden in their own houses, those in en-
forced *domicilio coatto*, those who have been deported to the
volcanic islands to the south of the peninsula and exposed
to the degrading brutalities of the regime’s myrmidons,
those who have been murdered by order of the *podestas*—if
not by order of the *Duce* himself? In Rome itself, did you
visit the widow of the noble Matteotti, who since his mur-
der (five or six years ago) has been watched in her house by
the police and who fears for the life of her grandchildren?
Have you forgotten what I told you about that great reli-
gious conscience, my friend Amendola, a man of peace and
reflection, who was three times beaten up and trampled on
by Mussolini’s orders, despite the spurious safe-conduct
given to him by Mussolini, and who died of his wounds
three months later? Do you not remember the moral suf-
ferings I outlined to you (too rapidly) confided to me by so
many men and women outside political parties who have
been forced to lie?

There’s one thing you say, of serious import in your
mouth for its very carelessness, which I have, alas, heard
frequently on the lips of other Indians! You say, to excuse
the crimes of Fascism, that “force (meaning violence) is the
basis of Western society”. I really must protest at this parallel
between the Mussolini regime and the great European de-
mocracies like France, England, Scandinavia or Switzer-
land. I have no affection for the “democracies”, and I have
often denounced their hypocrisy. But the point is that I
have been able to denounce it, and I still can. I ruined my
popularity by opposing the follies perpetrated by my people
during the war, but I have not been murdered by order of the state, like Matteotti and Amendola. Jaurés was murdered, but by a madman or a degenerate. The force of public opinion and certain traditions of civil liberties conquered over the centuries guarantee broad rights of free thought and expression in our Western countries—of which nothing is left in Fascist Italy. These rights are threatened today by business capitalism and imperialism, which buys up the press, and consciences wherever possible; one more reason for us to defend them energetically against the example of Fascism, which capitalism is trying to introduce into other states, by ruse or by force! Do you not understand that Europe is threatened by a plague, whose centre is Rome?

I am wonderstruck when you speak of the good Duce, protector of the people against the exploitation of the rich! Do you know that the Fascist march on Rome which established Mussolini in power was financed by large banking interests which wanted to crush the danger of popular power? Do you know that the first thing done by the Fascists when in power was to destroy, burn, pillage and ruin the labour exchanges, popular libraries and socialist communes? Nowhere on the continent had socialism achieved such a high degree of intelligent and well-informed strength than in certain provinces in the north of Italy Mussolini himself was a product of it. The Socialist Party was the only one during the 1914-18 war which resolutely held out against the war, and after the peace was signed it was called to the government of Italy. Mussolini, who left its ranks, ruined it, harried it with his personal hatred, to avenge his wounded and embittered pride. This man, whom you say is so attached to the “peasantry”, has exposed whole stretches of country to the brutality of Fascist expeditions. Certain villages and prosperous communities which resisted have been deported wholesale to the other end of Italy.
You say he burns with ardent patriotism? He and his band have pillaged the State treasury. His brother, who was a poor man like himself, died a millionaire. One of his henchmen, who moved turn by turn from the Ministry of Public Works to the Ministry of Aviation, has gorged himself with millions.\(^1\)

207. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

2 January 1932.—I had begun a reply\(^2\) to Gandhi on Italy and Fascism—then the news of his arrest arrived. I set my unfinished letter aside.

208. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

4 January 1932.—Gandhi arrested in Bombay, and taken to prison in Poona.

209. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

Telegram (postmarked 4 January 1932 Bombay)

Rolland Villeneuve Vaud

Government turned down all peace efforts arrested Bapu early today and taken him Poona stop his spirits high health good stop Vallabhbhai also arrested stop all well love.

Mira

\(^1\) This letter is unfinished, and R. R. did not despatch it.

\(^2\) The preceding item
210. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

5 January 1932.—I invite the Indian News (a review published in London by pro-Indian Europeans with which I collaborate along with Bertrand Russell, Fenner Brockway, Laurence Housman and Harold Laski) to take the initiative in organizing an international protest against the arrest of Gandhi and the particularly illegal way in which the Viceroy has violated the agreements embodied in the Delhi Pact, and outlawed the Indian National Congress.

In the following days, nearly all the leaders of the Congress and the Gandhist movement are arrested. India is virtually placed in a state of siege. This is the last lurch of old imperialist England, spurred on by the recent victory of the Conservative party and the betrayal of Ramsay MacDonald and Snowden.

211. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

25 January 1932.—Despite the state of siege now established in India, we succeed (until today, 25 January) in receiving precise and direct reports from our Indian friends (Mahadev Desai, and his replacements after his arrest). I use them for a “Letter from India” which I send to Europe under the title “England Declares War on India”. (25 January)

This is what I write to an Englishman (Celar Addison) who is begging me to mobilize European opinion on India’s behalf (where are the voices of Wells and Bernard Shaw?)
Oh! What an unbridgeable gap was left by the death of E. D. Morel!:

“In the eyes of those millions of men who in this hour consider the maintenance of present-day society intolerable and have determined to change it—“social change or death!”—the imposing experiment of Satyagraha in India is the only chance offered to the world of achieving this transformation of humanity without appealing to violence. If it fails, if it is ruined by the violence of the British Empire and the inability of India to stand up to it, human history will be left with no other issue than violence, and the British Empire itself will have decided it; either Gandhi or Lenin! In some way or other, social justice must be achieved! This is what makes the spectacle of India even more tragic for us, and this is why all those who have social harmony and the Gospel spirit of peace at heart should help India with all their might. For if the India of Satyagraha were to succumb in the battle, Christ himself would be struck with the supreme lance-blow on the cross, and, this time he would not be resurrected. Does it have to be a non-Christian (though Christian by birth, I am no longer one in spirit) who reminds the Christians of this?”

This appears in the Indian News, run by the Friends of India in London (early in February).

212. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

January 1932.—A few notes on Gandhi’s diet at the Villa Lionnette:

1. About 6 or 7 in the morning:
   A large glass of boiled goat’s milk (sometimes reboiled) and, a little earlier, the juice of four oranges.

2. At 10 o’clock in the morning:
Hot water with lemon and honey or powdered cinnamon.

3. About midday—1 p.m.:
   1 large bunch of grapes (sometimes more)
   1 large glass of boiled goat’s milk
   Dates (30 or 40)

4. About 6-7 p.m.:
   Several little dishes of grated raw vegetables: carrots, sticks of celery (we give him celery hearts)—Gandhi attaches great importance to this vegetable—turnips (in quantity), more raw tomatoes with salt, and two large grated apples.

   Mira always carries boxes of ground almonds and pots of honey about with her. (In addition, she is always preparing ground hazelnuts and walnuts of which Gandhi is fond.)

   Note the absence of flour—rice, bread, wheat, etc. (This is because of Gandhi's constitution; he is always inclined to constipation.)

213. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

4 February 1932.—Helbig, from Rome, drops in from the clouds (literally; he came by air). He says he came from Rome specially to see me. (And indeed he sees no one else and goes back to Milan next day.) I cannot understand why he came. In our first minutes together, he tells me in mysterious terms that the present situation in Italy will soon be coming to a head at last. . . . We pass to a less dangerous subject: Gandhi’s stay in Rome.

(H. is a close friend of General Moris, in whose company I met him in Lugano last summer. I knew his family in my student years at the Palazzo Farnese; his father was a German archaeologist and his mother a Russian pianist. He himself is a naturalized Italian, and he held the rank of colonel in the Italian Air Force—thus a comrade or a
subordinate of Moris. He resigned some years ago when he denounced a huge network of shady financial dealings. He seems to be *persona grata* with the King, but outside the circle of the *Duce*, with whom he has only once had dealings.)

...In any case, this is the story he told us of Gandhi's visit:

In the first place, General Moris, to whom I sent a rather indiscreet telegram suggesting that Gandhi might be his guest in Rome, seems to have been taken seriously aback when he opened my telegram (which, it seems, was brought to him by a police spy). He did not even know whether Gandhi would be a *persona non grata* in Italy (not being aware that official advances had been made to the Mahatma so that he could be annexed, and that it was precisely for that reason that I was approaching him). In short I plunged the good man into fits of timorous perplexity of which I had no inkling. He went to ask H. what to do; H. told him to ask the advice of the head of his office. Moris did so, and his chief postponed his reply until the next day to give him a chance to confer with "the Master". After a Council of State next morning, "the Master" agrees. Hence the thirty-hour delay in his reply.

Gandhi arrives in Milan at night, in his third-class compartment. The Station Master comes to greet him and tells him he is the guest of the Italian Government for the whole of his stay. A first-class carriage is placed at his disposal— or a third, whichever he prefers; Gandhi chooses the first, "as he doesn't have to pay". This is how H. explains the matter, finding it quite natural. (In fact Gandhi had no choice, but he told us that he would make no objection as it did not concern him; the Italian Government could do as it liked, and it was not an important matter.) Not only was he given a magnificent carriage (not at all the
usual first-class type); the whole train was a special one, which arrived in Rome twenty minutes before the ordinary express. Moris and H., going by the usual timetable, were late for the arrival, which, no doubt, the Fascist foxes were counting on to whisk Gandhi away from him. Gandhi was confronted at the door of his compartment by two ladies who told him they had come to take him by car to the palace of a certain person who would like him to accept his hospitality. This certain person was a big-business shark, a Fascist, and a friend and instrument of Scarpa, the Italian Consul in India, who was the man pulling the strings behind the whole affair. Anyone else but Gandhi would have given in, in Moris’ prolonged absence, but the wily old man, put on his guard by me, refused to budge; he sat down squarely in the corner of his compartment and said he was to stay in Rome with Romain Rolland’s friend General Moris and he would not get out of the carriage until Moris arrived. This caused no mean embarrassment to the railway authorities, who did not dare move the train to another platform and the following trains were delayed.

Finally Moris appears, with H., and takes Gandhi in his car, with Mira and the English policeman. H. follows in another car with the other Indians. A swarm of police separates his car from that of Moris; he is unable to catch up before the foot of the Monte Mario, and he sees five or six other cars climbing the hill in a queue behind Moris’ car. H. decides to protect his friend’s villa from the rush of journalists and sightseers, and he manages to make up lost ground and position himself immediately behind Moris, in front of the others. Moris’ villa is off the main road, being reached by a narrow side-road with room for only one car to pass. Moris’ car turns into it, then H’s., and as soon as he is in it, he stops and blocks off the bottleneck. There are shouts behind, but H. sits tight. A squad of police
rushes howling towards him, and he decides to move, but he has given Moris time to get ahead. They have hardly arrived when he sees the police enter the house; one installs himself by the telephone and another at the entrance to the drawing room, so not a word will be lost for the whole of Gandhi’s stay. At one point in the garden, Gandhi takes H. aside and says to him in forceful tones which H. hears only on this one occasion: “Now you must tell me everything.” H. is about to speak, and he sees Moris’ wife making desperate signals to him behind Gandhi. He finds it impossible to speak; he shows Gandhi the magnificent panorama of the landscape round the villa and says: “You see this beautiful sky, this admirable expanse of nature. This still belongs to us. This still is ours. . . . It would be very sad if we had to be deprived of that too. . . .“ The General is old, with a weak heart and he waits hand and foot on his wife whose health is also suspect; he trembles at the prospect of compromising her or striking her a mortal blow by bringing down the “Master’s” wrath on his head. So all lips are sealed; for the whole of his stay with his hosts Gandhi was told nothing and heard nothing.

H. goes over the timetable of his thirty-six hours in Rome. Gandhi’s first wish is to visit the Vatican (and, I imagine, its master, who made no attempt to see him). An afternoon rendezvous is arranged with the director of the Vatican Museums. At the same time Scarpa announces that he will take Gandhi to a Montessori school, then to Contessa C., then, if I make no mistake, to the Duce. There is no means of arguing, and Gandhi, no doubt curious, acquiesces. H. takes him first to the Sistine Chapel, and shows him the ceiling, the Michelangelo Frescos, the Botticellis, etc. Gandhi smiles and shakes his head; it makes no effect on him; he seems interested only when he is told that this is the room in which for centuries the Popes have been elected.
On the point of leaving, he sees on the altar a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century crucifix, very stiff and harsh; this is the one thing which moves him. In the museum of sculpture he stops in front of the Socrates, which he recognizes, but he then points out a Silenus and says “Socrates” again (and he’s not far wrong!). He also takes an interest in the statue of the Nile with its sources. (And probably also the Laocoon; H. doesn’t mention it, but Desai refers to it. in comic style in his account of the visit in Young India; the worthy Indians were so confused by what they were told that Desai describes the group as the work of a Greek sculptor and his two sons!)

Then H. takes him to see the sunset over Rome from the Janiculum. He is not present at what follows, but he knows that the top dogs of the Fascist press were all assembled at Contessa C’s., and that the director of the Giornale d’Italia, who knows not a word of English and could not have understood whatever Gandhi might have said to him, was still able to publish next day an impudent interview with Gandhi attributing to him the purest Fascist sentiments (even the legitimacy of violence). This article must have aroused considerable interest, which was soon used against Gandhi. He heard nothing of it until he was on the boat, or until his arrival in Egypt, from which he sent a cable disavowing it. But the journalist maintained the whole of his interview.

If I make no mistake (and I may have got the time wrong), Gandhi then went to Mussolini, accompanied by Mira, Moris and Desai. Mussolini crossed the room to meet him, and offered seats to him and Mira, but left the old General and Desai standing without seeming even to notice them. At one point, when Gandhi (I think) pointed to General Moris, Mussolini made a sharp gesture of indifference: “I know, I know. . . .” According to H.’s account,
Mussolini very prudently kept on his guard, asking all the questions and avoiding stating an opinion.

Early next day Scarpa took charge of Gandhi to take him to the “Ballilas”, where bambini of twelve and thirteen came up to him with little guns which they let off in his honour! (Gandhi, who adores children, may have seen it as just a joke.) Then at a meeting of party leaders, lording over by the Fascist chief Starace, they seem to have discussed events in India; these gentlemen graciously agreed with a smile that non-violence works for the Indians; but of course in Europe it’s another matter.

I could not possibly try to reconstruct the exact timetable of the day without risk of error; I only know that Gandhi must have been shown some model work of social assistance (hospitals for the poor or the aged) and technical education—a singular piece of bluff, as Gandhi may have believed that what he saw was just one example among thousands, whereas according to H. it would be a “bare minimum”.

The inevitable Scarpa again dragged his Indian elephant to the above-mentioned Contessa C.; this time she had invited what H. refers to as the cream of feminine stupidity and snobbery. Again, though, the visit was shortened by the announcement that young Princess Maria, the King’s daughter, wanted to visit Gandhi at Moris’ villa. This nineteen-year-old girl, whose naivety suggests a mental age of fifteen, had the touching idea of bringing Gandhi a souvenir of his own land, to which end, and going by the name alone, she chose “Indian figs”, which are the Italian name for some spiny cactus fruits which have nothing to do with India. So she furnished herself with a little hamper tied up with ribbon full of these fruits, more suitable for the rough tongue of a camel. H. says it was a real sight to see Gandhi unpacking them and turning them over with his mischievous calm.
H.'s last and strongest memory of Gandhi in Rome was on the last evening at the station, as he was leaving. Gandhi had settled himself at the window of his compartment about ten minutes before the train started moving. A crowd of several hundred people had collected round the carriage, and H., in the middle of them, heard them exchanging remarks. First they all commented openly, with the lack of restraint typical of a Latin crowd, on Gandhi's ugliness; the word "brutto" was running from mouth to mouth. Then they came closer and held out their hands to him, which Gandhi grasped with his broad radiant smile; and the radiance of his smile ran from one man to the next, no one could resist and finally everyone was won over. Ten minutes were enough, without a single word establishing any link between them. H. says it gave him a practical demonstration of Gandhi's striking charm over crowds.

214. Gandhi to Ashram Women

*February 13, 1932*

Dear Sisters,

...You have heard the name of M. Rolland. He is a great European writer and a saintly man. I went to see him. He has a sister who also may now be regarded aged, like him. She has remained unmarried with the sole purpose of helping her brother. The language of the two, the brother and the sister, is French. Romain Rolland does not know English, but the sister does. One may say that the sister has merged her identity in her brother's. She looks after Rolland's needs in every respect. She works as his secretary and also as interpreter when Englishmen come to see him. Rolland has delicate health and the sister guards it too. Though
such examples of renunciation are rare in this world, we
do come across them in the West. . . .

Blessings from,
Bapu

215. Madeleine Slade to Romain Rolland

In the Poona train
Wednesday, 17 February 1932

Beloved Friend and Brother,

It seems that the honour is to be mine at last! A notice
has been served on me and I expect my arrest tomorrow
morning.

In my cell I shall so often be thinking of you.

I am writing to you in the train on my way back
from Poona where I have just seen Bapu. He is well and
peaceful and sends his love to all. I reach Bombay tonight
by 8-30 and any time after midnight the police may
come to fetch me. I hope they may bring me back to
Yeravda that I may be near my Bapu with only a wall or
two and a road in between.

The beloved country is struggling in the grips of a
terrible repression. But the spirit of determination is strong
and deep. God will keep with us.

The authorities must be stopping all letters for I have
heard nothing from Villeneuve all this while. But I pray
that you are both well. The crash of modern civilization
seems rapidly approaching,—it seems as if it is to be the
scourge only out of which new hope can come. Deepest
love to you both.

Yours ever,
Mira
216. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

3 March 1932.—Edmond Privat and his wife, back from India, visit us.¹

217. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Yeravda
16 September 1932

Dear Friend and Brother,

On the eve of taking the momentous step in my life, I would like to tell you how I prize those days I had with you and your great good and devoted sister. Mahadev Desai is with me. We often think of you.

I wonder how you have felt over the contemplated step. I can only say that it was decided upon in obedience to the imperative voice of conscience.

With love to you both.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

Will you please send the enclosed to the Privats?

¹ See the account of their journey in Inde, pp. 380-390 (Editions Albin Michel).
218. Extract from Gandhi's Diary


219. C. F. Andrews to Romain Rolland

Telegram postmarked Montreux 26 September 1932

Thank God Mahatma's life is spared. Andrews

220. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Telegram 27 September 1932

Happy for your great spiritual victory. Romain Rolland

221. Gandhi to Mirabehn

September 29, 1932

Chi. Mira,

This is the third letter after the breaking of the fast and written just after the first fruit meal consisting of oranges and grape juice. And that has been my principal food.
Yesterday I took thin soup made of turai*. Today I propose to take milk.

Your letters have come in regularly. I cannot understand why mine have not been received by you. I am inquiring.

Strength is rapidly coming. There was yesterday already a gain of 1½ lb., i.e., 95 lb.

I did write to Romain Rolland. There was a cable from him on the break of the fast.

I read your message to Gurudev yesterday and I touched his feet for you, as Mahadev, poet-like, had forgotten to do so.

Ba, of course, forgot all her misery as soon as she came here. She seems to have borne it all very bravely indeed.

I hope you are all quite composed now. The fast was really nothing compared to the miseries that the outcastes have undergone for ages.

Love to you and Kisen.

Bapu

222. Gandhi to Romain Rolland and Madeleine Rolland

Postmarked Yeravda 30 September 1932

My dear Friends,

I had your loving message. You were ever present to me during the travail. God’s mercy was bountiful and traceable during the whole of the great drama.

My love,

Bapu

As I was finishing this, I had Mira’s letter. Hers has been an agony without felt joy. But she has chosen the spiked bed and she is bravely lying on it.

* Ridge gourd
223. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

September 1932.—Haunted by thoughts of Gandhi, who may die—(reports from India suggest that he is already in danger after a few days of fasting, in which he did not want to interrupt his political activity)—and by the foolish indifference of the European “idealists”, who cannot grasp the “real” significance for the future of the world and for their ideas which the disappearance and defeat of this last hero of non-violence would have. Not one of them would lift a finger to help his cause in Europe. The childish Quakers have found nothing more effective than a ridiculous 24-hour fast! The only one really doing anything in London is C. F. Andrews, who is also the only one listened to by the English governing class. Mrs. Cousins, an English Theosophist who has lived twenty years or so in India, is organizing an International Day on India’s behalf in Geneva on 6 October (which is very late in the day). No renowned French personality is willing to take part in it; some are sick, others selfishly conclude that it is not worth the trouble to put themselves out. Since Albert Schweitzer, on whom they had counted, also refused (though he at least has too much to do and, like myself, is in poor health), I am asked to press the matter with him; so I write (23 September).

“. . . It is not the man Gandhi that is at stake, nor even India. It is the cause he represents, whose outcome, victorious or disastrous, may shape the destiny of Europe for a century or more: the cause of non-violence. For several years now I have been in close contact with the world’s social movements, notably in the U.S.S.R. and in
Asia. I know what angers and hopes have been aroused by Indian *Satyagraha*, and I know that this heroic and patient experiment of a people guided by a Judge of Israel is the only barrier, the last barrier still holding out against the immense accumulated flood of violence; for it is the only powerful and effective instrument by which the social transformation, or rather the sudden mutation, which is both inevitable and urgent can be achieved without hatred. Without Gandhi the torrent will be unleashed over the whole world! And I shall be the first to cry havoc, for today's social state must be swept away at all costs—and it will be...."

So I ask him, if he cannot come, at least to send a message in support of "the man who may well carry with him into death the last hope for peace in our disturbed times".

But Albert Schweitzer replies from Gunsbach (24 September):

"My dear friend, I am deeply moved by what you say, and also that in your present state you should take the trouble to write. You know how heavily thoughts of the future of the world weigh on me; I suffer from them more than I can tell you... But it is absolutely impossible for me to come to Geneva...."

... (Too bad! And too bad for Schweitzer as much as for Gandhi, who is the epitome of Schweitzer's faith: his idea of "respect for life" carried into action. . . .)

Happily we receive this telegram from Andrews in London on the evening of the 26th:

"Thank God Mahatma's life is spared—Andrews."

Non-violence has conquered.

We send a cable to Gandhi (morning of 27th):

"Happy for your great spiritual victory."

(But it was high time! The news from India was
 alarming, and the finicky English Ministers refused to bring forward their reply by one single hour; they had to have their calm weekend's rest before dealing with business. If I had to invade England I would choose Saturday afternoon; all the government would be in the country until Monday morning.)

Gandhi had told Ramsay MacDonald on 13 September that he planned on 20 September to start his fast unto death (or victory).

224. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

13-14 October 1932.—Young Father Elwin spends the night at the Villa Lionnette and spends the next day with us. I spoke in my Indian Chronicle (see Europe) of this courageous English missionary, who has become a friend of Gandhi and has devoted himself to bringing material and moral aid to the poorest people of India.

. . . Elwin has harshly condemned by his bishop and the Anglican church in India as soon as his sympathy with Gandhi became apparent, but this has not stopped him. The Anglo-Indian police, which has its eye on him, has carried out searches at his dwelling, and he can receive no visitor in his desert abode without the fact being immediately reported. The whole of India is covered by a tight network of policemen—nearly all of them Indians, poor starving devils who can be made to do anything for money, but they admit it themselves with shame, and in secret often declare their sympathy for Gandhi.

. . . And nothing is done to bring help to these wretched millions of human beings. The peasants among whom Elwin has settled, who possess nothing, are crushed with taxes. The diabolical hypocrisy of the Anglo-Indian State has devised an infernal scheme whereby India is
forced to infect herself with imported opium, and the only resources which the Government is prepared to devote to public education in India are drawn from the sale of this poison. Thus if you want one, you have to accept the other.

. . . He is to go back to India next month, after spending a few days in Italy in a Franciscan hermitage, at which two sisters have been profoundly touched by the spirit of Gandhi (which their superiors have condemned, but the Pope has granted them his protection). . . .

. . . We exchange our judgments of Gandhi; on the scientific character of his great “Experiment”, whose outcome is not yet assured, but which he confronts with facts, —on the relationship between his spirit and that of Buddha or Christ,—etc.

225. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga

22 October 1932

My dearly beloved and revered Friend,

We received your two kind letters of 16 and 30 September. Thank you for thinking of us at such a time!

We were with you in thought during those days, and I don’t need to tell you that our thoughts were full of anxiety.

But I knew that you were right. I knew that your sacrifice was not only great, but just, legitimate and necessary. It was your mission at this decisive hour for your people, and no cause demanded it more imperiously than that of the untouchables. The honour of India, her moral unity which is the essential kernel of all social and political unity, her very right to exist and to live again, are
at stake in this preliminary reparation made to the victims of an outdated social order, this reacceptance into the fold of millions of brothers who had been driven out. The whole of humanity has an interest in the results of the "great experiment" which you are directing, and no one, not even you, can know the results in advance. We can but wait for them and believe, as the "great experiment" unfolds itself according to the strict laws of Truth—like science.

But on these results depend the destiny of the world and the shape of future action in it, and only the success of the "Satyagraha" experiment can save humanity from the torrents of violence hanging over it. We must pray, and the true prayer is the one which, like yours, is offered in the midst of action.

My sister and I send you our warmest thoughts of love and respect. Please pass on our friendly greetings to those of your companions at Villeneuve who are with you now.

Yours,
Romain Rolland

I am sending you in another package the copy of a message by me about you which was read to a pro-Indian assembly in Geneva.

226. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

1 November 1932. —Visited by Dr. Ansari, one of the leaders of the Indian movement, president of the Muslim National Congress, one of the past presidents of the All India National Congress, and a personal friend of Gandhi; he has several times been in prison, the last time being for nine months in Delhi.
... Gandhi was tricked by Lord Irwin during those touching talks they had before the Round Table Conference. Irwin managed to win his confidence and persuade him that he alone would be enough to represent India at the Round Table, and that as to the other delegates, Gandhi could choose whoever he liked and they could go as his counsellors. Gandhi, believing in his false appearance of friendliness, had himself named as sole delegate at the Indian Congress at Karachi—despite all the warnings of the mistrustful Ansari. Immediately afterwards, Irwin forgot all his promises. Gandhi asked in vain to have Dr. Ansari, Mrs. Naidu and Pandit Malaviya attached to him; nobody paid any attention, and in London he found himself isolated amongst puppets who served England’s interests with docility.

He was well acquainted with the now legendary leader of the Pathans in the North-West Frontier Province (Peshawar), Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He was his lieutenant in the Muslim National Congress, of which Ansari is President; they were in prison together for several months. He describes him as a giant of a man, one of whose hands alone is bigger than both of his (Ansari’s),—without much intellectual education, but with remarkable natural intelligence, and with a great hold over his people. A fervent adept of Gandhi’s non-violence, which he practises not out of politics, but out of the depths of his faith, and which he has spread among the Pathans, athletic warriors like himself. England has made every effort to stimulate violence among them; she has flooded the Frontier Province with Agents Provocateurs, and has imposed a cruel repression on the whole population; Ansari, who made an enquiry, considers that Father Elwin’s report sins on the side of indulgence (Elwin not having been able to interrogate the prisoners, who had most to suffer).
In reply to my question, Ansari says that the Viceroy is not the absolute master in India. The three governors of the provinces—the “Presidencies” of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta (the latter being the worst) are masters in their own territory, and communicate directly with the Secretary of State for India in England without passing through the Viceroy....

... Ansari appears very sure of victory. He admires the unshakable resolution of those thousands among his compatriots who face up to every violence (at his departure in the spring, he says, there were more than 90,000 Indians in prison, while the government claimed that there were only 20,000 to 30,000). Ansari says that it is impossible to relate adequately what Gandhi has made of the men who fight alongside him. He has freed them of every fear, every worry and every doubt. The morale of these prisoners is in a state of heroic serenity.

227. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1932.—Gandhi is talking about another fast to obtain the opening of a temple to the untouchables; I tell him by cable¹ that European opinion will not follow him in a repetition of his heroic act of last October, if it is for a secondary objective.

¹ This telegram has not been found.
My dear Madeleine,

It was a great joy to receive your brief letter, especially as it recalled the precious days of communion with you all. It was like meeting members of one’s family.

If the events at the time of the late fast were a miracle, as they were, it was purely God’s work. I was but a very humble instrument in His hands. At no stage did I feel that I was doing anything. I simply could not do it, but when I said that it was God working through me, it was literally true, as far as my knowledge went.

But I observe from your great and good brother’s telegram\(^1\) to Devdas that people on the Continent had not understood the contemplated second fast. I don’t wonder at it. The whole conception seems to be so new, and yet it appears to me to be the logical outcome of a prayerful search after truth. There is no prayer without fasting, and fasting which is not an integral part of prayer is mere torture of the flesh doing no good to anyone. True fasting is an intense spiritual effort, a spiritual striving. It is a penance and a process of self-purification. Such a fast generates a silent unseen force which may, if it is of requisite strength and purity, pervade all mankind. I have seen its unseen pervasive effect on a small scale but sufficiently large to know that it is a mighty

\(^{1}\) This telegram has not been found.
force. It was in this instance an inevitable step in the prosecution of the campaign against untouchability. I would have been false to myself, to my companion Kelappan, and to the cause of the Harijans, if I had faltered. At the present moment, however, it stands indefinitely postponed. Even now, perhaps, I have not made myself clear. It is difficult to do so. But I have no hesitation in saying that time will prove the correctness of the step, and in any case for me it was a call from God which I could not resist. If a further explanation is necessary, please do not hesitate to write to me.

I have been trying to find out a suitable adjective for your brother. To write of him to you as “Mons. Rolland” or as “your brother” sounds too prosaic and distant. To describe him as simple “brother” is too familiar and does not convey adequately the existing relationship. The two words that come to me are “Rishi” or “the Sage”. They are almost synonymous terms but not identical in meaning. Subject therefore to his and your approval, I am going henceforth to describe him as “the Rishi”. I hope that this letter will find him in full possession of his normal health. I am afraid one dare not hope for perfect health for him. He will not give it all that chance. It would mean concentration on physical health at the expense of concentration on his historical researches, and with him historical is also spiritual, or else he would not be a Rishi. Please tell the Rishi that some months ago I read for the first time his volumes on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The reading gave me great joy and enabled me more fully than before to get a measure of his love for India.

Mira and I exchange weekly letters. She is quite happy in her rest-house. She is studying Hindi, reading the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and at the present
moment she is reading Dr. Gour’s work on Buddhism. She is keeping her health and making dietetic experiments. There is no restriction about her diet. She is therefore able to get what she requires. She gets also one or two papers and whatever non-political books she may need.

Mahadev Desai is with me. The two others you do not know personally. Love to you both from us both.

Bapu

229. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

5 February 1933—About 7 o’clock in the evening, Gibarti, secretary general of the Secours Ouvrier International, arrives from Berlin. The object of his visit is to get my name for a new campaign they want to launch, the pretext being the scandalous condemnation of the prisoners of Meerut, in India. (About 45 English and Indian Trades Unionists and Communists, detained for 4 years without having committed any crime worse than propaganda, condemned to 10, 15, 25 years, in one case even to life detention in the Andaman Islands) . . . .

The cause I am asked to support is a compelling one and makes just claims on me. Yet I state my conditions: the movement once begun must not count on using my name against Gandhi and his movement!

. . . Gibarti assures me (and he seems sincere) that there is no intention of taking a stance against Gandhi in this affair, and even if it were true (as I say it is) that Gandhi has expressed real sympathy for the Meerut prisoners, it would be excellent for the cause to have

1 Madeleine Rolland had written to Gandhi for the anniversary of his visit to Villeneuve. (M. R. R.’s note)
Gandhists associated with it! . . . As to Gandhi, on whom we do not press the discussion as it would take too long and our business is urgent, it is obvious that Gibarti and his friends comically assimilate him to the Social Democrats, whose ridiculous and harmful activity (passivity) they can observe on the spot in Berlin. It is easy to see how this confusion can come about in an unsubtle party of action: Social Democrats and Gandhists appear to them equally as obstacles in the way of achieving action.

230. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

22 February.—I send Gibarti my appeal on behalf of the condemned prisoners of Meerut.

231. Devdas Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Delhi
April 10, 1933
(Permanent Address: Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, India)

Revered Sir,

The enclosed is a statement by Pandit Malaviya relating to assaults on Congress prisoners in Calcutta. It also furnishes information about the Congress session recently held there against very heavy odds.

I was arrested on my way to Calcutta, but released after the session—and the assaults!—were over. I am sorry to have missed both.

Father is keeping fairly good health in jail. All talk of his probable release seems absurd. They do not want to release him before they have tried their best to humiliate him. They want him to change his mind, deny all
that he has been preaching and—so to speak—sign a bond for future good behaviour.

We are therefore determined to carry on the movement in spite of every difficulty. The country, we are confident, will gain in the end by our continuing to suffer by our own free will. Any backsliding would be disastrous.

Mirabehn and my mother are in the same jail together. They are both happy, though not always in the best of health.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Devdas Gandhi

232. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

April 1933.—Gandhi announces on 29 April that in a week's time he will resume a three-week fast for the cause of the Untouchables. (This fast seems directed less against the British Government than against the Indian Brahmins who oppose the reintegration of the Untouchables into the Hindu community.) I wrote several months ago what. I thought about the inopportuneness of this renewed fast, and Gandhi replied, repeating all his arguments in favour of the fast with his usual gentle obstinacy. Yet no one foresaw it happening before October, and between then and now there was hope for a change of attitude in the British Government and among the Brahmins. This cannot now be counted on, and one can do no more than let him get on with his dangerous act, whose implications are perhaps greater in India than may appear.
My dear and revered Friend,

We are with you in these grave days when again your life is at stake. We hope ardently that the hardness of heart of those of your people who are blocking the great work of national reparation to the Untouchables will finally give way. Let them tremble at the prospect of assuming in the eyes of history the execrable responsibility of causing your death! They would bear the mark on their brow in the memory of mankind for evermore.

But allow me to read in your sacrifice an even broader meaning than that of the Untouchables’ cause! At this tragic moment of history, when the whole world is exposed to the most atrocious violence, on the eve of world wars surpassing in cruelty and extent all that have gone before,—a moment when the whole of humanity is divided between oppressors and oppressed, and when the latter, maddened by their sufferings and by injustice, as if drunk by the violence which rends them, see no other recourse than in that very violence,—your self-immolation to that sacred Justice which is all love and no violence takes on a universal and holy value,—like the Cross.

Though, alas! the Cross has not saved the world, it has shown the world the way to save itself, and its rays have cast light on the night of millions of unfortunate people.

. . . . But let us hope that we are spared this sacrifice today! May you remain a long time—I will not say
among us (for I doubt whether my own sickness-ridden life will last much longer), but among our brothers and sisters in India and the whole world who need your presence on board to guide the ship in the storm.

Give me your blessing, and my sister Madeleine!
I embrace you affectionately,

Romain Rolland

P. S. Fraternal greetings to our dear guests in Villeneuve, to your brood: our sister Mira, Devdas (whose letter we received), Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal. I often think of them.

234. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

May 1933.—Gandhi commences (or recommences) his twenty-one-day fast for the Untouchables on 8 May. On 9 May he is freed unconditionally by the British Government, careful to wash their hands of his death in advance. As a chivalrous reply, Gandhi asks the President of the Indian Congress to suspend Civil Disobedience for six weeks.

235. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

June 1933,—Mahadev Desai writes to me on the twelfth day of Gandhi’s fast (now finished, without accident, on the 21st day) to say that my letter reached him and did them a lot of good; all the more so because this time Gandhi’s fast met with the disapproval of nearly all his Indian friends, including Tagore. I do not approve either, at heart, but I know it is useless to discuss it with Gandhi; for him it is much less a form of political action (or protest) than an act of purification and communion with God.
As far as I can judge from reports on the spot, it must have been some kind of ordeal. Gandhi, who gives no voice to his moments of discouragement, must have been saddened by the ineffectiveness of his sacrifices and those of his admirable disciples, in prison for a year and a half. It seems to me that he must have said to his God: “If I am wrong, if you need me no longer, take me back!” For one of his first words after breaking his fast on the twenty-first day was: “Since God has not taken me back, it seems that he still needs me to fight, and I return to the fight with renewed ardour.”

236. Gandhi to Madeleine Rolland

25 August 1933

Dear Sister,

Just a word to send my love to you and to the Rishi. Mira will tell you all about the latest astonishing event. I hope that you are both well. Andrews too is here now.

Ever yours,

Bapu

237. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

November 1933.—I receive from Saumyendranath Tagore (nephew of the poet and a young Indian Communist, who has been in Europe for 7 years) a letter from Paris, dated 16 November:

“Dear Mr. Rolland.—The other day I had a long conversation with Mr. Andre Gide on the European situation,

Retranslated.
Communism and India. Speaking of India, our conversation naturally touched on the subject of Gandhi and Gandhism. I told Mr. Gide that in my opinion and in that of many Indian youths, Mr. Romain Rolland's book on Gandhi had harmed the ultimate cause of India. I also informed Mr. Gide of my book on Gandhi, which will shortly appear in French, and in which I have criticized your attitude towards Gandhi and Gandhism. This has made me very optimistic about the work in Europe on behalf of India which I have envisaged for a long time, and it gave me the courage to write you this letter. As briefly as possible, I should like to explain to you the reasons for my objections to your attitude towards Gandhism. Gandhism is essentially negative in its attitude towards life, whether from the economic, social, sexual or artistic point of view. I have heard people in Europe describe it as being a mystic primitivism. I cannot accept this explanation, for in my opinion true mysticism in its purest expression is direct, simple and lyrical. Gandhism cannot claim to be thus considered. Although I am a Communist, I cannot prevent myself from considering Lenin to be a great mystic, possessed as he was of the mystic qualities: being remarkably direct, sensing the shortest route to reality through the complicated labyrinth of phenomena, and having a real simplicity. Gandhi is not a mystic, he is simply primitive.

What a pity that in your formidable enthusiasm for Gandhi, you have praised and lent your support to all the parts of a cult which, I am sure, you would have totally condemned if you had evaluated them in relation with the historic task of our time and the ultimate values of humanity! I do not mean to bore you by a detailed analysis of Gandhism, I should merely like to point one thing out to you: Gandhi has created a very dangerous illusion in
many minds by means of his ‘non-violence’. Few people have realized that Gandhi’s ‘non-violence’ is a mantle which covers the maximum of social violence. I have tried to show in my book on Gandhi how Gandhi has completely failed to embrace the problem of violence and non-violence. Thus, even from the point of view of militant pacifism, which in my opinion is represented by Communism and Communism alone, the ‘non-violence’ of Gandhi must be condemned by every true lover of non-violence.

However strange this may appear, I have been struck by the remarkable resemblance between Gandhism and Hitlerism. Hitler wants to create a ‘pure’ Nordic culture; similarly Gandhi wants to replace the ‘non-spiritual’ Western culture by the ‘spiritual’ Indian culture. Hitler has prohibited marriages between Jews and Germans; Gandhi, in a different situation, has written against mixed marriages and common meals between Hindus and Muslims. Hitler has burned books, and Gandhi has burned clothes. These two autodafes had their roots in the irrational and romantic soil of extremely primitive and anti-social minds. The inner spirit of Gandhism, despite its profession of non-violence, is violence pure and simple; and Hitlerism, like Gandhism, is based on racialism.

In supporting Gandhism, you have strengthened the crusade, of the most reactionary type, of Gandhi, against so-called Western civilization. I doubt whether it is right to call this civilization Western, as it is the only civilization which exists today. The other civilizations have lost their inner vitality, and our times have broken the limits set by these civilizations. The greatest aspects of modern civilization, one of which is Communism, are completely beyond the mental horizon of Gandhi.

Our task in India is to wage war mercilessly against Gandhism, on all sides. Gandhism must be completely
crushed, if India wants to rank with the other nations of the world and advance towards the ideal of a classless society which is the historic mission of our time. We count on your help, and we should like you to understand hungry India, trampled under foot, which suffers, struggles and dreams. If you see India through the spectacles of Gandhism, you see her as a corpse or as an abstraction void of living reality. One of the concrete tasks which we have undertaken is to publish a book on the lines of the *Brown Book* on Hitlerism. Perhaps our book could be called the *Black Book* of imperialist terror in India. Mr. Andre Gide assures me that he would write something on the subject when the book appears, and he told me to write to you to ask for your co-operation. If you were good enough to agree to write a short preface to this book, the book will gain enormously in importance in the eyes of readers in Europe and America. . . .”

238. Romain Rolland to Saumyendranath Tagore

14 November 1933

. . . . My judgment of Gandhi has not changed at all; your sources of information know little about me. I have a profound esteem for Gandhi, to which, since my first book on him, personal affection has been added, for I have come to know him personally; he spent some time with me at Villeneuve, I had long conversations with him, and I was able to appreciate not only the absolute integrity of his character, but also his shrewdness in political and social action, and above all the living sincerity of a mind which

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1 Retranslated from Madeleine Rolland’s translation.
2 Date is wrongly mentioned as 14 November 1933, because this letter was written in reply to Saumyendranath Tagore’s letter dated 16 November.
is ever seeking to come closer to the truth by direct and scrupulous experimentation, and which never ceases to evolve. I advise you to go and see him when you return to India and discuss things openly with him; he's certainly able to profit from whatever factual experiences (not book-learning) you have gathered, and why shouldn't you too profit from his? In any case, it would be useful for both of you to contrast them. In what you write to me about him (particularly in your abusive and insulting comparison with Hitler), you formulate a number of criticisms which, even if they may have had some point to them 7 or 8 years ago, certainly have none today. You have been too long away from your country, and some of your judgments on Gandhi are seven years behind the evolution of Gandhi’s mind.

.... The role I have assumed in today’s battles, which you in your youthful intransigence will no doubt find hard to understand, is to try to be a link between the two Revolutions, Gandhi’s and Lenin’s, so that the two may come together at this hour to overthrow the old world and found a new order.

.... So you must not expect my collaboration in an Indian book directed in any way against Gandhi. Indeed I am certain that by initiating in France the sort of campaign against Gandhi of which you speak, you will do grave harm to India without Communism gaining by it; for if the West, in the thick of its own tragic worries which beset it today, still manages to show any interest in the cause of India and her independence, the cause owes it to a large extent to the popularity of Gandhi and the respect justly inspired by his great character....

.... P. S. I am not unaware of the “maximum of social violence” (as you put it) underlying Gandhi’s apparent non-violence. In several of my writings (introdn. to La Jeune Inde, 1924, Stock; the preface to Gandhi’s
autobiography, rieder, 1931) I have insisted on this side to it. I wrote: “What nonsense ever to have confused this paradoxism of action with the sheeplike race of passive pacifists. . . . Gandhi extends human energy to the utmost limits at which the cord seems ready to snap. . . . There is less distance between the non-violence of Gandhi and the violence of the revolutionaries than there is between heroic non-acceptance and the servile ataraxia of the eternal acceptors, who form the reinforcement of all tyrannies and the cement of all reactions. . . .”

239. Conversation between Romain Rolland and Saumyendranath Tagore

November 1933

. . . . S. Tagore: After reading your letter I felt that I must see you and talk with you. Of course one can say a good deal in a letter, but it is so much easier to get things clear in a conversation! Moreover Andre Gide and other European friends of mine have advised me to see you, especially with regard to my activities in connection with the cause of India. I think it absolutely necessary that we should unmask the reign of terror exercised over India by British imperialism, which is manifesting itself at the moment with unexampled savagery.

Romain Rolland: This terror reigns most intensely in the North West, does it not?

S. Tagore: Quite so. But it is beyond imagination in Bengal as well. Soldiers are posted in the villages and continually brutalize the inhabitants. There is no longer a civil authority; everything there is under military control. But besides this task incumbent on us of exposing the reign of terror exercised by the British imperialists we must fight against Gandhism which supports these
imperialists, and we must unmask its reactionary and pro-capitalist tendencies.

Romain Rolland: I entirely disagree with you in this estimate of Gandhi. I have had long talks with him and I am convinced that if through humanitarianism he seeks to mitigate the conflict between capital and labour, he is always ready to place himself on the side of labour when that is oppressed. Moreover I have had the occasion to make over to him here a questionnaire which was sent him by the revolutionary syndicalists of Paris. Here is the text of his reply¹ which has been typed. He has read and approved of it.

Question: Let us admit, with you, that for a people like yours, under a foreign domination, the necessity for first freeing themselves from the invader forces them into a provisional union of classes, and to the formation of one single national “bloc”. But events move quickly, and a native bourgeoisie and capitalism are developing. With you, as elsewhere, capital is concentrated in the hands of a small number. The struggle against the British oppressors will be followed inevitably by the struggle against the Indian oppressors. Will you then continue to ask the workers to further the interests of their employers?

Gandhi’s reply: I make no distinction between the European and the indigenous capitalists. My works treat of the struggle between the workers in factories and the owners of those factories apart from the national struggle. It is true that I do not consider antagonism between capital and labour to be inevitable. Though it might be difficult, I think it would be possible to establish a harmony between them. But if it were proved that such harm-

¹ The questionnaire and Gandhi’s replies appeared in January 1932 in La Révolution prolétarienne, a monthly revolutionary syndicalist review, published in Paris. (Romain Rolland’s note).
ony were impossible in one factory or another, I should not hesitate to increase the power of labour (that is to say of the organized workers) to such an extent that the destruction of capital would result, or its complete transference into the hands of labour. In this case, as in every other, Satyagraha would force capital to the wall, so that it would destroy itself on the day when its destruction would be judged to be inevitable. And even if capitalism should come into the national struggle, I should not consider its interests if they were proved to be in opposition to those of the community. But I do not wish to raise a quarrel with capital at this juncture, unless it becomes absolutely necessary to do so. It would make the difficult problem of the moment (the national struggle) still more difficult.

Madeleine Rolland: Gandhi said the same thing at the Round Table Conference.

S. Tagore: It is true that here and there, though very rarely, Gandhi has been forced by circumstances to speak in this way, but I can give you hundreds of quotations taken from his speeches and writings that prove that he has been entirely won over by the capitalists. At the Round Table Conference he went so far as to say that it was unnecessary for the peasants to send representatives to the assemblies, as they were represented by the landlords. Apart from his speeches and his writings, Gandhi from the very first day of his political life, has shown by his actions that he is on the side of the capitalists against the interests of the masses.

Romain Rolland: Gandhi judges capitalists all over the world by some Indian capitalist friends who may appear to him lovers of humanity and ready for an understanding with the workers. And as the words I have just quoted show, he still cherishes the dream that a harmony can be established between capital and labour without recourse
to a destructive class war. But if the facts show him the impossibility of such a hope, he will certainly place himself on the side of the exploited workers. I am sorry that you do not try to discuss matters with him instead of opposing him.

S. Tagore: I must confess that I have not the slightest influence over Gandhi, and I do not think that anyone in the world could convince him of anything. He is so obstinate in his irrationality that nothing can be done against it. It is, moreover, underestimating his intelligence to think that he is ignorant of the ill will of the capitalists and the distressed conditions of the Indian masses. I do not think that there are any persons in India—and if there are, their number is very limited—who are as well acquainted as Gandhi with the wretched state of these masses under the yoke of the Indian capitalists and landlords. But he is so fast rooted in capitalism that he cannot extricate himself. Not that he desires anything for himself, it is a question of safeguarding the interests of his class, the bourgeoisie.

Romain Rolland: I do not believe that at all. I think that Gandhi would like first to form a national bloc, so as to free India from the British oppression, and I think this would be a wise policy. Once having obtained freedom, one would pass on to solve social problems—those of the classes. I agree with Gandhi that one should endeavour in the first place to unite all the Indian forces in a bloc against British imperialism.

S. Tagore: The idea of a national bloc is an illusion, and indeed a very dangerous one. We have already had the experience of this bloc in China which is semi-colonial. The result there was that the nationalist organization, the Kuomintang, made use of the workers’ associations and those of the peasants against the foreign imperialists so long as these bodies presented no danger to the inte-
rest of the bourgeoisie. When, however, the masses demanded social justice, a most cruel reign of terror was imposed on them. This national bloc cost the lives of thousands of our best comrades in China. If we acted in the same way in India, a country a hundred per cent colonial, history would repeat itself. If you wish to speak of a colonial revolution, you must never lose sight of two important facts: first, such a revolution would coincide with the revolt of the proletariat all over the world, that is to say, with the decay of capitalism; second, that a Soviet state has been in existence for sixteen years. These two facts entirely change the aspect of an eventual revolution of the colonies. The Indian bourgeoisie is not so fast asleep nor so stupid as not to see that a revolution here, while destroying the British domination, would also inevitably destroy their own domination. It would rather share the profits with the British imperialists than have no profits at all. The best proof of what I say is to be found in the appeal that thirty of the most prominent landholders in Bengal sent to the Viceroy in 1930, offering him their services in order to crush the movement for India's independence. It is equally striking that the Indian National Congress, of which Gandhi is the leader, has never taken any action against these men. Two different classes, two different attitudes towards British imperialism—that is the sole reality. The national bloc is a myth.

*Romain Rolland*: It seems to me that in this struggle there is only one point on which Gandhi will never give way—that of non-violence. He says: “If you wish to employ other tactics, do so! But I shall withdraw; I will never agree to help in them.” As far as I am concerned, I do not like the word “non-violence”. One should say rather “non-acceptance”. Violence is everywhere in life. We must fight it with all the violence of the soul opposed to it. Gandhi’s so-called non-violence is a fixed effort, a
heroism of non-acceptance, the grandeur and necessity of which are more than ever needed at the present time when brutality roams free. Brute force has found an apologist in Spengler, who in his latest works mocks at all we consider humane in life and exalts cruelty. Gandhi is the last defender of the humane. If that hope is destroyed, the fiercest of combats must follow.

S. Tagore: I do not acknowledge the “non-violence” of Gandhi. I am always surprised that the intellectuals in Europe have not seen the nothingness of it. Gandhi justifies every social violence; the existence of classes, of castes, etc. How can anyone who justifies such things be called “non-violent”? Gandhi has shown himself utterly incapable of tracing violence to its source. If he had agreed that capitalism in itself was violence, that class domination was a form of violence, one would have seen that he had really grasped the problem. When Rabindranath Tagore was in Europe in 1930, I discussed the question of non-violence with him and he told me that he would write an article about it. But up to now he has not done so. His idea of non-violence is as incomplete as that of Gandhi, for they believe in the necessity of class divisions. They are not with the masses. Tagore sees the problem from the intellectual point of view—Gandhi does not see it at all.

Romain Rolland: What Tagore discerns through his intelligence, Gandhi’s instinct, that can penetrate the minds of the masses, reveals to him.

S. Tagore: In spite of all his attempts at simplicity, Gandhi has no sincere love for the masses of India. It was no effort for Lenin to be simple. He was with the masses not only in Russia, but all the world over. But Gandhi has made use of the Indian proletariat to serve the interest of the Indian capitalists.

Romain Rolland: I have already told you that I entirely
disagree with you. I admire Lenin, but in my eyes Gandhi is a kindly servant of his people and of all the peoples. To go back to the question of non-violence, I have even known Indian nationalist leaders (whose temperaments were clearly inclined to violence) justify Gandhi. Lala Lajpat Rai who gave his life for India told me that this non-acceptance was really the most powerful weapon in the fight for freedom. For it is practically impossible for India, deprived of arms and ammunition, to oppose the British domination by violent means. There would be a terrible massacre if the English, making violence offered by India their excuse, were to employ every violent method at their command. Whatever suffering India may endure under their present rule, violence exercised by Indians would be the signal (perhaps awaited by imperialists) for a repression causing infinitely greater suffering. And I may add that the non-violent non-acceptance of a whole people, apart from its economic efficacy against England, offers the only chance of acting on the feelings of the rulers and of disposing them in favour of the autonomy that India claims.

S. Tagore: Non-violence can be looked at from two different points of view, the tactical and that of its intrinsic worth. From the first point of view it is certain that we are not powerful enough at the moment to undertake a struggle against British rule. That can come later. Thus the use of non-violence can only depend on the political situation at the time. I have a deep respect for those who have given their lives for what they held to be the cause of India—who have let themselves be murdered by the police and the soldiers without resorting to violence. But I must say that in spite of its sincerity, nearly all this idealism has been in vain, because it was not based on reason. And I am persuaded that non-violence is entirely incapable of changing the hearts of the imperialists.
British imperialism, like all imperialism, has no heart; it is a system, something mechanical. We cannot change it, we must destroy it, root and branch. If any change has taken place, it has been for the worse. It has only shown itself more frenzied in its exercise of an uncalled-for terrorism.

*Romain Rolland:* It is asking too much to expect a change in the sentiments of the rulers, and in the opinion of their country, in the short space of time that has elapsed between the two Satyagraha movements in India. But the hope of such a possibility remains, based, moreover, on the interests of Great Britain who would be facing a whole race on strike. I do not know all the details of the political situation in your country. It changes from month to month. So I cannot speak of it with certainty, but I can judge of these grave problems by what is happening in Europe. Here all the available forces of both violence and non-violence are not too many—they are not even enough—to fight imperialism and Fascism successfully. Barbusse and myself, at the International Congress of Amsterdam in August 1932, called up all these allied forces and tried to mobilize them. In the struggle against Fascism, I attach the highest importance to the conscientious objectors and the non-violent non-acceptors who say to the Fascist governments: “We shall not obey your orders, whatever you may do.” They are a wing of the great anti-Fascist army. We are aware that in most European countries the Fascists have more forces at their disposal than the proletariat. Do not then divide our armies! Non-violence is a part of the war against Fascism, and carries a hope for the proletariat in Europe.

*S. Tagore:* I think that the proletariat was wrong in not showing enough energy at the propitious moment.

*Romain Rolland:* You must take into account the exhaustion caused by the terrible war of 1914-1918. All the European
people were bled white, physically and morally. The fact that they did not use force has nothing to do with idealism—true or false; they stopped the fight through sheer weariness.

*S. Tagore:* It was certainly not due to idealistic principles, in order to avoid greater violence, that the workers did not use force at the right moment. It was due rather to a lack of idealism among the socialist leaders of the proletarian movement in Europe which prevented them from making the revolution. This lack was the cause of our failure, and because of it, a barbarous Fascism has succeeded in spreading over Europe. I make a difference between force used by collectivism to recover what belongs to it, and force used by individuals to cheat collectivism of its just dues. In the last case, the force is spiritual, in the other it is violence.

*Madeleine Rolland:* What do you think of the problem of untouchability and Gandhi's great efforts to remove it?

*S. Tagore:* It is futile to accept a system of castes, and fight against untouchability. Gandhi considers the four castes as everlasting natural laws.

*Madeleine Rolland:* The untouchables, however, are in a far worse position than any other section of the people.

*S. Tagore:* That is so. But others are not much better off. An orthodox Brahmin would stop eating and throw away his food if I went into the room where he takes his meals. Is not that one of the worst forms of untouchability? Besides that, in spite of all the efforts made, up to now very few temples have been opened to the untouchables. There are hundreds and thousands which remain closed to them as before. We cannot solve this problem until a successful revolution has given us the power. We have learned from Russia how difficult it is to destroy superstition in the hearts of the people even after a revolution. The task is
long and painful. And it can only be successfully achieved after the revolution, never before it.

Madeleine Rolland: And you say that much time must pass before a revolution breaks out in India?

S. Tagore: Yes. The launching of a revolution depends upon so many economic and political factors, not only in India but the whole world over. I think there must be a long preparation. But the first step should be taken, and as soon as possible.

**240. Second Conversation between Romain Rolland and Saumyendranath Tagore**

*Saturday, 25 November*

S. Tagore: I have come to say good-bye. Before leaving I want to explain to you that our struggle is not concerned with persons—it is a conflict between two different conceptions of the world. Gandhism and Communism are mutually exclusive. We very much wish to have you in active co-operation with us.

Romain Rolland: I do not believe that Gandhism and Communism are necessarily mutually exclusive at the moment. On the contrary, I consider that they could and should unite. The time will come without doubt when Gandhi will have to make his position clear in the fight between labour and capital. Then it will be time to decide.

S. Tagore: That time has long passed for us. Those among us who at one time wholeheartedly supported Gandhi have discovered that (even leaving out the new world, the new relationship between human beings for which we work and to which we aspire) it is impossible to gain national independence by his methods.

Romain Rolland: Gandhi believes in the spiritual power of tradition. But he is not rooted in the past. He is a man.
on the march and he is absolutely sincere.  
S. Tagore: That is something everyone can say. Even Mussolini can say that he is looking for truth.  
Romain Rolland (forcibly): No, no! You cannot mention these two names in the same breath. All Mussolini’s being is concentrated in his ego. His ambition and his pride dominate his every action. Even Hitler, who is far less intelligent than Mussolini, is more sincere in this respect.  
S. Tagore: Perhaps you do not know that at the present moment the Indian nationalist newspapers, specially the ones in Calcutta, continually flatter Hitler. They go so far as to call him the Saviour of Germany.  
Romain Rolland: I know in any case that Mussolini seems to enjoy great prestige among young Indians, specially in Bengal. I have more than once opposed this enthusiasm.  
S. Tagore: Indian nationalism will turn perforce to Fascism, one day if it is not crushed at the proper time by a successful revolution. I must assure you again that our struggle is one between two different conceptions of the world. Therefore, personal loyalty towards whomsoever it may be is no longer a duty.  
Romain Rolland: I have told you before that to me Communism and Gandhism are not necessarily antagonistic conceptions of a world. They should be allied against Fascism—the common enemy. I will write you an Address to the Youth of India against Fascism, which I beg you to pass on to the young people of your country. But as for Gandhi, I remain faithful to him, for I admire and respect him more than any man of our time. But if he does not later place himself definitely on the side of labour in its conflict against capital—as I believe he will do—it will be the hour for me to dissociate myself from him. For whatever may happen, I am and ever shall be on the side of labour.  
S. Tagore: As I have already said, this hour has already sounded for us, and we have decided as to what line
of conduct to follow—I am sure events will help you to make up your mind. The point of view I have put before you is that of thousands of young Indians. Discontent with Gandhism is very keen and widely spread over India today.¹

241. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

November 1933.—Saumyendranath Tagore comes from Paris to Villeneuve, suddenly and unannounced, on 24 November. I have several conversations with him, first in my sister’s house and through her, then in my house, through Marie. (He speaks English, German and Russian; not French, but he understands a little.)

His aversion for Gandhi is total—although he expresses it calmly, without raising his voice. It is all the more inexplicable because he was at the outset a fanatical supporter of Gandhi, and he cannot forgive him for being disillusioned. It is aimed at much more than the political leader; it takes in the whole man—his “Weltanschauung”, as he calls it, his individual and social morality, his conception of life, his sexual asceticism, his monastic ideal, everything in him which seems a return to the past, which he scathingly calls “clerical” and obscurantist. At heart, underneath this scorn, he betrays the disdainful aristocratic reaction of the Tagores against the petit bourgeois of another race, without distinction, without a broad culture without any flights of “lyricism” or metaphysics. Naturally Saumyendranath reacts against this notion, as he is, or would have himself be, a Communist. But what a strange Communism is hidden (from his own eyes, no doubt) under the well-conned formulae

¹ With minor exceptions of detail, these two conversations are reproduced in Saumyendranath Tagore’s own published translation (Translator’s note).
from Moscow! And how little sympathy he must feel with that of the men of Moscow! (I tear more than one such confession out of him!) There is a conflict, in what he tells me, between his true essential needs, which are lyrical and metaphysical, and the social task which he has set himself and is courageously assuming, as a Communist combatant. But the two points of view come together in his scornful and violent antagonism towards Gandhi. On the one hand he disdainfully dwells on the nullity (or, what is worse in his aristocratic eyes, the mediocrity) of Gandhi as a mystic. When we speak to him of the reawakening of India which Gandhi has stimulated, he loftily replies that this reawakening is not due to him, and it goes back to Rammohan Roy (here I see an echo of his uncle Rabindranath's words) and a whole line of great Indians (whom I know as well as he does), who all were "anti-Gandhists" before there ever was Gandhism (he obviously means in ideology, in mystic and intellectualist pan-humanism). But what is the worth of this ideology, confined to a few handfuls of privileged people, compared with the practical action of Gandhi's thirty years of public life, and with the incontestable fact that by his example and his energy he has revived the masses of India and has breathed into them, from South to North, the proud awareness of their dignity and strength! Saumyendranath forces himself reluctantly to recognize this; but only to say at once that Gandhi has done nothing more than Hitler, and that Mussolini has as much right as he to be proud of his labours. His impassioned injustice so blinds him that he refuses to see any difference between the Mahatma and the Fascist Fuhrers and Duces. He says that Gandhi is the Duce of the most crass Indian reaction and that, far from leading India to independence, he is leading her back to the gloom of the past. He even goes so far as to refuse him any understanding of non-violence; he says that true non-violence
would consist of extirpating all violence from society; but he does not say by what non-violent means it could be extirpated, nor if, once extirpated, it would not be planted again in a different form. I rather believe that his revolutionary mysticism in the style of the young Saint-Just (he is just as handsome, as implacable and as pure) conceives of a non-violence which works by the guillotine.

When the discussion comes down to the level of the social situation in India, on which he is obviously better informed than I am (though I have no means of checking), he claims that Gandhi is the instrument of the Indian capitalist bourgeoisie, and is intelligent enough to have become aware of the fact, for at Ahmedabad, near his Ashram, he has under his eyes a typical example of crushing exploitation of industrial labourers, and he has not reacted against this abuse; he goes round preaching patient and resigned labour to the exploited; far from aspiring to social change, he wants the maintenance of classes and castes; his campaign for the untouchables is no more than a meaningless game, since untouchability exists between castes and, within a class, towards those who have failed to observe caste prescriptions. ("Thus I, Saumyendranath, on my return to India, shall be a genuine untouchable in my own caste. . . .") But he does not and will not see that true untouchability that of those outside all castes, constitutes an extreme degree of religious inhumanity, going to the extent of refusing water, air and life to the out-caste proletariat—and that Gandhi, a real man of practical action, first attacks, as he must, the most urgent problem. What, then, are the means of action of these "all or nothing" idealists like Saumyendranath? Saumyendranath says, perfectly frankly: "We Communists in India are an extremely small minority." Well then, what are they going to do?—He replies: "We must start somewhere!" Precisely! Which is exactly what Gandhi is doing, and has been doing for the last 30 years, day in
and day out. But it is impossible to bring the young fanatic round to the idea of a temporary alliance with the Gandhists in order to achieve the conquest of Indian independence. He absolutely rejects the idea of a united front. He also rejects my suggestion that he should see Gandhi and talk things over with him, trusting in his honesty and his sincere search for truth, which never refuses to evolve. He says: “In our view this has already been tried.” And it is in vain that I read him the typescript which I have in front of me of Gandhi’s replies to a questionnaire on what attitude he would take in a conflict between capital and labour, in which Gandhi declares that in any case in which Capital proves unjust, he will side with oppressed Labour and lead it to crush capital—without even thinking whether it would be opportune to maintain a united front in the national struggle. Saumyendranath listens (also to other threatening declarations made by Gandhi at the Round Table against Indian capitalism), but the words are hardly out of my mouth when he acts as if he had not heard them.

I refuse to collaborate in his projected Black Book in which he aims to attack Gandhi (he does not press the point). But I agree to promise him an Address to Indian Youth against Fascism. I am convinced that he and his friends will try to exploit it against Gandhi (and I shall be forced to intervene in a few months, by condemning their campaign against Gandhi in the Indian press).

. . . . He is without doubt a generous young idealist, very sincere and ready to sacrifice everything for his faith. Which makes it all the more sad to see these fine forces, intelligent and pure, hurling themselves against the greatest and purest of Indians.
242. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

28 November 1933.—Before he leaves Paris, I send Sau-myendranath Tagore an Appeal to the Youth of India against Fascism. I add this note:

“I am always ready to join with you in your struggles against Fascism and imperialism. But I must remind you that you are not to use my name, or allow it to be used in any way, against Gandhi. I remain firmly attached to his friendship, and convinced of the grandeur of his mission, for India and for the world.”

243. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1933.—S. Tagore writes to me on 4 December to say that he has received my Appeal: “... Many, many thanks for your fine message to the youth of India. ... All these last days since I returned from Villeneuve, I was turning over and over again in my mind all those things which we had discussed in that short time. Every time I remembered those words of yours: I cannot take part in this because of my personal loyalty to Gandhi.’ I was wondering if personal loyalty was after all not that dangerous irrational sentiment which has created lots of havoc in human society. Mussolini obliges each Fascist to take the oath of personal loyalty to him, so does Hitler. But the Communist Party never obliges its members to take an oath of personal loyalty to Lenin, it enjoins us to be loyal to Communism alone. Nowhere perhaps has the evil effect of personal loyalty been so evident as in the ‘Guru’ cult of India. My whole soul rebels against it. I am also
against Stalinism, for the same reason as it demands personal loyalty for its author. Therefore, I remember to have explained to you several times the nature of our fight against Gandhism. Communism and Gandhism, in my opinion, exclude each other. One cannot be both for Gandhism and Communism, for there is no denying the fact that in the long run, from this ‘non-violent’ capitalistic, nationalistic Gandhism, Indian Fascism is bound to emerge. Gandhism does not bring us one whit nearer the solution of any problem in any single sphere of our social life. Gandhist’s doctrine of non-violence is a thousand miles away from the problem of violence, not to talk of the possibility of eradication of violence through Gandhism. I do not see one single positive idea which Gandhism has given us. I cannot allow myself to be swept off my feet once more by its tremendous romantic appeal, a false romanticism which gives a false hope of a new dawn. Please believe me when I say that it often makes me feel very sad to think that one of the very, very few men who could have led the world out of this chaos, has failed us so hopelessly through lack of intellectual perception and also vision. Gandhi without Gandhism would be a perfect comrade of ours. But alas, I am afraid it is too much to expect from him and too beautiful an idea to be true. . . . Your co-operation which you have so kindly offered us in our fight against imperialism and Fascism, I gratefully accept. This co-operation is precious and valuable for our work. We will carry on our fight against Gandhism to the best of our ability. I assure you that so far as I am concerned, I will try to maintain it on an impersonal niveau, from which height every action and every idea should be criticised. I believe that one day the definitive hour will come when you will also be with us in our criticism of Gandhism, this pure and simple nationalistic, capitalistic, retrogressive movement. Till that moment we must wait. . . .”
I write to him, 6 December:

"... Allow me to correct a serious error in your interpretation of the word 'loyalty' as applied to my friendship with Gandhi. You go so far as to relate this 'loyalty' to that which Mussolini demands on oath! I should be hurt by this comparison if you had not made it in haste as you were writing, without checking your terms. Gandhi has never asked anything of me, and he expects nothing of me; he knows I am a man of independent character. It was I who gave him my friendship, my esteem and my veneration. 'Disloyalty', to me, is the act of a man who betrays his own friendship (which he gives freely), disloyalty towards oneself. You tell me that your Communism knows no 'loyalty' other than loyalty to ideas, not to men. I am not arguing with your viewpoint, but it is not mine. I have never sacrificed my friends to my ideas. I have friends even among the enemies of my ideas. It is enough to me that they are upright and sincere, and remain worthy of my respect. I respect Gandhi more than any other man of our time."

(Saumyendranath Tagore replies to apologise, but without really understanding what I wrote.

... Also he sticks to his comparison of Gandhi with Mussolini: he finds each of them as "sincere"—or as insincere—as the other.)

Meanwhile I receive the copy of our conversation, translated into French. It is just what I might have expected.

... I have to rewrite the whole account without touching the words spoken by my young interlocutor, but correcting my own. I send him back the revised dialogue, with the following letter:

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Saturday, 9 December 1933

Dear S. T.—I have received your account of your visit to Villeneuve.
There's nothing harder than retracing a conversation objectively, particularly when the writer is passionately involved in action and possessed by a great idea.

You have made a sincere attempt to be objective, but the result is none the less an argument reminiscent of those which used to be played out in Catholic churches between two priests, one playing the role of God's advocate, the other that of devil's advocate. Naturally God's advocate had all the good arguments on his side, and the devil's advocate used all his skill to lose his cause.

Without pushing the analogy too far, our conversation as you relate it is like a verbal jousting match in which the victor is known in advance and Triumphs without resistance. In all sincerity and without meaning to, you have reduced my role to that of receiving all the blows you strike and replying only by dodging the issue, unobtrusively and evasively. I really must re-establish my true position in the debate. Permit me to return to you, along with the copy of your French translation, a copy of the conversation re-written by me. *I have not touched a single word of what you said*. But I have had to re-write the whole of my "role".

Of course it's very difficult to grasp exactly ideas foreign to your own when they are expressed in a language you do not know well (and your French is not good). Many things which a Frenchman like myself expresses only in veiled terms are bound to escape a foreigner's attention. Simple courtesy obliged me not to reply to everything you said that I didn't agree with you and that your reasons did not satisfy me. I sensed that you were irreducibly convinced of what you said, and it was enough for me to state my own conviction once without repeating it at every moment in the debate. But since you are making our conversation into a publication which in your view will serve as an arm for your party against Gandhi, I am forced to reassert
my own convictions very clearly and in the full light of day.

_The text which I am sending you thus corrected is the only one whose publication I authorize._ I recognize no real exactness in the other _as far as my own part is concerned._

I must add that since you mean to use this conversation in publications both in Europe and India, I too reserve the right to send my own version to my friends in India and other countries. Furthermore, if there were to be any controversy about my position in the debate, I should feel free to clarify it by extracts from the letters which I have exchanged with you.

I know that you are a very upright and sincere man; I sensed this very strongly when I saw and listened to you, and I conceived an affectionate esteem for you, for ideological differences in no way affect my assessment of characters. I ask you therefore to believe that my feelings towards you are sympathetic, though I regret that we are at present divided on the matter of what action is appropriate in India. Whether or not we become allies does not depend on me, and whether it's your predictions or mine which prove to be right, the time will come in any case when we shall be fighting together; this is inevitable, as we both are for the defence of the oppressed and the exploited.

### 244. Romain Rolland to Kalidas Nag

_Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga_

24 December 1933

.... My sister will have told you that I had a visit from Saumyendranath Tagore. Despite the excessiveness of his ideas, I felt a great deal of esteem and sympathy for this young man, mixed with pity (he's suffering, quite
seriously I think, from tuberculosis, and the ordeals before him will make short work of his delicate constitution). He would have liked to drag me into his party, and he judges our great friend, the saint of Sabarmati, with an implacable violence which seems to me to cover the bitterness of wounded love; for he once loved him passionately, and he hasn’t forgiven him for being disappointed. I don’t need to tell you that I firmly upheld my faith and hope in Gandhi. We had a long discussion, verbally and by letter, but to no avail, as each of us remained unshakable. He retraced an account of our conversation, which he intends to publish, and most honourably, he sent it to me. Despite his attempts to be objective, he gave himself the best part and sacrificed mine; I rewrote all my replies (without touching his) and sent him back the modified text, telling him it was the only one which I recognized as authentic. He honourably accepted it, and he has promised me that he will publish it in my revised form. In the event of there being any polemic in India on the true sense of my thought, I shall keep copies available for you (or, failing me, my sister Madeleine will) of the very explicit letters which I wrote to Saumyendranath.

(Between ourselves, though, I wish that Gandhi would work towards a clearer formulation of his social thought. The time is coming all over the world when we shall have to take sides decisively in one or other of the two camps, or else withdraw from political action—into the forest....)
My very dear Friend,

I was sorry to learn from an English friend returning from India that you fear my feelings for you have changed. This is not the case at all: I venerate and love you, and I am faithful in my friendship. You have perhaps heard of Saumyendranath Tagore’s visit to me. This young man is hostile to your ideas, but in his hostility I believe there is much of his old love for you, and you would be the first to esteem and pity him for his agonizing sincerity which suffers passionately at the sufferings of India. In the account he published of his conversation with me, he very honourably recognized that my trust in you remains unswerving. I wish you could meet him: Saumyendranath is a noble force, idealistic and pure, ready for every sacrifice; you might be reconciled with him and win him back. But he refuses to see you again (perhaps out of an unconfessed fear of being won back by you).

That said, I must tell you (as I have already done anyway, in Villeneuve) that as far as our duties for present action in Europe are concerned, my thought differs from yours on certain points.

The great experiment of Satyagraha which you are carrying out, and whose issue is still uncertain, has, I hope, a strong chance of victory in India, but it has none, in my opinion, in Europe at the moment.

Present-day Europe is threatened by the most deadly danger to have weighed upon it for centuries. All the
marshalled forces of an imperialist Internationale of Money and bourgeois and military reaction, of which the Fascist movements are the instruments, seem to be on the point of stifling for centuries the political and social liberties which we have conquered by centuries of heroic and patient efforts. Germany and Italy are not the only nations to have passed into the hands of reaction. Hungary, Poland and all the Balkans are subjected to it. The working masses of Austria have just been crushed by gunfire. France and England themselves are touched by the plague of Fascism, and serious Coups d'état are building up in Paris.

Only the imposing block of the “Union of Socialist Soviet Republics” (Russia) has constituted itself solidly for the defence and construction of a new world, more intelligent and just, in which power will be in the hands of liberated and educated workers.

But there is no doubt that if Europe “goes Fascist”, it will at once form a coalition with Japan and, if possible, the imperialist powers of America, to destroy the U.S.S.R. (Russia), which by its very existence is a permanent threat to all the powers who live by the iniquitous exploitation of labour.

The most commanding duty for those of us Europeans who remain free and irreconcilably opposed to imperialism and Fascism is thus to defend the U.S.S.R., which is the indispensable basis for all hopes of social reconstruction.

How can she be defended? By Satyagraha, by non-action, by refusing violence? The European masses aren’t the least prepared for these tactics and this hope. Here and there in some countries there are small cells of “conscientious objectors” to be found; but among their numbers the individualism of their conscience usually objects to any organization in communal action. Noble efforts like Pierre Cérésolé’s to unite them in an “International Civil Service” are still the exception. Individual “objectors” may save
their own souls by their sacrifice, but they don’t think enough about saving the souls and the lives of others. It may be that centuries hence their sacrifice will prove fertile and be surrounded with a halo in the eyes of the future, as happened with the early Christian martyrs. But in today’s tragic times it does not modify the ineluctable destiny which sets at each other’s throats two antagonistic worlds: Fascist dictatorship in the service of international reaction, and the proletarian revolution. One has to take sides.

I have chosen my side. I support the world of Labour organized by its own hands and freed from the yoke of its exploiters. I am convinced that you too support it. As for myself personally, I shall never use violence either to attack, or to defend myself (such is at least my will; if I should fail to live up to this, it would be a product of my weakness and I should condemn it). But I refuse to condemn those who have recourse to violence in self-defence if they do not have faith in non-violence and in the ideals and “divinity” that it presupposes. When one believes in God and the Eternal, it is easy, too easy to sacrifice oneself! But two-thirds of the people of Europe—and perhaps not the least worthy of esteem—have lost all their belief in God and in any kind of eternity whatsoever. The only idea still capable of exalting them is their sense of human solidarity, their passionate hope that their battles against present injustice may free their sons and brothers, that by their death they will found a better world. Such a belief is no small thing. We can ask them to serve that faith; we cannot ask them to serve a faith which they do not share. The demands made by truth and duty on a man are that he should be sincere with himself, courageous and selfless in the harmony he is called upon to establish between his thought and his action. The Viennese workers who defended their social faith to the death against the bombardment by pseudo-Christian
Fascists acted strictly according to their duty. The duty of the U.S.S.R. and all those in Europe who believe in the same social ideal obliges them to defend this ideal, at the cost of their lives, by the means which they have at their disposal; those who support non-violence, by non-violence; the others, by armed conflict. In no case can passivity be admitted. Neither you nor I admit the acceptance of evil, cowardly adaptation to it. You fight by means of Satyagraha. The proletarian revolution has other arms, but it is the same battle being fought on two different fields of action. You are happy on your field (even if it is a heap of ruins at the moment); Pierre Cérésole will tell you so.

As for myself, I strive (as is my mission) to build links of esteem and alliance between those who, with their different arms, fight loyally for the same cause.

I send you my message, at once distant and close, of fraternal love and respect.

Romain Rolland

246. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Sunday, 8 April 1934

My very dear Friend,

I was surprised by a letter from Mira to my sister saying that you were “disturbed” by certain events in my private life. I didn’t think my private life would take up any of your attention among all the great and terrible public events which threaten us and come to pass every day. In any case there’s nothing there to “disturb” you.

I have married Mme. Marie Koudachef, whom you saw in Villeneuve, not my professional secretary, as Mira said, but a friend linked to me by affection and collaboration
for more than ten years. (She was already concerned with the composition of my book L'Elé, the second volume of L'Ame Enchantée, which was written in 1923.)

French on her mother’s side and Russian on her father’s, she is the widow of Prince Koudachef, who died in 1921 in the ranks of the White army in the Caucasus, and she went through the terrible years of the civil war in the Crimea. This will make clear to you that if she has come to adopt the ideas of the Soviet Revolution, she needed a highly disinterested character to break away from the prejudices of the caste to which she belonged and her memories of a husband she loved. Her example is a living proof of the force of truth overcoming self-interest. She has a seventeen-year-old son who, although he bears a dangerous aristocratic name, has regularly carried out all his studies in the Moscow Government Schools, works well, has an intelligent and serious character and is destined for the career of Soviet engineer.

We would have felt no need to make any legal registration of our close and long-standing relationship, but for the fact that the threatening times in which we live make the situation of a Soviet Russian citizen in Switzerland (which hasn’t yet recognized the U.S.S.R.) a highly precarious one, making it difficult for her either to stay in Switzerland or to go from Switzerland to Russia and come back; in short, she runs the risk the whole time of being separated either from me or from her son. This is why, at my age, I wanted to assure her future by a legal marriage. I think this very clear explanation will be enough for you. In any case, I find something humiliating in this vastly overused device of blaming the influence of a woman on a thinker for the natural evolution of his ideas. I know this procedure only too well; it has been used all my life, each time I disappointed my friends (and readers) who found themselves disagreeing with me: when my
Jean-Christophe was playing the young Hercules cleansing the Augean stables in Germany and France, when I defended the cause of peace and European unity during the 1914 war against my own compatriots, then when I made your noble mission and India's better known in Europe; in all these cases, as in this most recent one of my writings in support of the U.S.S.R., I have never done anything other than follow my conscience and reason. As early as 1917, four years before I heard your name, I was launching an appeal (you'll find it in my book *Les Précurseurs*) in defence of the young Russian Revolution, and I have never since ceased to defend it against its enemies—though equally never ceasing to maintain the rights of the independent spirit. I have tried to inspire Pan-humanism among my friends in Soviet Russia, and to make them aware of the powerful idealism within them, which they mask behind an apparent "materialism". Between the years 1920 and 1930 I became impressed by the great constructive social and even moral tasks being carried out by the Soviet Revolution, and convinced of the commanding duty incumbent on us to save its fruits at all costs from its many enemies' attempts to destroy it. I shan't insist on this matter; our friend P. C. will tell you about it at length. In any case I intend this year to publish a collection of my numerous articles on the subject over the last twelve years; this will show the continuous logic behind my developing thought and the present conclusions it has reached. (These conclusions are still only a stage in the journey; as long as one lives one must march and go forward. Walt Whitman's motto is mine too: "Whoever you are, advance!" . . . This is the motto of all men of goodwill, and it is yours too in your unceasing march towards Truth.)

Permit me to embrace you with respect and fraternal affection.

Romain Rolland
Since I don’t know whether this letter will reach you, would you be good enough to drop me a line briefly to let me know if you receive it?

247. Gandhi to Romain Rolland

Ranchi
3 May 1934

My dear Friend,

I have your two searching letters which Mira has translated for me. Your letter about your personal affairs has touched me deeply. Your utter frankness and your endeavour to let me understand your action as fully as was possible endeared you all the more.

Your exposition of the Soviet system I appreciate. I shall try to find time to understand it more fully from Cérésole.

My love to you and yours.

Bapu

248. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

May 1934

Eugène Lagot, secretary of the French League of Conscientious Objectors, presided over by G. Leretour, writes to me (9 May 1934) to ask for my help in an action brought by the Paris Public Prosecutor against the journal Le Semeur (the League’s mouthpiece) for “complicity in incitement of soldiers to mutiny, for purposes of anarchist propaganda”. (The article signed by Lagomassini and Bernizet, is indeed very imprudent, insulting and provocative.) I take the chance to tell Lagot what I think of the League’s attitude for the past year or more; it has cut itself off completely from the spirit of
non-violence and is committing the most absurd acts of provocation (to such an extent that suspicions have fallen on some of the so-called Objectors).

. . . . . The attitude of the French League of Conscientious Objectors over the last year or two, and above all that of its official mouthpiece Le Semeur, since the death of its former editor, has often disappointed and disconcerted many of its friends. It appears to be prey to a chaotic intellectual anarchy, with the most uncontrolled violence confusedly intermingled with non-violence.

Whereas true Conscientious Objection as practised by the great English Objectors, Gandhi and even Tolstoy draws its justification and its essential force from the highest spiritual values—moral peace, tolerance, non-violence, self-sacrifice,—Le Semeur is for ever displaying a most aggressive spirit, and theories as contrary as they could possibly be to the whole principle of non-violence. . . .

249. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

July 1934.—In my sister's house I find Mira, arriving at short notice from India. (She announced her arrival by a cablegram sent at the moment of departure.) This sudden resolution came to her in what she calls an"illumination", like the call of an inner voice. Gandhi left her free, and did nothing to put her off. Mira wants to try to publicise the true situation of the people of India among the people of England. She is going to speak about it to the workers, in London and in Lancashire. Gandhi does not recognize her as his representative among them, but as his interpreter—as his daughter who understands him best and can explain him. The notes which Mira reads to us of their conversation on their last night together suggest that Gandhi is still open to reconciliation with England, but on the basis of Indian autonomy. He says: "I am not
the servant of India. I am the servant of truth." There is little likelihood that he will succeed in making himself heard. The British watchword today seems to be to ignore him—and in the most insulting fashion. The Viceroy said of him to a mutual friend (with permission to repeat it) that he had become certain that Gandhi was insincere in his politics and character; Gandhi wrote a very dignified letter to the Viceroy complaining of this judgment and asking him to state his reasons. The Viceroy did not even trouble to reply; he merely sent an acknowledgement of receipt by a secretary, without a word of explanation. British tactics are to isolate Gandhi from the Indian Congress and to deal only with the latter. Gandhi's tactics should be to stick closely to Congress, to speak in its name and with its approbation. He does not seem to be doing so; he is too used to acting alone, according to the still voice within him. In a few weeks his self-imposed truce finishes. Freed on health grounds before the end of his term of imprisonment, he chivalrously renounced all political activity until this term elapsed; but once the time is up he will resume his liberty, and it is much to be feared that he will be imprisoned again on his political action. Gandhi does not hide that this time he has no desire to be imprisoned. But he cannot dispense himself from acting, and the first thing he will do when he can speak will be to demand the liberation of his companions, Nehru, Patel, etc., without whom Congress would be without leaders. He would like to obtain a guarantee of his right to speak from the British Government, but the Government is silent. Gandhi cannot even be received in audience by the provincial governors. Orders have gone out from above not to know him, to treat him as if he did not exist. A very British absurdity. The old gentleman doesn't want to know this barefooted man to whom he hasn't even been introduced. What a target that would be for Vivekananda's vengeful irony!
250. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

4 October 1934.—Pierre Cérésole comes, with Hélène Monastier. He is to leave again for India on the 22nd, to organize a team to bring help to the disaster victims. He speaks of his first two-month visit. . . .

. . . . He speaks of the admirable patience and good humour of Gandhi, who never refuses his attention to the thousands of questioners, inexhaustible and exhausting, who abuse his time; he never lets them see the least trace of tiredness and never says: "That's enough!"; of the atmosphere of complete liberty which he has been able to foster in his circle; of the incredible independence of the criticisms against himself which he allows people to voice without interruption, with an affectionate attention which in any case wins over the minds of his opponents more surely than any other attitude. One of them said to Cérésole: "Whatever you do, however hard you try, he is like a big python with open jaws; you always fall into them in the end."

Cérésole admires his unshakable vitality. The frail barefooted old man exhausted and outdistanced them all when they were out walking—and they are all good walkers around this Swiss mountain-dweller used to rough going. He also admires his ready adaptability in his contacts with his peasant audiences, as soon as he has settled, cross-legged, on a little table and begun to speak to them. Each of his little speeches is preceded by a brief religious chant, a recitative from the Vedas, which creates a mood of intimacy in religion around himself and the assembled gathering. Gandhi never makes a personal prayer; his soul never leaps directly towards the divinity. They are always texts, read or
chanted, from the Holy Books,—a liturgy, rather like the Catholics, and these worthy Swiss Protestants (Cérésole, Edmond Privat) feel embarrassed. One or other of them said to Gandhi: "Aren't you afraid this may make your religious thought a bit mechanical?" and Gandhi replied: "Why not?" I think he also says: "If you always offer your mind the framework (or the receptacle) for the best which is in it, this best will rise from it and fill it."

251. Romain Rolland to Gandhi

Villeneuve Villa Olga
8 November 1934

My very dear Friend,

You were present in our thoughts during Mira's too brief hours spent with us in Villeneuve; I am asking your good messenger to pay you my faithful respects.

Mira will tell you of the tragic times in which she leaves us in the West. Europe, in which men's minds are everywhere under excessive tension, is on the eve of a general war in which all the frenzy accumulated over the years risks being let loose, and it will be difficult then for the voices of reason and humanity to make themselves heard.

Permit me, in feverish Europe's supreme hour of vigil, to appeal to you.

Of all forms of violence, the most crushing at the moment is that of a social state whose demon is Money. The power of Money was always great, but over the last half-century and even more so since the last war, it has become formidably extended by its close connection with the big industries ("heavy" industry, armaments, chemical products) and a colonial imperialism which spreads its exploitation over all the races of the earth. It has taken control of political affairs (governments have become nothing
more than instruments in its hand), and its monstrous power has produced in those who wield it a mental unbalance which is leading the whole world to destruction. Large-scale industrial capitalism is fomenting war; it is speculating on the death of whole peoples (opium and its ever more murderous compounds, heroin, etc.). And unfortunately the middle classes are blindly sharing in the profits of these criminal speculations without being aware of it.

The worker and peasant masses are in revolt, seeking to organize themselves to establish a new order, more healthy and just, based on labour.

Non-violence, which condemns their violent actions, must understand them; it must fight violence at its source, in the unjust and murderous social order which forces them to this choice between Revolution or death!

It is essential for your voice to be heard in this conflict, in which one is decidedly forced to take sides. This is an urgent matter, as a misunderstanding is growing between your thought, badly interpreted, and millions of the world's workers. Too many people have an interest in fostering this misunderstanding between them and you.

Like you, I have sought all my life to establish a harmony between opposing forces. There was a time when this harmony could flourish naturally between classes associated in a free hierarchy. This time is no more; even that of parliamentary “liberalism” is in its death throes, and for a long time it has been supported only by lies. What we see today is the frenzied anarchism of wealth and violence (capitalism and Fascism in their most varied forms).

Our only salvation is in a new order based on the sanctity of Labour and the equality of organized workers all serving the community. It is for this that we must work. I know, I am certain that this is your opinion too. Say so, and say it forcefully! It is important for the salvation of the whole world, not just India. Now that you have
resumed your independence, you will better be able to embrace the whole field of humanity.

With affection and respect,

Your friend,

Romain Rolland

252. Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade

8 November 1934

Dear Mira,

I was delighted by those too brief moments spent with you. I envy your return to India and Bapu. I am giving you a letter for him and I wish you a pleasant and easy journey. Give my affectionate greetings to Pyarelal, Mahadev and all our friends. As to Bapu, you know how I revere him.

Your friend,

Romain Rolland

253. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

November 1934.—Mira passes through Villeneuve again on her way back to India, staying a day and night with Madeleine in the Villa Lionnette (6-8 November). Since July she has been travelling through England, Scotland, Wales and the United States, giving a large number of lectures (as many as three a day in the United States) to very large audiences. Everywhere she has been heard with interest and sympathy, and nowhere with more understanding than in English working-class circles, despite their being badly affected by unemployment and poverty (in South Wales, 80% of the population are unemployed; there is a whole generation which has never known work! These
people, among whom it would be most excusable to find a grudge against the rebel Indians for adding to English unemployment by their boycott of British merchandise, are in fact the first to approve of their efforts to achieve independence). The discussions, even with Socialist and Communist elements clearly opposed to Gandhian ideology, were always conducted with dignity. And the English provincial press proudly reported the meetings, although many of the speeches were hostile to English policy.

... In the United States Mira found a numerous public with a very lively interest in the moral side of Gandhi's message, and avidly asking questions. She had talks with Mrs. Roosevelt. In London she was received by the main political leaders: Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, Sir Samuel Hoare, Lord Halifax (ex-Lord Irwin), etc. The one most solidly rooted in the impossible Diktat of the "White Paper" (of which in any case he is the main author) is Samuel Hoare. The most broadminded is the most conservative: W. Churchill. This man, who refused to see Gandhi on his previous visit, received Mira with courtesy and spoke of Gandhi with high esteem and of the White Paper with scorn.

... None of the English politicians seem to have an adequate knowledge of India, except Lord Halifax (Irwin), who has lived there and who speaks of India, as of Gandhi, with emotion and affection. But he says he is bound by his party. The Viceroy is still proudly ignoring Gandhi.

... The Indian National Congress is being held at this moment; and although it has consented to all of Gandhi's demands, Gandhi has officially withdrawn from it so as to confirm their new independence. There would now be a case for Gandhi to come to Europe to have talks with the English statesmen and people without committing Congress to anything and without being tied to its apron-strings. This would create a completely new situation, not
without its disconcerting side for the statesmen to whom Mira mentioned it. There is nothing in the law to prevent a citizen of the Empire from coming to England and holding meetings. It remains to be seen whether catastrophic events and threats of a European war will prevent this plan from materializing.

I spoke to Mira about Saumyendranath Tagore's book, the French translation of which has appeared, and the repercussions which it cannot fail to have. I dwell on the misunderstanding which is deliberately being widened, on the mistrust towards Gandhi which is being encouraged among the people of Europe. It is urgent that he should make up his mind to speak clearly and uncompromisingly on the social question. Mira says that he is concerned about this himself and that over the last few months he has set himself to studying Socialism and Communism. He has come to understand that the worst of wars is the "daily war" being fought all over the world by the capitalist oppressors against the impoverished masses. And Mira is returning from her travels in Europe and America very much struck by the tragic aspects of the social conflict. I am counting on her to insist on the need for Gandhi to take his stance.

254. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

November 1934.—Writing to C. F. Andrews (in England, from whom I received an affectionate letter), to encourage him to make a close study of Saumyendranath's book and to reply point by point, without any apologetic passion but with objective exactness and precision. I also ask him to work on Gandhi in the same direction that I indicated to Mira.
255. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1934.—My letter to Gandhi has reached him and been read to him by Mira. He listened with attention, expressed his thanks and thinks that the best thing to do would be to reply by an open letter to be published alongside mine.

Since then, reports from India say that the great mill-owners in Ahmedabad (supposed to be Gandhi’s friends) had tried to reduce their workers’ wages, and the workers decided on strike action, Gandhi siding with them.

256. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

13 January 1935.—Visited by A. C. Chakravarty, Rabindranath Tagore’s secretary. Chakravarty is much concerned with the social question. Despite his profound respect for Gandhi, he does not think the Mahatma is still young enough in soul to adapt to the new social problems; he has finished his course, and it is up to a new generation to go further. He sees Jawaharlal Nehru as its leader; this is the man whom he most loves and venerates in India, and it seems that Nehru already has a great ascendancy over the masses. But England is too well aware of the fact, and is keeping him in prison. . . . After Nehru, the man with most ascendancy in India is Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Afghan leader and apostle of non-violence. Released for a month or two, then imprisoned again, he had time to visit the circles of Tagore and Gandhi, and he left them fascinated by his forceful serenity. . . . Gandhi, revolted by his arrest, reluctantly departed from his non-political
work organizing village industries, and declared his wish to go to the North-West Province to study the situation there. He was refused permission; it is therefore certain that Gandhi will soon be arrested again, for several years.

257. Romain Rolland to Subhas Chandra Bose

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
22 February 1935

Dear Mr. Subhas C. Bose,

I duly received your volume "The Indian Struggle 1920-34", which you were good enough to send me. I thank you for it and congratulate on it heartily. So interesting seemed the book to us that I ordered another copy so that my wife and sister should have one each. It is an indispensable work for the history of the Indian Movement. In it you show the best qualities of the historian: lucidity and high equity of mind. Rarely it happens that a man of action as you are is apt to judge without party spirit.

...... We, the men of thought, must each of us fight against the temptation, that befalls us in moments of fatigue and unsettledness, of repairing to a world beyond the battle called either God, or Art, or independence of Spirit, or those distant regions of the mystic soul. But fight we must, our duty lies on this side of the ocean, on the battle-ground of men. . . .

I sincerely wish that your health will speedily recover for the good of India that is in need of you and I beg you to believe in my cordial sympathy.

Romain Rolland
258. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

March 1935.—Raja Rao (Soissons, 20 March 1935) sends me a request from an Indian writer, A. N. Krishna Rao, who wants to translate Jean-Christophe (or at least selections from it) into the Indian “Canarese” dialect. He also tells me that he is following in Europe my introductory articles to Quinze Ans de Combat, and that I must not believe that I am wasting my time in trying to “marry water and fire”, in other words, Indian and Soviet thought; there is a strong Socialist, or pre-Socialist, movement at work in the new India, which will triumph despite “bigotry” (the Mahatma’s, he hints) and the weakness of Jawaharlal Nehru, who nevertheless is the man most aware of the movement.

I reply (26 March):

... I do not doubt that, whatever happens, the Marxist idea will, in a form appropriate to India, play an important role in the social development of your country. I am sorry that in this respect Gandhi has been held up by prejudices and preconceptions based more on sentiment than on reason, and that he is not setting himself the task of studying, closely and scrupulously, the great theoretical and practical teachings of Socialism—instead of radically brushing them aside with one sweep of the pen, as he did in his Speech to Congress reproduced in the 15 March number of Europe. The basis of his social thought is a religious creed which is certainly very pure and very lofty, but not broad enough to embrace a humanity on the march towards new horizons. Either one must march with it, or stay behind. The Mahatma’s legs are so good that I still hope to see him get up and leave his now outdated position, and catch up with the vanguard...
Dear Madeleine,

I have just read your letter to Pyarelal\(^1\). Thank God I am about to observe complete silence, thus I can reply to your letter immediately. Yes, I ought to write a complete letter in reply to the long letter of the Sage.\(^2\) But the very adjective 'complete' frightens me. I have no time to compose a letter which will do sufficient justice to this letter from there. I must try to do it during my days of silence. Your question is simple. My opposition is to socialism as it is interpreted here in its official programme. I can have nothing to say against the theory or the philosophy of socialism. The programme, as it is put here, cannot be achieved without violence. The socialists here do not exclude violence under all circumstances whatsoever. They would take to arms openly, if they saw there was chance to usurp power by it. There are in the programme some details into which I need not enter. I wonder if this reply will answer your difficulties. However, you must write about your difficulties more concretely. Love to you both.

Bapu

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\(^1\) This letter has not been found.

\(^2\) Romain Rolland
260. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

April 1935.—Visited by Subhas C. Bose, former Mayor of Calcutta, one of the leaders of the Socialist left wing of Congress, in prison for six or eight years and at present retained in Europe.

... He wanted to tell me how in his opinion, Gandhi’s political leadership has arrived at a sterile point at which India must break away from it if she wants to advance and achieve independence. In his view, the tactics of non-violent Civil Resistance have failed once and for all. They had no chance of success unless they could succeed in totally disorganizing the Indian administration and Civil Service. They did not achieve the complete boycott of merchandise which they decreed. Gandhi never consented to go the whole way in the movement he was leading. He never authorized any constraints on his supporters; he was never willing to exercise or to permit a dictatorship of Civil Resistance, which was what was needed to provide severe examples to intimidate the hesitant or the self-interested, the Indian merchants refusing to follow the boycott of English products. On the other hand the English, after long and not always very confident gropings in their struggle against the Civil Disobedience movement, finally discovered the right tactics to bring it down. They are no longer imprisoning thousands of Indians, as they did a few years ago; (all the prisons were full, and there seemed to be no end to the condemnations). Instead they keep in prison for years the only leaders who are the soul of Indian action, men like Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose, etc. And they repress the smallest movements by violence. The
non-resistance of the Gandhists calms them; they know they have nothing to fear on that side.

. . . . Gandhi enjoys great popularity in all parts and all classes of the country, but he is not using it to bring about effective action. No doubt he has done an immense amount over the last 15 years to revive the Indian national sentiment and to bring the classes closer together. But he is by nature a middle-of-the-road man who is for ever seeking compromises between opposite extremes, between classes and parties. Thus he sincerely fights against untouchability, and at the same time defends the caste system. He is interested in the workers, but prevents them from organizing themselves against the bosses. He is no longer openly fighting against mechanization, but he is diverting efforts for social reform towards his system of domestic industry (the spinning wheel) in the villages, which in practice can bring no more than insignificant advantages and turns attention away from the great and necessary movement towards collective industrialization. Everywhere he is a restriction on progress. Above all, in his fight for Indian independence he has always been careful to avoid emphasizing the economic question, which leads to divisions between classes. And according to Bose, it is on these that the Socialist party must insist if it wants to act effectively on the masses.

. . . . The main reason why he came seems to have been to find out my opinion—(I had not realized the value attached to it in India)—and whether or not I would follow them if they were to engage in an independence campaign not excluding violent means. They seem anxious that I should not publicly break away from them. Some of my French friends—probably well-intentioned, but certainly little qualified to speak in my name—had told Bose that I would lose interest in India if she ceased to follow Gandhist tactics. I assure him of the contrary, and as to the basis of the debate on revolution, violence and non-
violence, I try to translate to him (through an interpreter, as Bose speaks and understands only English) the attitude I have had to take and my comments on it in my new book: *Quinze Ans de Combat*. With all due reverence and affection for the lofty soul of Gandhi, which I still keep (and on which Bose agrees with me), I do not consider myself in any way bound to his doctrine, which in my eyes is no more than a great experiment. If, despite inadequate or negative results, Gandhi stubbornly adheres to it,—if, above all, in the inevitable conflicts between capital and labour he does not deliberately and uncompromisingly side with labour, it is still with labour that I shall side,—even against him. This I have never hidden.

In any case, Bose does not seem to me (any more than Gandhi's other political adversaries) in any hurry to discuss things with Gandhi or to try to convince him in advance. (This is not the first time that I have noticed that the anti-Gandhists want to ignore anything in Gandhi's recent published writings or conversations denoting any marked evolution in his social thought. It is a great pity that there is no man in India of my sort and with my moral credit. I should not at all have lost hope of drawing Gandhi into the social revolution—making allowances only for his non-violence, which he could not abandon. But although Bose himself has to recognize that the support of Gandhi would be an enormous success for them and their cause, I do not believe that at heart they very much want to have him at their side: they would always feel "overshadowed". This is probably what has happened with Jawaharlal Nehru: in his ideas he goes a long way, to the brink of Communism and maybe even beyond. But his filial respect for Gandhi makes him timid and uncertain in his action.)

For himself, Bose too seems on the verge of Communism; but he will hear nothing of it. His antipathy is probably based on some personal reason concerning the present
representatives of the party in India; for he declares that he would certainly see no harm in the U.S.S.R. helping India to liberate herself, and his main reproach against the Soviets is that they seem to have lost interest today in the world Revolution to concentrate on their national politics.

261. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

April 1935.—Europe has published in its 15 March issue an Address by Gandhi to the Bombay Congress in September 1934, in which he puts a veto on Socialism. I am shocked by his attitude, and say so to my sister, who shares my regrets and writes to Pyarelal to tell him of them so that he can pass them on to Gandhi. The latter replies hastily on one of his tours round India organizing village industry.¹

(Before receiving this letter I had drafted my note appearing on page 74 of my book under press: Par la Révolution, la Paix. It will be seen that I had fairly well grasped the profound reasons for Gandhi's opposition to Socialism, but that I see in it the roots of failure for his political action if he does not succeed in breaking away from it.)

Extract from Par la Révolution, la Paix:

..... Since that time the situation seems to have modified a little, and Gandhi seems to have approved of the workers' strikes in Ahmedabad against their employer (1935). But he is still up against Socialism. Not only does he not accept it; he refuses even to study it. (Address to the Bombay Congress, September 1934). His desire for conciliation, which is an essential part of his nature, keeps him wavering between parties at a time when the needs of action demand that he should take sides; for any hesitation to do so in the social conflict inevitably turns to the profit of the exploiters against the exploited. At heart, this inter-party attitude

¹ See Gandhi's letter to Madeleine Rolland, 28 March 1935.
of Gandhi springs from his profound faith in non-violence which itself is based on a religious conception. However pure this may he, it hinders the freedom of his vision. The social experiment is always open, always in progress. It cannot be subordinated to any sentimental preference or to any creed. If Gandhi does not succeed in breaking away from this hold of the past which is delaying his march forward, he is bound to lose control of the great Indian movement, which is already beginning to go beyond him.

262. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

April 1935.—Subhas Chandra Bose sends me his written account of our recent conversation, which he means to publish. His account is fairly exact in outline; he simplifies and reduces my replies to almost nothing, to the profit of the questioner, but this is a frequent snag in conversations at second hand between two participants who do not understand each other’s languages. The direct impression is bound to be blunted.

In a letter of 27 April 1935, I correct my thought on two details:

1. You say that in a split between Gandhi and “the younger generation” in India, I should be on the side of the young. That’s not quite the way I put it. I don’t see it as a decision between two generations or two political parties (which in any case are not exactly defined in your account; do the “younger generation” mean the Socialists, the Communists, the Independent Radicals, or what?) No! the question, as I see it, is a higher one, concerning the cause of Labour. I say quite clearly: “If, by some unfortunate turn of events, Gandhi (or any other party) turns out to be in conflict with the cause of the workers and the labourers, and their necessary evolution towards a Socialist
organization,—if Gandhi (or any other party) loses interest and turns away from this,—I shall still go forward with the world of Labour and I shall share in their efforts and their struggles; for on this side is to be found true justice and the true and necessary law of social development.

2. You speak of the ten (or fifteen) years of “mental agony” which I have spent questioning my “attitude towards non-violence” and my final decision on the subject. My inner conflict has been over a broader and more complex field. Since the end of the war I have had to revise all my social ideas, indeed the whole of my ideology. The question of non-violence was only a fragment of this great debate—and I have not decided against non-violence. I have simply decided that non-violence could not be the central pivot of all social action. It is only one of the means, one of its suggested forms, and it is still under experimentation. What must be at the centre of our concerns is the establishment of a more just and humane social order—and to be established, it must be imposed, for it must first be strenuously defended against all the violence of the old order, which is condemned once and for all; for it is based on social iniquity, capitalist exploitation, the military imperialism which flows from it and the oppression of three-quarters, if not nine-tenths of the earth. Against this odious state of affairs, this permanent state of Crime, it is our commanding duty to dare to act with the most extreme vigour, and not to wait (for the permanent state of reigning Crime is certainly not waiting! If it is not destroyed, it will be the destruction of all human society.) Therefore we must act against it with all the arms of violence and non-violence which can strike at the target most promptly and most tellingly. I reject no weapon, provided it is in the hands of worthy, frank and disinterested combatants. My own task over the last few years has been to try to bring together the revolutionary forces of non-violence and violence
in the common fight against social Crime, against the old order which enslaves and exploits humanity. This was my role in the “World Congress of All Parties against War and Fascism” which took place in Amsterdam in August 1932, and in the permanent committees which sprung from this Congress. I still believe today that there is in non-violence a powerful latent revolutionary energy, which can and must be utilized (refusal of military service, general strikes in the munitions factories, chemical products, transport, etc.) Organized non-violence and disciplined revolutionary violence must or should be two allied armies, each keeping its own tactics, but both co-ordinating their efforts in the common action against the common enemy of humanity, which is war, Fascism, industrial and military capitalism, imperialism, social iniquity, etc.

.... I need hardly add that I still keep my affectionate respect for Gandhi—even if in the future I have the sorrow of seeing him stand aside from the social action into which my duty calls me to enter—in which, in fact, I have been energetically operating for several years. . . .

263. Madeleine Rolland to Jawaharlal Nehru

_Villa Lionnette-Villeneuve_  
(Vaud)  
13 September 1935

Dear Mr. Nehru,

It was a great joy for all your friends and the friends of India here, to hear of your release (at last!) and of your safe arrival at Badenweiler.

Let me express to you the deep sympathy we felt for your moral sufferings all these months when you knew your wife was ill and was ruthlessly prevented from being constantly with her. I hope you have found her in better
health and I look forward to meeting you soon in Switzerland. Your European friends have so much to ask you and to learn from you.

Will you kindly give my best regards to your wife with my best wishes for her rapid recovery and my affectionate greetings to your daughter whose visit I missed last month through unlucky circumstances.

Yours sincerely,
Madeleine Rolland

264. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

22 October 1935.—Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter spend the afternoon with us.

... After Gandhi, he is the most considerable political (and moral) personality in India and, with Gandhi, the highest morally. Deeply imbued with Gandhi’s influence and love, he still has the strength to break away—partially at least. He marks the next stage of India’s progress. Much more touched than Gandhi by social preoccupations and much better informed of the overall worldwide social movement, he has formed an advanced Socialist party in Congress of which he is the recognized leader, although his imprisonments have made it impossible for him to direct it effectively. In prison, his ideas seem to have developed to an even more advanced stage, almost to the verge of Communism, from which the only thing that seriously separates him is a moral, not a social problem: that of violence or non-violence. But, he says, his meditations have already led him to the discovery that Gandhi’s non-violence is, in many of its essential features, a form of violence—or, more exactly, an extreme form of constraint exercised on those who practise it as well as those who undergo it. (Non-co-operation, strikes, etc.) And he has also come to recognize that the worst violence is not always physical
violence, and that the kind which is exercised morally can even at times be more equal. There is thus no insurmountable barrier between violence and non-violence; and the first cannot be eliminated \textit{a priori} from the field of action. It is more appropriate to measure the conditions in which it should operate. This Gandhi does not want to do—at least on the intellectual level; for on the level of action, as Nehru goes on to say, he is different.

Nehru has known and loved Gandhi for fifteen years (or thereabouts) and, he says, he has not yet got to know him well. Gandhi has done and will always do things which will disconcert his friends; there is something unpredictable about him, and on the social question no one can succeed in making him take a clear stance. I say that no doubt there is a permanent conflict within him between the traditional and the rational parts of his nature. His reason will show him what is just and necessary, but his attachment to Hindu tradition will restrict him or lead him backwards. Nehru says that in his opinion the conflict is between the religious side of his nature and the man of action. On the field of action it will always be possible (as Nehru has always found) to come to terms with him. On the field of action, Gandhi makes few mistakes; he will pronounce decisively and he will go much further forward than he does when at rest, and in intellectual discussion. In the latter field, no one ever gains anything; Gandhi has decided where he stands and he changes nothing; he is (or seems to be) indifferent to any arguments. But at the precise moment when action is needed, Gandhi acts, and in the right way. "But," Marie objects, "has Gandhi not often halted the action once it has started?" Nehru replies: "He stops only when in any case the action would have had to stop soon afterwards." He has the instinct for it. But while at rest he is often misunderstood. It is not always possible to explain the compromising friendships which
he tolerates, and who use his name for reactionary purposes. I say: “He cannot make up his mind to admit of class warfare. He never stops wanting to believe in the good faith of his adversaries even when they have shown their bad faith three or four times over. And he refuses to look beyond India to the struggle being pursued all over the world; he does it out of a sort of stubborn modesty.” Nehru assents; but he tells me that in the last year or two Gandhi has set himself to read Marx, Engels, etc.—not that it seems to have changed him at all. (But one never knows. Gandhi is the sort of person in whom long inner evolutions are carried out in silence.) In any case, Nehru refuses to pass judgment on his present state of mind, for he has not had the chance to see him for several years—prison walls separate them (except for a few days after Gandhi’s return from Europe and before they were both imprisoned). Now with Gandhi, direct contact is necessary before one can judge. I recall that for a year I have been waiting in vain for a letter which Gandhi promised me in reply to my questions about Socialism. Nehru says that, although Gandhi is opposed to Socialism, he nevertheless helped in the constitution of the Socialist party in Congress by encouraging his friends not to oppose it. Although he keeps his own firm opinions, he wants Socialism to be able to express itself and make its own experiments.

Nehru insists a great deal on the enormous power of public opinion which Gandhi has at his disposal. He says that it is absurd to deny it or to claim that it has diminished; at the most it has declined among the intellectuals, but in the masses it remains immense; particularly the peasant masses—and that makes three quarters of the country. Nothing serious can be done without him. “But has he not now retired from politics?” No, says Nehru, this is merely an appearance. Everyone that counts in India still takes advice from him. His present retirement reproduces almost
exactly his retirement around 1923 (?) when he came out of prison. He is recollecting himself and observing, waiting for the hour for action; meanwhile he is busyng himself with his organization of village labour and the fight against untouchability—without wanting to see that this is an accessory task, and that untouchability will collapse of itself when Socialism has suppressed all classes (But I think that is exactly why Gandhi does not want it: the suppression of classes subconsciously shocks his traditionalist sentiments.)

Nehru aims at returning to India in February 1936, on the eve of the opening of the new Congress. It is probable (he does not say so, but I know) that he will be its President. And he has a deeply rooted hope that when the hour for action strikes, Gandhi will be back at their side or at their head.

265. Madeleine Rolland to Jawaharlal Nehru

_Villa Lionnette—Villeneuve_  
(Vaud)  
12 January 1936

Dear Mr. Nehru,

For some time now I have not been getting any direct news of Gandhiji, but I read in the _Harijan_ of December and this very day in a Lausanne newspaper that he was seriously ill from overstrain and arterial hypertension. I shall be very grateful to you for letting me know the latest details you may have had from India.

In addition, I am taking the liberty of bringing to your attention the deplorable campaign conducted in certain Socialist and Communist circles of Europe about the book written by Saumyendranath Tagore on Gandhi—just last week a socialist journal of Geneva, the _Droit des Peuples_,
devoted an article to this book and emphasised the accusations made against Gandhiji: sold to the capitalists, traitor to the people, etc. etc. And this type of attack is read and accepted by thousands of honest Westerners who blindly believe the declarations of their newspapers.

Not to accept all the views of Gandhi, to fight against them as inadequate or dangerous—every sincere man has the right to that. But these accusations, based on erroneous data, on mutilated quotations, gratuitous and tendentious assertions, are revolting, and coming from an Indian reflect back on the whole of India.

In the name of true friends of India, in the name of historical truth—I shall not say, on behalf of my friendship for Gandhiji, for he would be the first man to declare that truth should never be sacrificed for the sake of friendship—I now beg you to refute it only in a few lines—the main attacks contained in that book, which rest on a flagrant misunderstanding of the very character of Gandhi.

Forgive me, dear Mr. Nehru. I know that you must have many tasks to perform for your country. But is it not one of them to prevent fanatics from sullying the reputation of a man who has made India conscious of her inner force and who has dedicated his whole life to serving her according to his faith and to supporting the cause of the oppressed with his whole apostle's heart?

I am of course at your disposal to translate at once into French any article on the subject that you may be able to send and to try to get it published, with the help of my brother, in French language journals or reviews.

I hope that Madame Nehru's health continues to improve and that we will perhaps see you this spring in Switzerland. Please give her my best wishes, my friendly greetings to your daughter, and believe me.

Very cordially yours,
Madeleine Rolland
Dear Mr. Nehru,

My brother thanks you deeply for the good wishes you sent him on his birthday, and is himself also very sorry that it is not possible for us to meet you again before your departure. But we understand only too well that you cannot devote to our family these few days that remain before it!

I am glad to know that Madame Nehru is better. I hope the doctor will allow me to see her next month. In addition, I shall telephone to the clinic beforehand to find out if and when she can receive me.

I am sending you the issue of *Sentinelle* in which your article on Gandhi appeared. *Vendredi* having already had one from you was not able to publish it, but I sent it to *Europe*. A change in the management of the review is the reason why I have not yet received any reply, but I have asked Mr. Raja Rao, who is coming there, to attend to the matter.

I had requested Miss Indira to convey to you all our congratulations on your new nomination as President of the Congress. We rejoice at this for India’s sake. All our good wishes go with you.

Sincerely yours,

Madeleine Rolland

Will you please convey our good wishes to all our friends there?
Dear Friend,

My ill-health has prevented me from coming to greet you before your departure. I wanted at least to send you while we were still neighbours our affectionate good wishes to you, your wife and your dear country.

I am thinking of the emotion, for you, of this separation. May the coming spring improve the health of Madame J. Nehru and may you return with a calmer spirit to the great fight which awaits you over there.

I hope that under your guidance India, like our West, will know how to form a “Popular Front” to fight against all obstacles to her independence and her social progress.

It is entrusted to me to ask you as well as Gandhi to join a Universal Assembly for Peace which we are convening towards the end of this summer, probably in September at Geneva. It will be a vast and powerful Congress, a sort of mobilisation of all the forces in the world for peace. A number of great national and international organizations and personalities from France, England, United States, Czechoslovakia, Spain, Belgium, Holland and many other countries have already joined (in England Lord Robert Cecil, Major Attlee, Norman Angell, Philip Noel-Baker, Alexander and Professor Laski; in France Herriot, Pierre Cot, Jouhaux, Cadrin, Racamond, Professor Langevin, etc.; in Czechoslovakia Benes, Hodza; in Spain Azana, Alvarez del Vago, etc.; in Belgium Louis de Brouckere, Henri
Lafontaine, etc.). It will be a question of organizing, simultaneously on a national and international level, resistance against the catastrophic menace of a universal conflagration. Would you please talk about this to our friends in India, while conveying to them my cordial salutations? Their reply as well as yours can be sent either to me or to the head-office of the “World Committee for the Struggle against War and Fascism”, of which I was made Honorary President (237 rue Lafayette, Paris X).

I wish it were possible for us to remain in regular communication with you and our Indian friends. It is important that Western opinion is kept constantly informed of social and political developments in India, about which too many people are interested in preserving silence or spreading false news.

I clasp your hands wholeheartedly. Look after yourself, my dear friend, be happy, and may your cause, which is that of the best India, triumph.

Yours sincerely,
Romain Rolland

Once again please give my affection to Gandhi and his friends who were our guests at Villeneuve, to Mira, to Pyarelal and to Mahadev Desai.

I read with great interest your article which appeared in Vendredi with an introduction by Madame Andree Viollis. The other article you sent to my sister will come out in the March issue of the review Europe.

268. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

February 1936.—On 27 February, visited by Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian political leader. . . . He is going to return to India for the National Congress, opening early in April.
Bose takes a pessimistic view of the present situation in India. The majority in Congress, which Gandhi’s lieutenants seem to be dominating, is moving to the right; they seem to want to agree to enter into governmental councils and functions, and to try out the new Constitution. No doubt this is because of extreme weariness after years of unsuccessful struggles; and perhaps also the fear of Socialism. Gandhi has not yet pronounced himself, but he is not doing anything to stop it. Bose says it is false to think he has retired from politics; it is a mere feint, and in his retreat he remains the counsellor of all Indian politics. The great unknown is the attitude Nehru will take.

### 269. Jawaharlal Nehru to Romain Rolland

*Hotel Suisse*

*Montreux*

*March 4th, 1936*

My dear Monsieur Rolland,

I am very grateful to you for your message of sympathy. I appreciated deeply the letter you sent me a week ago. I intended writing to you more fully on the subject but under the circumstances you will, I am sure, forgive me if I do not do so. I shall however carry your letter with me to India and convey your message to my countrymen. If I may say so, I am entirely one with you in your general outlook as to what should be done. I hope sincerely that we may be able to move in that direction in India. But, as you are aware, we have to face great difficulties and I do not know how matters will shape themselves. But the thought of your good wishes and blessings will keep our courage up and cheer us in our dark days.

I realize the importance of the great World Congress for Peace—the ‘Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix’—
which will be held next September in Geneva. I very much hope that the Indian Congress will be able to take part in it.

I shall convey your message of affection to Gandhi and other friends.

Again thanking you and with my homage and affectionate regards to you and Madame and Mademoiselle Rolland,

I am,

Yours very sincerely,

Jawaharlal Nehru

I am leaving for India day after tomorrow afternoon.

270. Devdas Gandhi to Romain Rolland

(The Hindustan Times, Delhi)

November 13, 1936

Respected Sir,

I have never troubled you with letters even after the very precious time we were privileged to have as your guests at Villeneuve on our way back from England in 1931.

As you probably know, since my return to India I have been once to jail. After my release I have been connected with the leading daily of Upper-India, The Hindustan Times. This paper is run on independent lines and within its obvious limitations it tries to serve the Indian cause to the best of its capacity. We are publishing a Special Number consisting of about 60 pages on the occasion of the forthcoming session of the Congress in the middle of December. It will be, of course, brought out under my personal supervision. I would be sad to have missed a special article from you in this Number. I don’t mind what the subject is. Perhaps you would like to write on the serious international situation which threatens the very existence of
the world, or it may be a short story. Whatever it is, I shall deem it a personal favour from you.

The article, which I hope will not be less than 800 words, should reach my hands not later than the 15th of December, and therefore I am afraid it must be sent to me by air-mail.

Father is, I am glad to say, in excellent health, and will also be present at the Congress.

If there is anything I can do for you here, I should be glad to act as your agent.

With kindest regards to Madame Rolland, your sister and your goodself,

I remain,
Yours sincerely,
Devdas Gandhi

P.S. I have the best arrangement to have French writings translated into English. D.

271. Romain Rolland to Devdas Gandhi

2 December 1936

My dear Friend,

You know how much I love and honour India; she must resume the great place of seniority which belongs to her in the world's social and moral life. My fervent wish is that she may win back her national independence and achieve the social progress to which her huge people, so long sacrificed, has a right. Please pass on my warmest expression of this wish through your paper to Congress and to the Indian masses.

Unfortunately I cannot write you an article at present. All our forces in Europe are absorbed by the tragic events in Spain and the threat of war weighing over the whole of the West—the whole of Europe. I am sending you a copy
of an Appeal which I am sending to every people in aid of the victims of the Madrid massacres. India should at least learn something from the spectacle of the follies and crimes under whose weight Europe is succumbing. She must become aware of the mortal danger in imperialist and racialist Fascisms, which carry the torch of war everywhere and crush every liberty. India is not immune from their tortuous and rapacious politics, which aspire to nothing less than complete world domination. Beware of the German-Italian-Japanese pact! Asia has suffered much under European imperialisms, but those of yesterday still had to take account of certain legal principles written into their democratic nations. Those of tomorrow, founded by Fascist movements, will trample underfoot the last traces of humanity. We in France, over the last two years, have given up our party political quarrels (Socialists, Communists, radical republicans, Catholic democrats, etc.) to form a Popular Front alliance against Fascism. I call upon you to do the same in India. All over the world, liberty and progress—our great hopes, our reasons for living—are in danger!

Romain Rolland

272. Devdas Gandhi to Romain Rolland

(The Hindustan Times, Delhi)
January 2, 1937

Respected Sir,

I am full of gratitude for the affectionate response you have made to my request for a contribution for the Special Congress Number of my paper—The Hindustan Times. I have already posted a marked copy to your address. I shall very highly prize any remarks that you may care to make in connection with the Special Number. I have also sent you
a marked copy of one of my daily issues which will give some idea of the trend of feeling in India as regards the situation in Spain.

Whenever there is anything to be done here in India, need I say that my humble services are always at your disposal.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,
Devdas Gandhi

273. Gandhi to Marie Romain Rolland

Segaon-Wardha
18 February 1937

Dear Sister,

My son sent me your letter to him in which you have asked for my autograph for the purpose of selling it in aid of the stricken women and children of Spain. While that unhappy people has my wholehearted sympathy I am not sending you my autograph. I am not convinced of the right of employing such means for obtaining money for a good cause. People should subscribe willingly for such without expecting any return.¹

My affection to you both.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi

¹ Madame Romain Rolland had had the idea of asking a large number of personalities for manuscripts to be sold in aid of Spanish refugees from Franco. (Editor's note)
274. Marie Romain Rolland to Jawaharlal Nehru

Villa Olga, Villeneuve (Vaud)
Suisse
24 March 1937

Dear Jawaharlal Nehru,

Thank you for your kind letter and excuse me to answer too late.

Yes, I begged you to send an autograph from your hand (one or two pages) for a sale which is organized in Paris for aid to Spanish children and women. If you can send two autographs, the second of them will be sold in New York, where a friend of us organized a similar sale.

Please send it the sooner you can: the sale in Paris must be at the end of April.

Thank you very much for the “Statement” for Spain. We have sent it to our friends and I think it will be re-impressed in Clarté.

Rolland sends you his best regards and his hopes in your success in your work.

And I pray you to believe in my sympathy for you and your great people.

Marie R. Rolland

Please send us your autographs per registered post: Switzerland, notwithstanding her “democratic” regime, acts now quite as a fascist government: letters are opened and sometimes do not reach us. Newspapers also. Some of our friends go away in France, and England, where there is more liberty. And we shall also search another home.
(There are special apparatuses, that are branched on telephones, to spy conversations! But naturally, all people know it.)

275. Jawaharlal Nehru to Romain Rolland

Anand Bhawan, Allahabad
April 17, 1937

My dear Friend,

I give these few lines to introduce to you my young friend and colleague Mahmud uz Zafar Khan who is going to Europe for a few months. I hope he will have the privilege of meeting you during his stay there.

I have been unfortunately unwell for the last three weeks and have been unable to respond to Madame Rolland’s suggestion to send an autograph message for Spain. I hope to do so soon.

With all good wishes and affectionate regards to you and Madame Rolland. We follow with the liveliest interest the great work you are doing.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

Monsieur Romain Rolland
Villa Olga
Villeneuve
Suisse
276. **Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary**

*28 July 1937 (Nevers).* — The day before we leave Nevers, Amyanath Bose, a young nephew of the Indian Bengali leader Subhas Bose, comes from Paris to have supper with us.

.... He is not a supporter of Gandhi, whose moral and political supremacy in India today he recognizes (he says that Nehru, theoretically more advanced, will in practice never break away from obedience to his master).

277. **Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary**

*15 October 1937.* — Visited by Jawaharlal Nehru’s secretary, Mahmud uz Zafar Khan, with his pretty wife Dr. Rashid Jehan, bearing a letter of introduction from Nehru. Both are Muslims, the wife from Kashmir and he from the Northern provinces. .... It is most curious, and rather worrying, that these elite Indians who are, in a sense, Nehru’s right arm, give evidence of a sharp distaste for Gandhi. Mahmud at least is prudent, and watches his words. But his wife speaks without restraint, and he does nothing to correct her. .... I cannot believe that Nehru, so respectful and affectionate towards Gandhi, would approve of what they say, but he cannot be unaware of their opinions, and if he allows them to be present at his side, it must mean that they express in disrespectful form something fundamental to his thought. In addition there is in the Mahmuds a religious, maybe a racial animosity. They present Gandhi as being hostile at heart to the Mohammedans, putting them in
disadvantageous positions, secretly opposing their legitimate claims (as in the debate about a single national language, in which he did not want to take any account of Urdu). They present him as a Hindu bigot, anchored in his backward piety, blessing God for the earthquakes which are due to the sins of the Hindus, as a petit bourgeois allied with the upper Hindu bourgeoisie and applying himself to maintaining their pact of alliance with England, reading nothing, not even the new Constitution—(it was Nehru who made him admit to it, and gave him a copy to read). They claim that all Muslim India is against him, and that Abdul Ghaffar Khan is an exception. They have to admit that the immense Hindu masses are with him; Mahmud says with a smile: "Mr. Gandhi is the typical Hindu. Nehru says:—If I can convince Mr. Gandhi, then I know that I can convince the people of India. If not, all my efforts would be in vain. He is the touchstone."

278. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

December 1937.—Gandhi gravely ill in Calcutta (where he wore himself out trying to obtain the liberation of the political prisoners). Tagore, himself scarcely out of bed after a serious illness, comes to see him, and there is a most touching scene. Tagore arrives, still very weak, and unable to climb the stairs. At the doorway he learns that Gandhi is better; he is pleased and, not wanting to disturb him, offers to leave without seeing him. He is told that Gandhi would like to see him and that, but for his state of health, he himself would have gone to Santi-niketan. Tagore allows himself to be carried in an armchair; he finds Gandhi at prayer; he remains seated during the prayer, but does not want to disturb the prayer by speaking to him, and he leaves praying for him and blessing him.
279. Gandhi to Madeleine Rolland

30 December 1937

My dear Madeleine,

I was glad to have your letter. I am getting on as well as may be. And whatever I do and do not do, I suppose I shall live on for a while, if God wants more work from me. His work goes on, we come in only when and to the extent He wants us. Yes, I remember those happy hours with you and the Sage. I wish they could be repeated.

I hope all of you are keeping well in spite of the awful political atmosphere surrounding you. These rapid communications have so reduced this tiny globe that what happens in one part of it reverberates throughout the length and breadth of it.

My love to you both,

Bapu

280. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Diary

February 1939.—The Indian philosopher, S. Radhakrishnan, at present teaching in Oxford, has asked me to co-operate in a book of tributes which he is collecting to offer to Gandhi on his birthday. I write this text for him (February 1939):

An Expression of Gratitude to Gandhi from a Man of the West

Gandhi, for India, is not only a hero of their national history, whose memory will pass as a legend into the age-old epic. He has not only been the spirit of life and
action who has breathed into the people of India the proud consciousness of their unity, their power and their will to independence. For all the peoples of the West he has renewed the message of Christ which had been forgotten or betrayed. He has inscribed his name among the sages and saints of humanity; and the radiance of his features has found its way into every region of the earth.

He appeared in the eyes of Europe at an hour when such an example seemed almost miraculous. Europe had scarcely emerged from four years of savage warfare, whose ravages, ruins and rancours were living on and breeding the germs of new wars yet more implacable. In addition there was the overwhelming effect of the revolutions, with their inevitable train of social hatred, gnawing at the hearts of the nations. Europe was weighed down under a heavy night, great with misery and despair, without a single streak of light. The appearance of Gandhi, this frail, naked little man, repudiating all violence, armed only with his reason and his love, whose humble and stubborn gentleness had recently won his first victories against blind force, seemed a paradoxical challenge flung in the face of politics and the traditionally accepted and uncontested wisdom of the West. But it was at the same time a glimmer of salvation opening in the midst of despair. We could hardly believe it, and we needed a long time to convince ourselves of the reality of such a prodigy. Who knows this better than I, one of the first in the West to discover and spread the Word of the Mahatma? . . . But as the certainty of the existence and the steady, patient and progressive labours of the spiritual master of India gradually imposed itself, a torrent of gratitude and faith flowed towards him from the West. For many, he was like a second coming of Christ. For others, for independent thinkers worried by the uncontrolled advance of a Western civilization no longer directed by any moral principle, in which
even its prodigious genius of discovery and invention had deviated monstrously in the direction of its own ruin, Gandhi was a new incarnation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Tolstoy, denouncing the illusions and crimes of civilization and preaching to men the return to nature, to the simple life, to health. Governments pretended to ignore or to scorn him. But the people sensed in him their best friend and their brother. Here in Switzerland I have seen the pious love he inspired among the humble peasants of countryside and mountain.

But if his Word of wisdom and love, like that of the Master of the Sermon on the Mount, has touched the hearts of thousands of good people, it did not fall to them—any more than it was granted to the Master of Nazareth—to change the course of a world which has devoted itself to war and destruction. In order to be applied in politics, the doctrine of non-violence needs a moral climate very different from that which prevails in Europe today: it demands a total self-sacrifice, immense and unanimous, which has no chance of present success in face of the growing ferocity of the new regimes of totalitarian dictatorship which have established themselves in the world and proved themselves pitilessly in the blood of millions of men. The radiance of such sacrifices cannot hope to lead to victory until after a very long period of trials for the peoples of the world, and the peoples cannot have the heroism necessary to bear them unless they feel themselves supported and exalted by a faith like that of Gandhi. This faith in God is lacking in the majority of our men of the West, people as much as elite. And the new faiths (nationalist and revolutionary) generate violence. The most urgent tiling for the people of the West to do is to defend, by every possible means, their liberties, their independence and even their lives which are threatened by the voracious imperialism of the Fascist and racialist states in coalition.
Their political abdication would inevitably lead to the enslavement of humanity, perhaps for centuries. In these circumstances, we cannot recommend or practise Gandhi’s doctrine, however much we respect it.

It seems to us that it is called upon to play in the world the role of the great monasteries of the Christian Middle Ages, in which was preserved, as on an islet in the middle of a stormy ocean, the purest treasure of moral civilization, the spirit of peace and love, the serenity of the mind. A glorious and sacred role! May the spirit of Gandhi, as of old that of the great founders of the Christian orders, St. Bruno, St. Bernard and St. Francis, maintain, amidst the furious torments of the age of crisis and transformation through which mankind is passing, the Civitas Dei, the love of humanity and of harmony!

For the rest of us, intellectuals, scientists, writers and artists, we who also work, as much as our feeble forces will allow, to prepare for the spirit this City of all men in which reigns the peace of God, we who are the third order (in the language of the Church) and who belong to the Pan-Humanist brotherhood,—we send our fervent tribute of love and veneration to Gandhi our master and brother, who in his heart and in his action realizes our ideal of the humanity to come.

281. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

March 1939.—... a wild sense of disproportion among the frenzied pacifists. Felicien Challaye launches an attack on Gandhi in La Patrie Humaine, the latter having poured scorn on the Munich agreements.

"Europe," Gandhi wrote, "has sold her soul for the sake of a seven-day earthly existence. The peace Europe gained at Munich is a triumph of violence; it is also a defeat. If England and France were sure of victory, they
would certainly have fulfilled their duty of saving Czecho-
slovakia . . . but they quailed before the combined
violence of Germany and Italy. I have the hardihood to
say that if the Czechs had known the use of non-violence
as a weapon for the defence of national honour, they would
have faced the whole might of Germany with that of Italy
thrown in. They would have spared England and France
the humiliation of suing for a peace which was not peace;
and to save their honour, they would have died to a
man...."

Challaye, in a fury, retorts:
“.... What a peculiar argument! What ignorance it
reveals! What strange moral judgments it implies! Gan-
dhi is unaware of the most elementary facts of the Cze-
choslovak problem. . . . Gandhi does not know that the
reasonable Czechs are delighted today that they form a
united people, instead of dominating a divided state, nor
does he know that the Slovaks and the Ukrainians today
feel more cordially associated with the Czechs now that
they are freed of the age-old tyranny. Gandhi does not
notice that the destruction of the Czechoslovak bastion
henceforth renders impossible any war that the U.S.S.R.
or France may wish to declare against Germany. . . ."

282. Extract from Romain Rolland’s Le Voyage Interieur

8 September 1940.—I must not delude myself. And I
did not delude myself. Even at times when I allowed my-
self to become drunk with mirages created by the mind,
ever in the whole long course of my Voyage did my mind
cease to be sensitive to poignant reminders of present
torments.

It was not only my cosmic dreams which I sought
to nourish at the springs of clairvoyant India; I also bore
thither my European concerns, the spectre of war, which had already ravaged the fields of the West and was still prowling round the charnel-house. I knew only too well that the Furies were still lurking behind the tombstones from which the red smoke of blood was still rising. And I was anxious to erect in their path, as at the conclusion of Aeschylus’ trilogy, a barrier built of sovereign reason which might bring the conflict to an end. This could hardly be expected of the victorious imperialisms of the West, intent on enjoying the spoils and gorged to stupefaction, who were neglecting even the most elementary precautions to keep what they held. I thought I had found the answer in the revelation brought to me in 1922 by Gandhi, the little Indian St. Francis. Did he bear, in the folds of his homespun robe, in his Ahimsa, the heroic Non-violence which resists and does not flee, the key to our liberation from future massacres? I so needed to believe it that for several years I did believe it passionately, and I generously worked to spread this faith. I was certain—and I retract nothing—that in this alone could be found the salvation of our world laden with crimes, past, present and future.

But to make this possible the world had to will it, and first of all it had to find the strength for it; for such a faith demanded the consenting self-sacrifice of a people of heroes, and the post-war climate was not of a kind to encourage such a breed in the West. . . . With what anxiety did I follow the bold and patient Indian experiment!

I must admit, alas, that although my admiration, my respect and my love for Gandhi never ceased to grow, I soon formed all sorts of reservations about the effectiveness of his tactics, particularly in the West. He himself was too frank not to show his own doubts—not of the ultimate divine truth of his law of Ahimsa, but of its practical effects in the modern world. Too honest and too prudent to
assert what he did not know, he limited his activities to India, which he knew well, and did not permit himself to give advice to the West. The West was obliged to repeat in its own way the experiment made by Gandhi and his people of India. We were thus alone in face of the terrible problems assailing us at that moment.

283. Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary

November 1943.—The Indians in Paris invite me to participate in a “Centre for Free India”, associated with the name of Subhas Chandra Bose. . . . They brandish a supposed message from Gandhi (on the eve of his arrest) repudiating his work of non-violence and calling them to battle.

They know very well that I cannot reply, and that my own nation is captive. But their sole concern is with their own, and for its liberation all means are acceptable—even the imprisonment of others!

284. Sarojini Naidu’s Tribute to Romain Rolland

Romain Rolland was one of the small band of great dreamers in whom the war wrought an animate and poignant anguish of the spirit. Every hour of the world war seemed to him a desecration of his noble and exalted ideal of world brotherhood and peace.

1 Interview to the 'United Press', January 3, 1945 on the death of Romain Rolland on December 30, 1944 in Switzerland.
285. Gandhi's Statement on Romain Rolland's Death

Wardha,
10 January 1945

Having been once bitten, I am too shy to believe in Romain Rolland's reported death.¹ But it seems that this report is true. And yet for me as for many millions, Romain Rolland is not dead. He truly lives through his famous writings and perhaps more so through his many and nameless deeds. He lived for truth and non-violence as he saw and believed them from time to time. He responded to all sufferings. He revolted against the wanton human butchery called 'War'.

286. Gandhi's Last Reference to Romain Rolland²

New Delhi
13 January 1948

Who am I to write a foreword for the autobiography of a celebrity like Sage Romain Rolland, who, alas, is no more among us? I consider myself unfit for the task. What is more, I have not even had a moment to read the volume.

M. K. Gandhi

¹ On an earlier occasion the report of Romain Rolland's death had proved false.
² Reply to a Bombay publisher planning to bring out Romain Rolland's *Voyage Interieur*, who had asked him for an introduction to this work.
287. Jawaharlal Nehru to Marie Romain Rolland

30 September 1956

Dear Madame,

I must ask your forgiveness for the great delay in answering your letter of July 17th, which was given to me I think in Paris when I was there last. On my return to India, your letter was misplaced and I was occupied with other matters. Hence the delay.

I am greatly interested to know you will be publishing a “Cahier Gandhi-Romain Rolland”. I would greatly like to see this.

You ask me to write a brief introduction to this book. I feel rather hesitant to do so. It is always difficult to write about a great man. To write about two such great men becomes doubly difficult.

If, however, you wish me to send you a few lines, I shall try to do so. But I should like to see, if possible, what you are publishing in this volume.

With all good wishes and regards,

Sincerely yours,

Jawaharlal Nehru
PART TWO

Extracts from letters referring to Gandhi, sent by Romain Rolland to various Foreign Correspondents
288. Romain Rolland to Henri Barbusse (France)

Paris, 2 February 1922

... But there is another arm, much more powerful and within everyone's reach, high or low; an arm which has proved its effectiveness among other races, and it's surprising that it's never mentioned in France; the arm used by thousands of Conscientious Objectors among the Anglo-Saxon nations, and by which Mahatma Gandhi is at present undermining the dominance of the British Empire in India.¹ I refer to non-acceptance (and I'm not saying non-resistance), for make no mistake about it, this is the supreme resistance. To refuse consent and cooperation to the criminal State is the most heroic act open to a man of our time; it demands of him—just him, an individual, alone in face of the State colossus which can coldly throttle him behind closed doors—an energy and spirit of sacrifice incomparably greater than that of confronting death when your breath and the dying sweat on your brow are mingled with those of the throng. Such moral force is possible only if one kindles in the heart of man—each man individually—the fire of conscience, the quasi-mystic sense of the divinity which is in every mind and which, at the decisive hours of history, has raised the greatest races to the stars. . . .

¹ Read Mahatma Gandhi: Swaraj in One Year: Indian Home Rule (R. R.'s note).
289. Romain Rolland to Charles Vildrac (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Wednesday, 27 December 1922

. . . . I am preparing a study of Gandhi, having read with my sister pretty well all the speeches and articles which have been published (700 or 800 pages). But it was only by chance that I was able to receive the volume from Madras in proof state; since then it’s been impossible to correspond with the publisher; the lines have been cut. Did you know that at present there are 30,000 Indians from the elite of the nation in English prisons? It’s a formidable movement, and England will never get the best of it, as it springs from the depths of the religious soul of India. Gandhi wouldn’t be less great without the support of these age-old forces, but it is through them that this little Asian Tolstoy is able to threaten an empire greater than that of the Tsars. . . .

290. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

28 December 1922

. . . . I have just finished reading, with Madeleine, Gandhi’s 700 or 800 pages, and I am now going to write, in my own time, an Essay on this Hindu Tolstoy for an international review which is at last to be founded in Paris. . . .
291. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

25 January 1923

... The only thing I really want to write at present is my study on Gandhi. It's a last sacrament. I shall give it first to the review Europe, then as an introduction to the European editions of Gandhi's works; I should even like to develop it a bit and make a little volume for my collection of “Vies des Hommes Illustres”. But would Hachette be interested? ...

292. Romain Rolland to Paul Colin (Belgium)

Villeneuve

Thursday, 25 January 1923

... I want my study on Gandhi to be the first in the review on the subject of Asia. I shall submit it to you before the end of February, and I should like it to appear in the April number. (I'm assuming that the review appears at the beginning of the month; if not, it might still be in time for a number appearing on 15 March.) Perhaps you'll have to publish the study in two parts; it's an extensive subject and it's never been treated really competently in Europe.

I have got a Swiss publisher I'm friendly with to acquire all publishing rights of Gandhi's works in all the European languages from his Hindu counterpart. I've prepared a selection from them, with my sister (about 400

1 Director of the review Europe
pages out of the 1,200 of the Madras edition) and I shall
preface this selection with my study after it’s appeared in
Europe. I may even bring it out again separately (develop-
ing it a bit) in a little volume in my collection of “Vies
des Hommes Illustres” . . . .

293. Romain Rolland to J. Taupin (Belgium)

Saturday, 27 January 1923

As it happens, I am at present writing a fairly long
study on Gandhi, and I shall publish it in one of the first
numbers of the review Europe.

This study will also serve as an introduction to the
French and German editions of Gandhi’s works, whose
rights I have had acquired by a friendly publisher in the
German part of Switzerland. My sister and I have
made a selection from Gandhi’s complete works, as they
can’t all be published; no European reader would have the
patience to plough through the 1,200 closely-packed pages
of the Madras edition, so we have chosen the 400 most es-
sential pages. The two translations, into French and Ger-
man, are being done now, and I think the volumes will be
able to appear in the course of the summer.

It’s a magnificent movement, but so rich and complex
that I can’t possibly sum it up for you in a few lines, and
at present nothing exact, let alone adequate, has yet ap-
ppeared on the subject in Europe. So I must ask you to
wait until my study is in print which, I hope, will not be
too long. If you’re in too much of a hurry, though, I
could reply briefly to a set of precise questions.

The most surprising thing is not that the Gandhian
movement in India is so little known, but that no one knows
Gandhi heroically led the same movement in South Africa
from 1895 to 1913, and won. Old Europe has gone deaf;
I'm no longer speaking for her, as I know she doesn't hear me. I still am speaking, though, but for whom? For the spirits of the air. . . .

294. Romain Rolland to Paul Colin (Belgium)

Monday, 5 February 1923

. . . . I shall have finished my study on Gandhi by Thursday and shall start the fair copy at once. It will probably run to about fifty pages, hence two successive articles in the review. The first, appearing on 15 March, will coincide with the anniversary of Gandhi's imprisonment (18 March 1922) which will be celebrated all over India by a general "Hartal" (religious strike). Perhaps when you announce the number you could draw attention to this anniversary.

Tell me where I should send you the copy before the 24th; in Brussels, or at Rieder's? . . .

295. Romain Rolland to Maurice Delamain (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Wednesday, 7 February 1923

. . . . A Swiss publisher among my friends, Mr. Emil Roniger, of Rheinfelden, director of the Rotapfel Verlag in Zurich, has on my advice acquired the European publishing rights (except in English) from Gandhi's Indian publisher. He will do the German language edition himself, but I think for the French edition he means to make an arrangement with a French or Swiss French publisher. I thought I would mention it to you first; would you be interested in such a work? The English original has 1,100 or 1,200 pages; it's being reduced to 350 or 400 for
the European editions, and I should attach my essay as an introduction. This is only my own judgment, but it seems to me an admirable book. Gandhi’s personality is of unequalled grandeur in the world today, a unique harmony of moral and active genius. His campaigns in South Africa and India form a social experiment of striking novelty whose repercussions go far beyond the foreseeable.

... I may add that I have no financial interest in this question of publishing Gandhi’s works. I did the classification and shall give my introduction to the volume freely.

I should reserve my rights only for a little volume. I might think of bringing out later based on my essay on Gandhi, published separately as a heroic biography (as I shall explain below)....

I have become so attached to the man in the course of studying him that after the edition of Gandhi’s works has appeared (leaving a few months in between if necessary) I should like to bring out my introductory essay again as a little volume, expanding it a bit. It would make a short heroic biography, in the style of my Beethoven. A man like Gandhi is much more than a great Hindu; his personality has a universal value....

296. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

8 February 1923

... But sad to say, the writers who strike me most at present, those of most solid value, all seem to be in the enemy camp: Drieu la Rochelle, Henry de Montherlant (detestable, admirable). The wave of violence passing over the world carries them high, whereas the pacifists and the non-violent are following along in the trough of the wave and seem to be sinking. Gandhi is the only
exception with genius, but he’s not an artist—luckily for him! . . .

297. Romain Rolland to Paul Amann (Austria)

Villeneuve, Friday, 9 February 1923

. . . I have just finished quite a long essay on Mahatma Gandhi which I shall bring out next month in two articles in the review Europe. (You know they’ve finally succeeded in getting it going—directed by Arcos and Colin.) I’ve got a Swiss publisher I’m friendly with to acquire all the publishing rights of Gandhi’s works in the European languages; the French and German editions are being prepared at the moment, and my essay will serve as an introduction. It’s all most impressive. Gandhi has the purity and burning love of a Francis of Assisi, and at the same time he’s a heroic leader; his twenty-year campaign in South Africa is an extraordinary adventure. As always happens, we don’t seem to realize that there’s a Jesus of Nazareth living among us; all he lacks is the cross. Everyone knows that without the Jews Rome would have refused it to Jesus, and England is just the same as Rome. But on the other hand Jesus never saw a people three hundred million strong thrilling to his breath.

It’s very interesting to see Tagore’s attitude to Gandhi. I have a series of unpublished letters and texts by Tagore and Gandhi’s replies. It’s hard to say who’s the greater, the saint or the sage. But for these two lights to come to us from India at the same time—what a moral fortune for a people! Europe has nothing similar to set up against it. . . .
298. Romain Rolland to Paul Colin (Belgium)

Villeneuve, Monday, 19 February 1923

... Arcos has written to ask me to send my manuscript to Paris, as “the French section is his responsibility”. But since it was arranged in advance between us that I should send it to you in Brussels, I’m posting it to you today in a registered packet; perhaps you’d sort it out with Arcos. Anyway it seems to me that the “Gandhi” comes into your “foreign section”...

As I told you, this is the first half. Don’t be frightened at the number of pages: 61 pages of copy! It won’t make more than about thirty normal pages (it makes 35 in my handwriting).—Insist on it appearing all at once in the next number: it’s already unfortunate that it has to be split into two halves. The whole ought to produce an effect for the review Europe rather similar to what my Vie de Beethoven did for the Cahiers de la Quinzaine.

The second half, I believe, will be the most interesting. I’ve put in a splendid debate between Tagore and Gandhi based on documents unpublished in Europe, and the end is to be a universal appeal.

Be so good as to send me the proofs, I shall only keep them a day, but I shall need to check all those names and dates.

I suggest you put the (rather clumsy) long bibliographical note, etc., at the head of the article. Use small print, to gain space.

... If it’s absolutely impossible to fit this first half into one number, if it has to be divided into three articles, the cut should be made on page 37, at the words:
"On 28 July 1920, Gandhi announced to India..."

But I'd consider this arrangement most unfortunate.

299. Romain Rolland to Paul Colin (Belgium)

Tuesday, 20 February

. . . . An urgent request for you to have the printers send me two sets of proofs of my article, so that I can keep one. I am without my only two fair copies; one is in your hands, the other has gone to R. Goldscheid.

300. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

20 February 1923

. . . . I've just sent the first half of my Gandhi to Europe and to the Vienna Friedenswarte, and Gorki has asked for it too for his new Russian review in Berlin. I'm copying out the second half; it'll be about 80 pages.

301. Romain Rolland to Auguste Forel (Switzerland)

Wednesday, 21 February 1923

. . . . I have been spending the last few months studying the doctrine of Mahatma Gandhi, the great Hindu, at present imprisoned for six years by the British government. I'm having a selection of his works translated into French and German (300 or 400 pages out of the 1,200 published in Madras under the title of Young India), and I am at the moment putting the finishing touches to a long essay on Gandhi, which will serve as an introduction
to the French and German editions. This essay will first appear in the Vienna Friedenswarte and the new review Europe in Paris. I know few personalities as great as this man who joins the religious genius of his race to the European genius of action. He is the Master, not, as has been said, of non-resistance, or passive resistance (he loathes passivity), but of heroic resistance without violence, by the power of self-sacrifice and the love of other men. And he’s not content with preaching it; he’s proved that it works, in his twenty-year fight in South Africa (1893-1914), where he finally came out victorious, at the price of nameless sufferings joyfully accepted—a real moral epic, which I am relating in my article. And this weak, insignificant-looking little man has been able to arouse the 300 million Indians, uniting Hindus and Muslims, reopening the doors of the great Indian family to the pariahs, appealing to women, and never finding a word of hatred for the English whose domination he wishes to overthrow. At present the English are hastily offering the Hindus the reforms for which they have long been asking, but I doubt whether that will be enough to check the movement. India has woken up....

302. Romain Rolland to André Suarés (France)

Tuesday, 27 February 1923

. . . . . I am finishing a long essay on Mahatma Gandhi. These 80 pages which will make up two articles in the review Europe have caused me to read 1,200 or 1,500 pages by my “guru”, as the Indians put it; I’ve spent several months over it, but I don’t regret it. The man and his activities really are extraordinary. There’s no point in telling you about it; you can judge for yourself by my article. It’s unbelievable that we haven’t been better
informed about it in Europe long ago, for his prodigious life’s work has been going on for thirty years already; before moving to the Indian theatre he operated in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, with an energy which tore victory from the most stubborn races in the world, the English and the Boers. I’m having Gandhi’s works (his articles) translated into French and German—or at least a selection which my sister and I have made—and my essay will form the introduction to them. I don’t believe there is in the world a greater religious soul, more pure, more true or more modest; and he’s a bold man of action as well. The epithet “non-resistance” applied to him in Europe is the last thing to suit him. I have spoken of him with Tagore and several other intelligent Hindus; they all of them venerate him, even Tagore, who disagrees with Gandhi on many points. Tagore, who has his pride (he’s a high-caste Brahmin, and though he’s not vain or proud, he knows his worth), said to me: “I’d kneel before him.” If he died in prison, he’d become a god. While he’s alive he doesn’t permit it; he says, “I am a man like everyone else. I have no vision, no revelation.” And perhaps that’s the greatest proof of the strength he can communicate....

303. Romain Rolland to Stefan Zweig (Austria)

Villeneuve
Wednesday, 28 February 1923

My dear Friend,

I have spent the last two months in spiritual intimacy with Mahatma Gandhi. I have finished a long essay of about 80 pages which will appear as two articles in the review Europe. I’ve also sent it to Rudolf Goldscheid for his Friedenswarte (although he can only publish part of it, for lack of space); but that was ten days ago and he
hasn’t acknowledged reception; I hope the copy hasn’t been lost in transit.

He really is a “great soul” (“Mahatma”). I know none in the world more pure, more true, more holy, and at the same time he’s a torrent of action. There’s nothing more against his nature than this “non-resistance” or “passive resistance” which is attributed to him; anything “passive” is repugnant to him. What he preaches by word and example is active and fruitful sacrifice, the gift of self in the love of mankind. I expect much good to come from the knowledge of his thought in Europe.

I believe I told you that I’m also having Gandhi’s works translated into German and French (or rather a selection made by my sister and myself from the 1,200 pages of the Madras edition), and my essay will form the introduction. A Swiss publisher I know, Emil Roniger of Rheinfelden (director of the Rotapfelverlag in Zurich) acquired all Gandhi’s European publishing rights on my advice, and he’ll make arrangements for their appearance with publishers in other nations. I’m involved in this in a completely disinterested way, for Gandhi seems to me of the same order as Christ. All he lacks is the cross.

The controversy between Gandhi and Tagore is very fine as well, and I’ve been able to bring the main texts together. It’s hard to know to whom to give the palm, the saint or the sage.

304. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

1 March 1923

. . . . For my part, I’m moving further and further away from the Church; the months I have lived with Gandhi have made me feel its degradation even more sharply. For in the end Gandhi is doing nothing more
than instinctively resuming Christ’s doctrine and spirit. But he lives and does what he says like Christ, which no Christian does. The other day, Adolphe Ferriere showed me a letter from Dom Brizio, who is perhaps the best Christian of our day. The poor man wanted to save the world by summoning an international Parliament of writers, scientists, thinkers, etc., etc! Gandhi has reminded us that the world can’t be—let’s not say saved, which is impossible!—but reawakened other than by the virtue of sacrifice, entire and unreserved. These arc Christ’s words. Leave everything, and follow me! . . .

305. Romain Rolland to Paul Colin (Belgium)

Saturday, 10 March 1923

. . . . I made great haste to send you the copy of my article before 20 February, and I have not yet received the proofs for the number appearing on 15 March! You cannot carry on any serious work on a review if you do not right from the start demand punctuality from the printers as well as the contributors. I am suspending despatch of the rest of my article until I have received and checked the proofs which have been requested and promised three or four times already.

. . . . In any case I should not allow the number to appear without the proofs being checked by the authors. . . .

306. Romain Rolland to Jacques Mesnil (France)

Monday, 12 March 1923

. . . . I have just finished a long study on Gandhi which will appear in two articles in Europe. My sister and I have spent all our evenings for several months reading
his works (the collection of articles 1,200 or 1,500 pages, published in Madras); we are having a selection (300 or 400 pages) translated and published in French and German. I’ve also read a good proportion of the Anglo-Indian literature on the subject, and I’m beginning to get to know him. He’s a splendid fellow. The snippets on him in *L’Humanité* and *Clarté* make me laugh. There’s one cliche in particular of Communist jargon that’s really rich when applied to India; I mean the epithet “petit-bourgeois”.

### 307. Romain Rolland to J. Taupin (Belgium)

*Monday, 12 March 1923—Villeneuve*

. . . . The article in *L’Humanité* is childish. There is no “petit-bourgeois” party in India, where the towns play only an insignificant role and 80% of the population are agricultural labourers. There’s no possible analogy between the Indian parties and what’s happening in Europe.

What’s more, the article in question is a fine specimen of sleight of hand. The only important minority contradicting pure Gandhism was a reformist minority aiming at participation in the Legislative Council, hence the transformation of Gandhian non-cooperation into parliamentary opposition. The violent revolutionaries were insignificant in number. The article has done a juggling trick with the two opposition parties.

As to the future, no one can tell. We mustn’t imagine that paradise will reign on the earth; it never will. We must fight, which is Gandhi’s own law—but by self-sacrifice. . . .
308. Romain Rolland to Albert Gregoire (France)

*Wednesday, 14 March 1923*

... The times are, *and will again be*, hard, cruel and full of trials, but they are powerful and fertile. You allude to Tolstoy in your letter. This month you will read a long study I’m publishing (in the review *Europe*, published in Paris by Rieder) on another Tolstoy, more heroic and messianic; Mahatma Gandhi, master of non-violent resistance, who is at present arousing 300 million men in India.

309. Romain Rolland to Paul Colin (Belgium)

*Thursday 15 March, evening (1923)*

... Really, my dear friend, what is going on? Has the publisher sworn to scupper his own review? You write to me on the 12th that someone telephoned you in the morning to say the proofs had arrived, and I still haven’t got them after the last post on the 15th! The printer is making game of us. If you can’t control him, let’s drop the review. Collaboration is impossible in such circumstances. ...

310. Romain Rolland to Anna-Maria Curtius

*(Germany)*

*Monday, 19 March 1923*

*Villeneuve*

... I’ll see that you’re sent two numbers of a new review, *Europe* (published by our group of good Europeans
in Paris) in which I’m publishing a long study on Mahatma Gandhi. There should be much there to interest you and your friends, and I believe Gandhi’s thought is destined to have considerable repercussions in Europe. I have just spent several months studying his works; he’s not only the highest religious conscience in the world, but the master of energy without violence. He opens a way of salvation in the midst of human destruction. . . .

311. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

8 May 1923

. . . . We got back yesterday. Our stay in England was interesting to the end. We saw Hardy, Morel and Andrews (the only Englishman who’s a close friend of Gandhi and Tagore). . . .

312. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

25 May 1923

. . . . I’m glad you liked the conclusion of my essay on Gandhi. Some Hindus in Paris have written to express their emotion. Nag hasn’t written to me yet, but I know he’s deep in preparations for his thesis examination. My sister, who’s just read his work, is expostulating about the Machiavellian depths to which English diplomacy has sunk. It seems there’s a treaty, very grave and complete, alongside which Machiavelli looks a babe in arms. The chapter on espionage is particularly spicy, I’m told. Andrews has sent me some new books and illustrated albums on Gandhi’s campaign in South Africa before 1914; I shall make use of them in my planned reshaping of my articles in book form. I see my articles have (of course!) had much
more effect abroad than in France. Publishers in the United States and Sweden are asking for permission to bring them out as a book. . . .

313. Romain Rolland to Luc Durtain (France)

Villeneuve, Friday, 1 June 1923

. . . . The little trip to England was very interesting. Not only did I see Shaw, Wells, Thomas Hardy and other Gentlemen of the Pen; I also saw people from the inner circle of Gandhi and Tagore, like the C. F. Andrews of whom I speak in my articles, whom I wasn’t expecting to meet in London. He was in transit there, having come to appeal to English politicians on behalf of the Indians who are being oppressed again in Africa. He was the companion of Gandhi’s ordeals in the Transvaal in 1913-1914, and having spent twenty years in India he’s the link between Tagore and Gandhi, the only man to be present at their recent talks. He’s taught me a lot. I am completing my notes for the publication in brochure form. I’m not sure whether this evocation of Gandhi will touch anyone in France other than yourself and a very small number; in fact I rather doubt it. Paris and its egoistic lack of concern really have hit me hard; England seemed to me much more aware of the seriousness of the situation; over there, people are suffering and they don’t hide it. In France, if it’s hidden, it’s well hidden. As one of the young pontiffs of the Revue Européenne recently put it, “Since the war, we don’t know what pain is any more. . . .” If they have no grasp of pain, let them beware that pain doesn’t end up grasping them! . . .
Since finishing the publication of my essay on Gandhi in *Europe*, I’ve had the good luck to meet C. F. Andrews in London—that admirable Scotsman I mention in my articles, who in twenty years in India has become a close friend of Tagore and Gandhi, and the link between them. After 1913 he was the companion of Gandhi’s ordeals in the Transvaal. He’s taught me a lot; thanks to him I’ve had at my disposal a few more documents which allow me to fill in the early period (his youth and his time in South Africa). So I’ve done a bit of reworking on the first ten or twelve pages of my essay, as well as the bibliography. Now I can bring out my study as a little volume, published by Stock.

Two Hindu publishers in Madras have brought out collections of Gandhi’s articles and speeches: S. Ganesen (29 Pycrofts Road, Triplicane, Madras, S.D.) and Natesan, whose address I haven’t got. (But it’s enough to say Madras, if you put “Publisher” on the envelope.)

The two most important collections are those I mentioned: *Young India* by Ganesan and the one by Natesan called *Speeches and Writings, 1922*.

There’s a very fine book on the South African movement, unfortunately very hard to find now, by Joseph J. Doke: *M. K. Gandhi, An Indian Patriot in South Africa, 1909*, London, Indian Chronicle. This is the book that revealed Gandhi to Tolstoy. I used it in my reworking last month, but I don’t possess a copy; I had to return the volume.

Gandhi’s journal in South Africa, *Indian Opinion*, is
even rarer. It probably doesn’t exist any more outside a few large libraries in London and South Africa. I’ve had a few numbers in my hands.

I’m sorry I can’t give you an address for C. F. Andrews, who came to London to ask the help of the politicians on behalf of the Indians who are being persecuted again in eastern Africa. He will have left again by now.

I am certain that the pure light of Gandhi will find its way into many European hearts. But I haven’t the least hope of his thought having any influence on action in Europe—at least not in the foreseeable future and, I fear, not before the ruin of Europe. The European mind and temperament have been deformed for too many centuries in the direction of material action. They are no longer aware of the incalculable forces of the Soul; but in the coming centuries, the giant Asia will take—will command—an increasingly large place in human evolution, proportionate to the decline of Europe, which is committing suicide. . . .

315. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

8 June 1923

. . . . I’m also expecting visits this summer from C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson, the two friends of Tagore and Gandhi who teach in Santiniketan. Since writing my articles, I’ve read (with my sister’s help) some more very interesting documents on Gandhi’s youth and his work, in South Africa. I’ve reshaped the first twelve or fifteen pages of my study, and now I’m going to bring it out in a small volume. I gather Barbusse has announced he’s going to “reply” to my articles on Gandhi in the next number of Clarté, He’d do better to take the whole enterprise in hand; he hasn’t written anything in it for a year, and it’s dying the death. (It’s flinging out desperate appeals into all the winds that blow. . . .)
316. Romain Rolland to Stefan Zweig (Austria)

Villeneuve, Friday, 8 June 1923

... I’ve also just finished my study on Gandhi, working from the documents provided for me by Andrews. I’m adding some important details to the account of his youth and the period in South Africa. The study thus reworked will appear as a small volume in French and German. It seems to have provoked a reaction in Clarté; Barbusse has announced that he’s going to “reply”. To whom? To Mahatma Gandhi? ...

317. Romain Rolland to Waldo Frank (U.S.A.)

Villeneuve, Sunday, 17 June 1923

... My Gandhi is going to come out in book form. ... I’ve filled out the articles with information I gathered in London from one of his close friends, his old companion in his ordeals in the Transvaal, C. F. Andrews. I’m pleased to see the commotion already being caused in German and Russian minds by this resume of the great Hindu’s thought, which up till now has not been recognized. ...

318. Romain Rolland to Paul Colin (Belgium)

Villeneuve, Sunday, 17 June 1923

... There is some negligence in the review’s secretariat. Robertfranc (or is it Robertfrance?) wrote to me about ten days ago, claiming to enclose a request being
sent to me by the director of a review called *Orient*, something to do with my *Gandhi*. There was nothing in the envelope but Robertfranc's letter. I wrote to him at once to point out his omission and ask for the letter he mentioned, but I've had no reply and no missing letter. I really would rather like to know what *Orient* is and what exactly I was being asked.

319. Romain Rolland to Andree Karpeles (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga

Monday, 18 June 1923

.... I hope to see our dear friend Kalidas Nag soon, before his departure for India. I'm also expecting visits from C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson, the friends of Tagore and Gandhi. I met Andrews last month in London, where he'd come to plead the cause of the oppressed Indians in Africa, and he struck me as a noble and pure man, just like one of the early apostles. Thanks to him I've been able to fill out my study on Gandhi which appeared in the review *Europe* which I am now going to publish as a brochure.

320. Romain Rolland to Alberto de Angelis (Italy)

Villeneuve, 7 July 1923

.... I am writing to the directors of the review *Europe* to have you sent the 15 April and 15 May numbers, which carry the continuation and conclusion of my study on Mahatma Gandhi. I should very much like you to know the whole of this essay. Gandhi's personality is impressive and his action is colossal, and it is incredible that they are
both so little and so inaccurately known in Europe. In the 15 April number you can also read the magnificent debate between Gandhi and Tagore.

321. Romain Rolland to the Review Renovacion (Argentine)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Wednesday, 18 July 1923

Thank you for your words of sympathy. I willingly grant you the right to translate my Vie de Tolstoy, provided the Madrid edition does not enter America.

I should also like to point out to you the Life I have just written of the great Hindu Mahatma Gandhi, for he is an even loftier spirit, purer than Tolstoy and whose action is immense. My study has so far appeared only in three numbers of the Parisian review Europe (published by Rieder, Place Saint-Sulpice, 15 March, 15 April. 15 May 1923). But I am going to collect these articles into a volume which will appear this autumn, no doubt, published by Stock.

322. Romain Rolland to Maurice Delamain (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
Friday, 20 July 1923

. . . . I am glad my study on Gandhi interested you, and I hope the little volume will make its effect in Europe, through the grandeur of the personality portrayed there.

I am sending you 13 duplicated pages, of which I should be grateful if you would take account in your projected edition. The first 10 should be purely and simply substituted for the beginning of my study as it appeared in
the review *Europe* (the 15 March number). Pages 11, 12 and 13 indicate a few changes or additions to be made in the rest of the study; you should not have much difficulty in intercalating them into the corresponding pages of the *Europe* text.

Apart from that, you need do no more than follow the *Europe* text, and you can have it printed straightaway.

. . . . Thank you for suggesting to send me the proofs of the volume of Gandhi’s articles. I do indeed think it might be useful for me to check and, if necessary, annotate some passages.

In my opinion it would be a good idea to publish the brochure on Gandhi first; it will prepare the public for the volume of articles. . . .

. . . . My new notes come from conversations I had in London with C. F. Andrews, the close friend of Tagore and Gandhi, who had arrived from India. . . .

N.B. For the printers—My text is divided into little chapters separated by ** signs.

### 323. Romain Rolland to Roger Avermaete (Belgium)

*Villeneuve, Sunday, 22 July 1923*

. . . . Since the *Editions Prométhée* want to start a collection of European books, attract their attention to my *Mahatma Gandhi*, which the publishing house of Stock is bringing out as a volume in October or November. If they’d be interested in doing a Dutch edition of it, I suggest they contact Delamain, director of Editions Stock, 7 Rue du Vieux Colombier, Paris. . . .
324. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

23 August 1923

... As for Cremieux, I must admit that I haven’t read his article on Gandhi, nor the one on Annette et Sylvie; I don’t take the Nouvelles Littéraires; I’ve heard about the bad article and also a bit about the good one, but I can’t judge for myself. ... 

325. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

13 September 1923

... Along with the little snake (which is what Nag means in Hindi), we had a visit from Pearson, Gandhi’s companion in the Transvaal. What a prodigious power over crowds this frail little man wields, with a voice so weak (weaker than mine) that he can’t be heard at ten paces! And multitudes hang on his lips, drink in his features and his gaze! On the day he visited Tagore’s Santiniketan, everything was turned upside down in the school from the very first evening; the students would obey no one but him, and even the masters harnessed themselves to the tasks he laid down. His wife is as weak in health as he is, and equally resistant to trials. This race of Gujarati Hindus is surely of different metal from the Bengalis. ...
326. Romain Rolland to Pierre Cérésole
(Switzerland)

Villeneuve, Villa Olga
Wednesday, 10 October 1923

I was expecting to have my Gandhi collected into a volume to send to you; I hope it won’t be much longer. Yes, he’s an apostolic figure, of immaculate heroism. He’s not the only one offered to us as a model and a guide by the reawakened Orient in these last hundred years. The old religious wellsprings are gushing forth again in Asia.

I should greatly encourage young people looking for a thesis topic in history to study the origins and development of Conscientious Objectors. The movement seems to go back a long way. Gandhi in the Transvaal, twenty years ago, was referring to the English Conscientious Objectors whose activities had struck him. But in fact they must always have existed, ever since the early days of Christianity and the rebels against the orders of recantation issued by the Church rallying to the power of Constantine. . . .

327. Romain Rolland to Marcel Benedek (Hungary)

Villeneuve (Vaud)
Saturday, 27 October 1923

Thank you for your friendly letter. If there is a Hungarian publisher interested in my Mahatma Gandhi, tell him to get in touch with the French publisher of the work, M. Delamain, director of the Stock Publishing House, Paris VI, 7 Rue du Vieux-Colombier, who alone is
empowered to make any agreements. The French edition is at the printers’ and will appear in a fortnight; needless to say I shall send it to you, and reserve you the rights of translation into Hungarian, if you want to undertake the task.

328. Romain Rolland to Paul Amann (Austria)

Villeneuve, Tuesday, 30 October 1923

Have you received the Gandhi volume in German? I’ll send you the French one soon. It’s at the printers’.

329. Romain Rolland to Maurice Delamain (France)

Villeneuve, Wednesday, 31 October 1923

I am very surprised that you have sent me the corrected galley-proofs of Mahatma Gandhi. Have you not received the page-settings, which I returned to you on the 25th, from Territet, in a registered packet, with my authorization to print? I made haste to check the page-settings in one day, so as to finish off the printing, and your latest package without any reference to what I sent you six days ago makes me afraid the parcel may have been lost. Please let me know at once, and make investigations.

I should like to believe M. Davray is more scrupulous in his literary reports than in those concerning India and English policy. (His allegation is absolutely false. You can be sure that my information is accurate; I correspond regularly with Englishmen and Indians in India, with Tagore and his circle, with Gandhi’s friends and partisans and with his journal Young India, directed by his own son. Gandhi was condemned to six years’ imprisonment in March 1922—in other words until 1928—
and is still in prison; his wife, who is allowed to visit him once a month, is not using that right on Gandhi's express request, as he does not accept any privileges. The truth is that there is in England (as always) a liberal minority struck by Gandhi's greatness of soul, who have organized a movement for his release, and there is a chance that they may succeed. But if freed, Gandhi will find his authority redoubled by the trials he has been through.

As to the future. I shall not play the prophet; I am content to give an exact description of the present, and the present situation is that Gandhi's influence has never been stronger. His authority is such that Das, leader of the reformist party, has recently been obliged to ask the prisoner for his advice and approbation. A week ago I had a letter from Ganesan in Madras, Gandhi's friend and publisher, telling me a strange piece of news going round in India; there was a rumour that Gandhi was about to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and with the usual ready Indian imagination some people said he had already received it; Ganesan, who was asking me whether the report was accurate, asked me to use my influence with the Scandinavian jury; the Indians thought that if Gandhi were to receive this prize, European public opinion would exert so much pressure that England would be forced to release Gandhi. I need hardly add that the report is false, and there is little likelihood of the Nobel Committee risking offending England by giving a prize to her condemned prisoner! In any case I think it far from desirable! Gandhi is infinitely above Nobel Prizes. But you can see from this what M. Davray's reports are worth. He probably got his documentation from the British Conservatives, whose tactics are to denigrate their enemies.

In 1917 my friend Jean-Richard Bloch, an officer on the Italian front, was having lunch with the French Consul in Milan, who had recently been Vice-Consul in Zurich, and
heard him talking about the criminal activities of pacifists in Switzerland and a treasonable book recently published by Romain Rolland. This intrigued and amused him, as he knew me, and he asked the title of the book; the Consul named *Le Buisson Ardent*, Volume 9 of Jean-Christophe, which came out in 1911. M. Davray’s report seems to me to be of the same order.

If you read the long note on pp. 171-173 of my book, the enquiry by the Manchester Guardian, a paper opposed to Gandhi, you will see what intelligent and well-informed English people think about the gravity of the situation.

### 330. Romain Rolland to J. Taupin (Belgium)

*Villeneuve, Saturday, 3 November 1923*

. . . . My Gandhi, already published in German translation by Rotapfelverlag in Zurich, will be brought out this month by Stock in Paris. I’ve given the authorization to print. . . .

### 331. Romain Rolland to Mina Vallette (Switzerland)

*Villeneuve, Saturday, 10 November 1923*

. . . . You’ll find a short bibliography at the head of the volume. Nothing by Gandhi has yet been translated into French, but I am having a selection of his articles translated and brought out in two editions, French and German (by the same publishing houses as my little book).

The article “Our Fallen Sisters” is taken from the volume of articles called *Young India*, published in English by S. Ganesan of Madras, the official publisher of Gandhi’s works and journal.
332. Romain Rolland to Maurice Delamain (France)

Villeneuve, 2 January 1924

... I am also sending you some press cuttings noting the complete victory of the Indian Swarajists (partisans of Home Rule). Indian independence is making giant strides forward. (My compliments to M. Davray.)

I certainly do not want my book used in the current wave of Anglophobia, for (and in this I am like Gandhi) I look upon England, with all her faults, as still being superior in liberalism to all the countries of Europe, including France. There have always been two Englands in the struggle: that of the Empire, which has surpassed German imperialism in despotism and in grandeur as well—Lord Curzon is its latest representative—and secondly that of the old liberal and independent traditions, whose deeds in opposition have always been bold all through history, and which forms today the strongest bastion of liberalism in Europe. To confuse the two would not only be an injustice and an error, but a crime against ourselves. The day they destroy the England of the Labour Party, the Union of Democratic Control, the Conscientious Objectors, free spirits like Wells, Shaw, etc., it will be the death of all European liberty. There would be no room left for anyone but the Mussolinis, the Stinnes, the Trotskys. No thank you very much! We must always distinguish between English imperialism and liberal England. ...
Anyone who knows me can say that I am in no group, no literary or political party. My very reason for existence is to be outside all frameworks, and political frameworks revolt me above all others. Everything I say and write is on a different level. In any case, if I had any political inclinations it would be towards Mahatma Gandhi, whom I have just brought into my series of lives of illustrious men. (I am sending you the volume, and you can judge for yourself if there was ever a man more worthy of a place among the saints and heroes. . . .)

I am happy—but not surprised—that you have been struck by the emergence of the messianic figure of Gandhi. Like India herself, he is out of all proportion with our European products. We shall hear more about them! (Indeed we would have done so long ago if our ridiculous European self-satisfaction had not persuaded us that civilization begins with the thrice-burned ruins of Ilium.)

Unfortunately the French and German translation of Gandhi’s writings has already been entrusted to competent hands, and the most essential of his articles will be brought out this year by Stock and, for Germany, the Zürich
Rotapfel Verlag. The latter (directed by Emil Roniger, Rheinfelden, Quellenstrasse) has acquired Gandhi’s European publishing rights from his Hindu publishers. You could in any case approach M. Roniger, using my name.

Gandhi’s books are published in India in English and the native languages. His English is not impeccable, but his action-orientated thought loses less when transposed into European languages than that of Tagore, who is an artist even in English but whose English corresponds hardly at all to the Bengali original.

. . . . I have news of Gandhi frequently. His imprisonment is stricter than I had presumed (in a note on one of the closing pages of my book). He has almost no news of what happens outside, but his calm ardour is the same, and his fragile health is keeping up despite a recent operation. Outside, the last Assembly of all India (late December) confirmed the victory of the Gandhist party. The Swarajists have the majority in many provinces, and the English dominator is vainly trying to disarm them by concessions which have come too late. The two Ali brothers, the Muslim leaders friendly with Gandhi, have recently come out of prison (their two-year sentence having expired) and resumed their place at the head of their co-religionists. . . .

335. Romain Rolland to Jenny Guyot (France)

Villeneuve, 18 March 1924

. . . . Look closely at the question of the Conscientious Objectors, Gandhi’s heroic non-violence, the International Civil Service. These are the rare roads to salvation available to a Europe infected by the spirit of violence, and pregnant with new wars which will inevitably destroy her great races unless there is a desperate effort on the part of their moral élites. . . .
336. Romain Rolland to Stefan Zweig (Austria)

Villeneuve, Saturday, 22 March 1924

... I cannot conceive of a future without a Eurasia. I have just received a long letter from Tagore, who is leaving for China; he describes the eternal conflict going on within him between two duties, two natures: the pure artist sighing for solitude and the man with the desire and the duty to help his fellows, neither of which can be sacrificed. I’m kept very regularly up to date with affairs there by my friends in Asia, and I’ve just written a dozen or so fresh pages, for Stock’s 25th edition, on events in India since my volume on Gandhi appeared. The repercussions of Gandhi’s thought in France are much deeper than I would have thought. Religious and Protestant circles in particular are drinking in his words as if they came from Christ himself, and after ten long years of moral depression, of feeling leaderless, betrayed by their spiritual chiefs and their own pusillanimity, they’re getting a grip on themselves again. I’ve had personal news and an affectionate message from Gandhi, and I know that in his rare moments of leisure (his doctors have ordered him to take a complete rest for several months, but he’s not obeying them and indeed he can’t, as he’s bound by his obligations as “Duce et Maestro”) he’s reading Clérambault and Les Précurseurs.
337. Romain Rolland to Renée Thiesson (France)

Villeneuve, 26 March 1924

... I have entered into direct communications with Gandhi who, himself hardly over an operation which could have killed him (and still might; the wound hasn’t healed after six weeks), worn out and down to two thirds of his weight which, even when normal, was less than that of a slim woman of small build,—has resumed his activities as leader, is sending out messages to the 300 million Indians, finds time in between for fine conversations on art and music with one of my Indian friends, has a kind and welcoming reception for even the humblest of those who come to beg for his help, forgets none of those he knew and loved and certainly shows a greater heart than Tagore. ...

338. Romain Rolland to H. Key-Rasmussen (Sweden)

Villeneuze (Vaud) Villa Olga
Monday, 7 April 1924

... I have never met Gandhi, and have been able to communicate directly with him only since his liberation. But I know him through his two closest friends, his two English companions since the years of “non-resistance” (“non-acceptance” would be a much more accurate term) in South Africa: C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson. Both of them, being teachers in Santiniketan, have often served as intermediaries between Tagore and Gandhi. The unfortunate Pearson came to see me last September and entrusted me with various rare documents on Gandhi; two
days after leaving me he died in a railway accident in Italy. A recent message from Gandhi told me of how he mourns for this man who, as he put it, “loved him like a brother”.

Naturally I have contacts with several Indians who know Tagore and Gandhi, and S. Ganesan of Madras, the publisher of Young India, regularly sends me everything which seems interesting about the Mahatma. I’m adding to the new French edition (the 25th) of my book a dozen or so pages on recent events, since the liberation. You know that Gandhi nearly died last January, and he’s still far from recovering his health.

. . . . At this very moment I have received a letter from India saying that Gandhi is at present using his leisure to read Jean-Christophe and Clérambault; he intends to write to me very soon on two points of his doctrine which he wants to defend against me. The particular point at issue is my rather harsh judgment on his disciple, Professor Kalelkar. . . .

339. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

16 July 1924

. . . . I have to write another introduction to the translated volume of Gandhi’s articles which Stock is to bring out. I was fed up with doing the job again, as when I’ve exhausted what I have to say on a subject, I normally content myself with distant respect for the rest of my life. But since I had to do it, I re-read the articles, and I found something new in them, or at least I saw them in a new light; striking, and perhaps more tragic. So I no longer regret writing those pages, even though they took me a few days which I gave with a bad grace. . . .
340. **Romain Rolland to Carlos Americo Amaya, of the Review “Renovacion” (Argentine)**

*Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga*

*24 July 1924*

... You can use my articles in your review; I shall always be pleased to see my name among yours. I am grateful to you for your excellent translation of my *Gandhi*....

341. **Romain Rolland to Roger Avermaete (Belgium)**

*Villeneuve, 28 July 1924*

... I have been more involved in action than you, my dear Avermaete; and “on the high plateaux of speculative thought” where I held myself “above the battle”, I have been more lashed than most by insults and hatred. But my words have always been “to relieve my conscience”, “to say what I believe to be true”, not what is advantageous to men. To each his role! I do not mean to insult anyone who fulfils his role according to his conscience, but there are plenty of men already to deal with political utilitarianism; my own role is to defend the values I believe to be durable, not the values of today or tomorrow. It is clear that *non-acceptance*—don’t say *non-resistance*, and certainly not that ignoble word *defeatism*, which I reject with disgust—it is clear that Gandhian non-acceptance for example would lead its apostles in Europe to sacrifice without any immediate practical result—maybe not for a long time. It is nevertheless true and good on an absolute level, and it is
the only way to salvation open to human civilization. Besides, it's not a foregone conclusion that civilization will be saved. But each man must do his duty, and the duty of the servant of truth is to tell the truth whatever the cost, either to himself or to others.

American pragmatism has always seemed to me a pitiable way of dodging the issue, shifty and ineffective. For the Spirit, no compromise is possible . . .

342. Romain Rolland to Roger Avermaete (Belgium)

Villeneuve, 9 August 1924

. . . . But of course, my dear Avermaete, one must practise Gandhian non-acceptance in Europe, although it will lead its apostles in Europe to sacrifice without any immediate practical result and maybe not for a long time; for it is nevertheless true and good on an absolute level. I wrote this quite clearly at the end of my Gandhi, and you can read it again at the end of the introduction to G's works in the Stock edition, which the Revue Europeenne is to publish. One must sacrifice oneself without immediate profit, without any profit for oneself and one's nearest and dearest, when all humanity is at stake. Only to each his task. Don't you understand that a man of 60 who will no doubt be dead before the next conflict no longer needs to set himself the problem of non-acceptance, as it will not be to him that the problem will be set. He must confine himself to opening the way to young people and saying to them: "It is for you to decide! For it is you who will suffer." My role at present is to see beyond me and beyond you. As Michelangelo's poem says, "I have been what you are. You will be what I am." To each age its task! . . .
343. Romain Rolland to Charles Bernard (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 4 November 1924

. . . . Paul Passy’s article is all right, but he hasn’t enough inkling yet of the present degree of brotherly feeling being achieved in India between the members (and even the leaders) of the various religions: Bishop of Calcutta, Protestant Missionaries, Muslims, Hindus. On the day when Gandhi ended his twenty-one-day holy fast, hymns were recited and sung by Christians, Mohammedans and Hindus. And for the Congress of Indian Unity which Gandhi stimulated, prayers were said in all the Catholic and Protestant churches, the Brahmin temples and the mosques. Gandhi’s influence there is Christ-like. . . .

344. Romain Rolland to Louise Cruppi (France)

20 December 1924

. . . . Nag and our Indian friends send plenty of news of Gandhi and conversations with him, notably about art, or about my book. He turns out to be a man of admirable modesty, and in the midst of all his holiness, of a calm tolerance and moderation of mind always ready to understand the reasons of those who don’t share his ideas, without wavering for a moment in his own thought. It also seems that his long fast did him an unimaginable amount of moral good; beforehand he was not without troubles and fatigues, but at present he has resumed his complete equilibrium. Today he is presiding over the annual Congress of All India. . . .
345. Romain Rolland to Gaston V. Rosselet (Switzerland)¹

February 1925

... I merely wanted to make known in Europe a great spiritual movement and a great man, about whom I believe no European missionary has had anything to say worthy of the subject (since the fine forgotten book by Joseph J. Doke, in the Transvaal in 1909), although they should have made it their duty to do so long ago. In my turn I should like to ask M. Rosselet why it is that these Christians have passed over in silence the work of this greatest of Christians, though he is Christian only in spirit and not by baptism.

My book never claimed to portray all the religious and social movements of modern India, and I had no reason to mention the Y.M.C.A. movements in it (Young Men's Christian Associations); they are powerful enough to speak for themselves and they lose no opportunity to do so. It is true that Mr. Paul is worthy of all respect, and he too deserves a special study. But each thing in its time; I may resume my series of Indian studies.

My book was read through by several Indian friends and by Lajpat Rai, one of the main leaders of the Swaraj party; they considered it to be true in the general impression it gave. They pointed out a few errors of detail, such as the one M. Rosselet rightly mentions concerning the semi-failure of the abandonment of titles and honorary functions as ordered by the Committee of Non-co-operation.

¹ Formerly a missionary at Moulki (Canara, India)
The corrections they pointed out will be made in the following editions; they involve few alterations to my text and none to my conclusions.

As to the rest, M. Rosselet seems to be making himself the champion of the British Government. I shall not follow him on to this ground, as I should have too much to say and I have no time today. What is postponed is not lost.

I shall merely reply on two or three points:

1. On the ritual burning of foreign cloth I had a lot to say, and I do not understand why M. Rosselet hints that I pass it over in silence. I gave considerable space (pages 83-85 of the French edition) to C. F. Andrews' woeful reproaches and (pages 112-140, particularly page 139) to the opposition between Tagore and Gandhi. I join my own regrets to those of Andrews.

2. The spinning wheel seems ludicrous to M. Rosselet as an economic instrument. Perhaps it would be if Gandhi advocated it as the sole means of support for the Indian villager, but Gandhi says nothing of the sort. What he says is that the wheel would allow the villager to add a little to his meagre subsistence and to economise on clothing. In the Young India number of 22 January 1925 there is an account of a large popular meeting at Vedchhi, at which an old man of sixty told Gandhi that he now spins after a hard day's work in the fields, not at all out of faith in him, but because: "I spin for myself. I produce my own cotton, I spin my own clothes and those of my family. This allows me to save. . . ." The cottage industry of the spinning wheel existed almost everywhere in India before the English; the English destroyed it and Gandhi is re-establishing it. This is not a mediaeval return to a forgotten and obsolete task, but a natural, practical and direct means of reducing expenses and at the same time striking at the foreign industries who come to squeeze out of India.
the money they spend abroad. For this is one of India’s largest complaints against England: until their time, all the conquerors who succeeded each other on Indian soil, once the initial damage was done, settled down, became Indian and consumed the riches they extorted on the spot; by this means perhaps one generation of men suffered, but India herself was not carved up, whereas English domination keeps England alive at the expense of India, and India is being ruined.

3. M. Rosselet speaks of the co-operative organizations created by the government. They exist, certainly. But I have consulted my Indian friends about them, and all the independent Indians (and even Englishmen as well informed as the head of the Agricultural School of Sri-niketan, which is attached to Santiniketan) would agree that these co-operative organizations are not based on a true spirit of mutual help, and that if the government withdrew its financial support they would at once disappear.

4. Finally, my Indian friends will no doubt be much surprised to read that the British Government “has given its support to all attempts to fight against alcoholism”; I shall leave it to them to reply. But I have no need to wait for their reply to know that at this very moment the British Government is imposing the poison of opium on India, on the hypocritical pretext that it is obeying the wishes of the Indians. It is stopping its own ears to their indignant protests, but it has not succeeded in preventing us from hearing them: they emerge violently in the Indian press and even the English liberal press, such as the Manchester Guardian.

(I add that if European readers want to follow the Gandhist movement for themselves, they must read the weekly journal Young India, whose address I quote.)
346. Romain Rolland to Nobuyeshi Ichitani (Japan)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
22 February 1925

.... I am glad you have acquired the right to translate my book on Gandhi into Japanese. I should be pleased to write a short preface for your translation.

Let me remind you that there may be some interest in your adding as an appendix to the volume the introduction which I wrote for the volume of articles by Gandhi called La jeune Inde (also published by Stock). You would not need to ask the publisher for a fresh authorization, as I give it to you herewith. This introduction was written a year after my work on Gandhi, and complements it.

If in the course of your work you come across any difficulties, either with a Hindu term or a French expression, send me a list of them and I shall reply. . . .

347. Romain Rolland to Maurice Delamain (France)

Villeneuve, Monday, 26 October 1925

.... Last year, when you printed the ten editions of my Gandhi, you gave me the hope that when they were exhausted you would reset the work so that I could modify the text. This is not at all the same as adding an “Errata and Addenda” to the old text; one risks harming the text.

1 On 3 March, Romain Rolland sent Mr. Ichitani two pages of modifications and corrections.
in the readers' minds by correcting it. So see if it would not be possible to insert the changes into the main body of the text. I have a copy which was carefully revised with me and corrected by Gandhi's friend Lajpat Rai, leader of the Indian Swarajist party since Das' death. It would be a pity not to revise the impression thoroughly after the 50th edition.

I am perfectly convinced that the book will prove of durable interest—not for its author's sake, but for the subject. I only have to look at the astonishing spread of Gandhism in Europe; Gandhi is being consulted by young people in every country. (One can follow this correspondence in the Indian reviews in which Gandhi's replies are published.) The Zürich publisher Roniger is continuing his edition of all Gandhi's works, and is probably going to devote a review to him which will follow the Swarajist movement regularly. Only it is clear that the French book, which is now translated into most languages, will carry on its way chiefly in translation.

348. Romain Rolland to J. Taupin (Belgium)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
10 December 1925

. . . . I have come to know Gandhi through my conversations with Indian friends and friends of Tagore, whom I saw in Paris and Switzerland after 1919. I have also made contact with Gandhi's Indian publisher, Ganesan of Madras, who has made the main published works available to me. I spent six or eight months reading them with my sister, Madeleine Rolland (who has translated Thomas Hardy, Wells and Tagore into French). We read them aloud, line by line, pen in hand. Then my book was written in three weeks. One of my Indian friends
who first told me about Gandhi promised me when he left for India to send me all the documents on the Mahatma, but because of Oriental slowness a year went by and my book was published before any of the promised documents had been sent to me. This caused great amazement in India. My book has spread all over the country; an English edition has been published (there are two other English editions in England and America, an edition in Hindi, another in Tamil, and a fourth is now being published in Bengali).

You ask me for information on the Indian movement; why don’t you read, instead of the very superficial *Current Thought*, Gandhi’s weekly journal *Young India* (at Navajivan Press, Sarkhigara Vadi, Sarangpur, Ahmedabad)? That would give you several articles by Gandhi every week.

The main change in Indian politics is that Gandhi has released his disciples from the obligation not to enter into the Councils and to make use of the spinning wheel. He did this so as not to split the Swarajist movement, declaring at the same time that for his own part he would maintain the whole of his position. It goes without saying that on crucial principles like Non-resistance and Non-violence he admits of no compromise. His activity is as immense as ever. He has recently travelled across the whole of India, making speeches everywhere and writing every day. His religious power has never been stronger, even if from the political point of view he has temporarily yielded first place to his great Swarajist disciples like Lajpat Rai, the most eminent Indian Swarajist leader since the death of Das.

He is at present in his monastery, Satyagraha Ashram of Sabarmati, near Ahmedabad. I have had the good fortune to send him an admirable disciple, a young Englishwoman called Madeleine Slade, daughter of an admiral who commanded the Indian fleet; she has recently en-
tered his Ashram. She is a woman of remarkable intelligence and energy who has been touched by faith. I am receiving letters from her full of fervour and mystic joy that she has now been admitted into the Mahatma’s closest circle, and Gandhi too has recognized her high moral value and the sincerity of her faith; he has written and told me so. I see her as a holy woman alongside a new Christ. One’s thoughts are always returning to Christ when one reads these accounts by a disciple who sees him daily and has the joy of hearing him speak; she tells a tale of nobility, gentleness, purity and touching modesty, and that astonishing control over himself and all who approach him.

When Miss Slade arrived at the Ashram convent (where she was strictly obliged to follow the religious rules of work and prayer) she found a Frenchwoman whose name I don’t know. This woman of no great social rank had come from Lille all alone to the depths of India without knowing a word of any language other than French. Until then she’d studied theosophy in a confused sort of way, and her thoughts were a bit disturbed; she longed to see the Mahatma so that he could soothe the troubles of her soul. No one knew French at the Sabarmati Ashram; Miss Slade served as an interpreter between this woman and the Mahatma, and it gave her an impressive vision of light and peace gradually returning into this lost soul under the Mahatma’s words and calm gaze. The Frenchwoman found the answer that her restless mind was seeking, and she set off again alone, at peace with herself, to return to France.

Isn’t this a striking chance example of the far-reaching radiant power exercised by this Asian Messiah over the humblest souls? (Gandhi would refuse the title of Messiah with indignant humility.) . . .
349. Romain Rolland to J. Taupin (Belgium)

Villeneuve, 17 December 1925

. . . . Gandhi come to Europe? No, no, he has better things to do. He hasn’t an hour to spare from the superhuman task assigned to him out there. Beware of the eternal confusion of roles, of which there are many! A Mahatma, a religious man of action is not a thinker, an artist, or a writer of books; such men have other tasks, which impose other duties. One must never desire a man to do any other task than his essential task. If everyone did his own task, the world would be a better place. . . .

350. Romain Rolland to Henri Hisquin (France)

Villeneuve, 14 January 1926

. . . . I see Gandhi at very close quarters through letters sent to us regularly by one of his disciples, a young Englishwoman, daughter of an admiral who commanded the Indian fleet. She became a convert to Gandhism and has recently entered the Ashram (his principal convent) at Sabarmati, near Ahmedabad. She’s a fine forceful woman, of magnificent sincerity, ardently devoted and allowing nothing in the world to put her off—a real holy woman of Christ. I expect much from her activities there, for she joined to the religious spirit of Asia the will of a European and an instinct for order. Gandhi saw how to appreciate her from her very early days there. So I see him through her letters in the familiarity of daily conversations, and it’s a real Gospel story. The incredible gentleness of so in-
flexible a man, his kindness, modesty and authority all exercise a power which fascinates and does good. When Miss Madeleine Slade (that's the name of my English friend who is his disciple) arrived in the Ashram, she found a Frenchwoman, whose name I don't know; a woman of no great social rank, who lived in Lille, having read my book (and without writing to me) she set off for India, knowing nothing but French. How she arrived in the depths of that huge country (Ahmedabad is a good way from the coast, a whole night's train journey from Bombay, and Sabarmati is some way from Ahmedabad on foot) I cannot conceive. No one speaks French in Gandhi's Ashram, so there was no one to understand her, and Miss Slade served as the interpreter. So she was present at the moving spectacle of this unknown Frenchwoman, suffering grave torments of mind, who had come to seek an answer from the toothless little old sage,—finally receiving her answer, recovering her peace of mind and after three days setting off back to France, just as she came, alone, in silence and at peace. Isn't this a great thing? And but for chance it would never have been known. There must be countless others about which we shall never know! . . .

351. Romain Rolland to J. Taupin (Belgium)

Villeneuve, 5 July 1926

. . . . No, Gandhi will not be in England in the next few days. He is not coming to Europe; all the rumours are wrong. It is true that the Y.M.C.A. invited him to their Helsinki Congress, but he refused; he cannot leave India. That is where his essential and urgent task is. Can you imagine the Mahatma in one of those fashionable and semi-official European talking-shops? Life is short and the work is heavy; there's no time for distractions. . . .
352. Romain Rolland to Paul Birukoff
(Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 2 October 1926

...I am thinking about your Tolstoy Jubilee for 10 September 1928. We must make it into a solemn worldwide demonstration. Of course Gandhi’s voice must be heard, and we must appeal to all the countries of Asia and America where our great friend’s thought has borne fruit. ... 

353. Romain Rolland to Charles Baudouin
(Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 1 January 1927

...For a religious soul, art is a thing of second-rate importance (if not tenth-rate). The first Christians weren’t in the least concerned with it. Much time was needed—and lukewarm water in the wine (the wine of Christ which is his blood)—before they arrived at the formula of the basilicas, which in any case they borrowed from the infidel pagans, in purified form. Gandhi too looks down rather on art. ... 

354. Romain Rolland to Marcel Lob (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
17 April 1927

Are you interested in Gandhi? He has just been very ill, and is still not completely out of danger; excessive
overwork, even by his standards. For some months he has been travelling all over India, inspecting everything and speaking to the masses. Twenty days ago he had the first stages of a stroke but it seems that once again his spirit has overcome the sickness. You have no idea of his lucid and continuous activity since he came out of prison. If only we had a guide like him in Europe.

355. Romain Rolland to J. Taupin (Belgium)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
28 April 1927

... I’m asking my sister, Madeleine Rolland, to give you some information about Gandhi and his recent activities. She follows the movement much more closely than I do, and is in regular correspondence with Sabarmati.

At the moment Gandhi is seriously ill. He recently (three weeks ago) was threatened with a stroke, right in the thick of things—eight or ten speeches a day to eager multitudes, several months of religious and social propaganda the length and breadth of India; a formidable level of activity, without any rest. At the moment he’s obliged to rest; the force of his soul seems to have overcome the danger. But it’s a serious warning. Will he listen to it? I don’t know. It’s not in his habits to be ungenerous with his life.
356. Romain Rolland to Tatiana Soukhotin-Tolstoy (Italy)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
24 May 1927

. . . . I see that your father’s admirable letter to Gandhi dated 7 September 1910, is dated from Kotschetz. So it was under your roof, and almost under your very eyes, that those pages were written which will stand in all future times as the Gospel of Non-resistance, consecrated by Gandhi by the heroic action of his whole life? Have you any memories of it? . . .

357. Romain Rolland to Paul Birukoff (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, Villa Olga,
2 June 1927

. . . . Are you following Gandhi’s autobiography weekly in Young India? He has often spoken of Tolstoy with reverence. . . . . Gandhi has indeed been seriously threatened by the beginnings of an attack of hemiplegia. He is better now, but the danger is still hanging over him. He is overworking; these last few months he has been travelling all over India giving eight or ten speeches a day to thousands of people, and he cannot and will not cut down his activities. I also know that his great heart is suffering at the wretched state, of his people and the struggles between Hindus and Muslims which are breaking out again. But to others he shows only his calm; he stifles his grief under ceaseless action. Tagore is far from playing such a large
role. He is not made to guide whole peoples. He is a very lofty thinker and artist, and he can act only on his peers, an elite extending over all ages.

358. Romain Rolland to Maurice Wullens (France)

14 June 1927

... As to your request, it is not of the kind that can be satisfactorily dealt with in a short chat. Tolstoy and Gandhi have written whole volumes discussing their doctrine point by point. (Don’t mix the name of Jesus with theirs; it’s too tendentious! So many contradictions have been heaped on his back!)

359. Romain Rolland to Renee Thiesson (France)

Villeneuve, 2 October 1927

... We know the scandalous book by K. Mayo, who is a more than suspect character. Some years ago this person published a Yankee propaganda book against the Philippines, called *The Isle of Fear*, which set out to prove to the world that the Filipinos were abject creatures and that American domination there was a good deed to the world selflessly done by the virtuous United States. This book was widely disseminated in India.

But note well how careful and cautious they are! Not one copy of the defamatory book on India has reached India. The Indians heard about it only through European papers and reviews, and when they finally were able to bring it from Europe, the poison had had time to spread widely. Gandhi has recently made a scornful, ironic and calm reply, as is his wont, in *Young India*. It is probable that the European press, now almost entirely in the pay of
the Anglo-Saxon financiers, will take care not to say a word about it, any more than they will about replies in the reviews of Tagore and his friends.

Gandhi’s answer (more or less) is this: “Suppose I come to London and visit nothing but the slums, the brothels and clinics catering for serious illnesses, and then say: ‘This is England!’ would that be honourable?” (This reminds me of my generous friend Clara van Ende, who devoted herself to aid for unmarried mothers in Paris, who had to spend several years plunged in the deepest dregs of society and came out so choked with despair and disgust that she was never again able to reconcile herself with life and died a broken woman.)

Gandhi adds that the book is teeming with errors, accidental or otherwise. He has some to point out even in the account of K. Mayo’s one visit to him. Tagore is the victim of a more serious lie, which makes him out to be a supporter of child marriages. Now the Brahmo Samaj of which Tagore is a leader, and which was founded by his father, strictly forbids such marriages. Tagore approves of people marrying young—which is not at all the same thing; it’s obvious that the Bengali woman is more precocious than her Anglo-Saxon counterpart, but it’s a long way from that to child marriages. (Besides, one ought to understand the true spirit in which really respectable and pious Hindus look upon child marriages, and I may have occasion to speak about it in a book I am preparing about two great Indians of our time; the girl is brought up in the family of her future husband, but as chastely as a sister, and it’s not until years afterwards that the marriage is consummated. The main advantage they see in this practice is that of making the woman share in the atmosphere of the house from her childhood.) In any case Gandhi can easily make the point that anyone who knows the respectability of the Santiniketan circle and of the girls and young women
who are brought up there can easily judge how truthful K. Mayo is....

360. Romain Rolland to Marianne Rauze (France)
Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
21 November 1927

. . . . I’m sending the typewritten copy to Delpeuch today. Do you know what I wanted to do with it? Send it to Gandhi. He should be one of the first to read this marvellous adventure.¹ He doesn’t read French, but our friend and his disciple Mirabai (Miss Slade) will relate it to him. As soon as you have a copy available, send it to me, and I’ll see that he gets it. . . .

361. Romain Rolland to Paul Birukoff (Switzerland)
Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
21 December 1927

. . . . I have received your kind letter. I admire your boldness and fidelity to the Master (to the double Master: our dear Leo Nicolaievich, and the greater, invisible Master whom we bear at the bottom of our hearts). I approve warmly of what you are doing. Pass on my fraternal greetings to your friends the Doukhobors. Certainly their faith in non-acceptance of violence is not incompatible with energy! On the contrary, it demands the greatest energy, and the “tender” Gandhi, as you call him, makes it the first condition of his Satyagraha, You know

¹ The story of the Berthallon brothers, told by Marianne Rauze (see the exchange of letters between Romain Rolland, Gandhi and Miss Slade). Romain Rolland wrote a preface to the text.
that he has several times repeated that he prefers the violent who are bold and sincere to the non-violent who are cowardly and hypocritical. Force is the first condition of all virtue, but after that the main thing is to know how to direct it.

362. Romain Rolland to J. Taupin (Belgium)

Villeneuve, 5 March 1928

... Why don’t you and the rest of you interested in India get together and take out a subscription to Gandhi’s weekly paper Young India? You’d find there all the information you want, and the answers to your questions of conscience. You could even discuss them with Gandhi if the occasion arose.

Gandhi is still being followed by millions of men, and he hasn’t stopped travelling about India in all directions, preaching his immutable doctrine of non-violence. But it’s natural enough that you aren’t told about him by the imperialist European press or by the Bolshevik press; when it comes to lying, neither of them has anything to learn from the other.

Gandhi no longer operates on the political level, but on the religious and human level. This hasn’t stopped him from giving public approbation to the Indian hartal on the arrival of the Commission.

He was seriously ill again last month, on his return from one of his tiring journeys across India (excessive arterial tension) and he is still obliged to be very careful; which hasn’t stopped him from writing me a long letter in these last few days about the French conscientious objected, the Berthallon brothers. There’s a risk that he may die suddenly in harness, but he has been expecting that for a
long time. So have we; we are all mortal. But thought does not die.

You were wrong not to write to Miss Slade, of course not for motives of "profane curiosity", as you put it, but for the general questions which are worrying you. I'm sure she would have sent you her master's reply. . . .

363. Romain Rolland to Ferenc Hugai (Hungary)

Villeneuve, 8 March 1928

. . . . I have received a long and interesting letter from Gandhi in the last few days. Although he has recently been seriously ill and has to take great precautions (he's suffering from excessive arterial tension, resulting from his uninterrupted activities and an exhausting journey across India), it is possible that he may come to Europe this summer. . . .

360. Romain Rolland to George Lenard (Austria)

8 March 1928

. . . . Read, at the head of Mère et Fils, the motto by Spinoza, which is valid not only for the whole of this book, but for all my books and all my life:

\[
Pax enim non belli privatio, \\
Sed virtus est, quae ex animi fortitudine oritur. \\
\]

\(^1\) Romain Rolland's Diary: A young Viennese, George Lenard, pupil in the Bundesreformrealgymnasium VIII, 8. Klasse, Vienna, has chosen as a subject for his baccalauréat thesis: "Rom. Roll, during the Great War", and he sends me a copy of his work (in French) (2 March). Quite an attentive summary of my articles and wartime writings; it does not go very far, but one cannot expect more of a schoolboy. I write to thank him.
And if one day you have the chance to read the book by Gandhi called *La jeune Inde*, to which I have written an introduction, you will see what Gandhi and I understand by "Peace" and "Non-violence"....

("Non-violence is a means of combat—the sword of self-sacrifice. . . . What nonsense to have ever been able to confuse this paroxysm of action with the sheep-like face of the passive pacifists! . . . There is less distance between Gandhi's non-violence and the violence of the revolutionaries who frankly oppose him than there is between heroic non-acceptance and the servile ataraxia of the eternal acceptors, who form the reinforcement of all tyrannies and the cement of all reactions. . . .")

365. Romain Rolland to Alphonse de Chateaubriant  
(France)

*Villeneuve, 17 March 1928*

.... We are still planning to make a little pilgrimage to Morvan and the Nivernais when spring reaches its height in mid-May. But our plans may be changed by the arrival of distant friends; one of our most charming Japanese, and perhaps also Gandhi. But this is not certain. . . .

366. Romain Rolland to Marcel Martinet (France)

*Villeneuve, 12 April 1928*

.... Gandhi has indeed said he'd like to come and see me soon, and this may change my plans completely. I must add (however odd it may seem) that I haven't encouraged him to come. I see he has formed an inexact idea of me, and I don't want to disappoint him. We have mutual friends, such as his principal disciple Mirabehn
(Miss Slade), whose enthusiasm makes her a little too blind to understand fully; in her burning desire to bring us together, she has portrayed me too much in the image of the Mahatma. On the other hand, a correspondence over the last few months in which I've firmly held out against Gandhi, as I can't accept the explanations he insists on giving publicly of his participation in the 1914 war, has inspired in Gandhi an intense desire to talk with me until we have thoroughly sorted out the question. (He's infinitely more attracted by people who resist or criticize him than by those who acquiesce in his judgment.) But he imagines that I am, as he is, devoted to the religious and social service of humanity, to the sole cause of peace, and that my whole activity and thought are directed towards this aim. He doesn't see that though I make a place for it in my life's work, the centre of my life is beyond. I'm keeping my own Western head firmly on my shoulders, and for me, my portion, my first duty and my great role is to see and understand—friend and enemy alike. Goethe is as important to me as Christ or Krishna. Gandhi must not make the journey to Switzerland to come up against what Snares, referring to Ibsen, called the "glaciers of intelligence". Maybe the sun shining on them is the same sun that shines on the Indus, but Sanyasins still risk catching colds in it.

(I really am being disrespectful! . . . Yet my heart is not so, and I revere the sancta sinceritas of the Mahatma. But this is just the point; I don't consider myself worthy of him.) . . .
367. Romain Rolland to Paul Geheeb (Switzerland)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
7 May 1928

.... I have been corresponding with Gandhi recently, and he did indeed think about coming to Europe, but I believe he is having to give up his plans. . . .

368. Romain Rolland to B. De Ligt (Netherlands)

Villeneuve, 4 July 1928

.... Thank you for your package; I had already read your open letter to Gandhi in Evolution. Since I share your feelings about Gandhi’s attitude in the last war, I have been arguing with him about it by letter for the last five or six months; Gandhi was even on the point last month of coming to Villeneuve so that together we could sort out this problem which is close to his heart; everything was ready for the journey when unforeseen events—the death of his right-hand man in the Satyagraha Ashram—forced him to postpone the project until next year.

Perhaps you are not following his weekly review Young India (published in Ahmedabad), in which he is telling the true story of his life and examining it; three or four months ago he came to that decision in 1914, over which he has difficulty in giving up his point (at that date and in the circumstances in which he took the decision), although he now condemns all participation in war; near or far, in fact or in spirit. We are not the only ones to be surprised at this contradiction, although I am more aware than most
of the mentality of great Indian religious thinkers, to whom absolute non-resistance must be a heroic act of heroic souls, without which it will be nothing. For a genuinely heroic soul like Vivekananda (whose life story I am at present writing), non-resistance is forbidden to anyone who hypocritically slips the slightest cowardly thought into it. For the question of the conscience, or perhaps one should say the salvation of the soul, has a much greater place in their thought than that of material social progress, for their concerns are those of the director of conscience. War is detestable in their eyes less for its ravages on the battlefield than for those it makes in the human heart.

M. K. Gandhi's present address is at Sabarmati (Satyagraha Ashram), Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Since he has been seriously ill and is overloaded with work, he is not likely to read an article written in French himself (he doesn't read much more than English). You could send the article care of Mirabehn, which is the religious name (same address) of his best disciple and our friend, an Englishwoman whose real name is Miss Madeleine Slade, daughter of an English admiral, who has been converted to Gandhi's faith and is devoted to his service, a remarkable woman both in heart and mind.

369. Romain Rolland to James H. Powers (U.S.A.)

Grand Hotel-Rigi-Kaltbad
11 August 1928

. . . . You have seen recently how the Schubert celebrations were travestied into official demonstrations of reascent pan-Germanism.

Also, Gandhi's delegate of the Sonntagsberg Congress, his friend Rajendra Prasad, who is his best lieutenant in "Non-co-operation", has just been beaten up in Graz by
Austrian nationalists, who at the same time knocked out the wife of a Graz teacher with whom he was staying. I saw him a day or so ago; he came to visit me in Rigi-Kaltbad, and he had a deep wound on his forehead. But that's another matter; the Indian Gandhists don't need our pity or our encouragement, and they don't ask for them. They are used to heroic patience. Their calm faith will conquer all. . . .

370. Romain Rolland to Toshihiko Katayama (Japan)

Rigi-Kaltbad, 15 August 1928

. . . . I am alone and working, or dreaming, on my Vivekananda. (I've just today finished his life story; I still have to look at the body of his religious thought and juxta¬pose it with ours.) I have no one to talk to; I've only had a visit a few days ago from two Indians, one of whom, Rajendra Prasad, is one of Gandhi's chief lieutenants, in the Non-co-operation movement; a handsome Bihari (Bengali) type, proud and refined. They were both coming from a world Congress of the International League of War Resis¬ters (a vast association embracing all lands and all parties, whose general secretariat is in England); this Congress took place near Vienna, and on the way back, at Graz in Aus¬tria, Prasad was half killed, completely without reason, by nationalists—Austrian Fascists, who hate him as the repre¬sentative of Gandhi. When I saw him he had a deep scar on his forehead. I imagine the early Christians must have aroused the same savage hatred. . . .
371. Romain Rolland to Beatrice Aram (Netherlands)

Villeneuve, 22 September 1928

. . . . Tagore did not come to Europe, as had been rumoured; his heart was giving him too much trouble to allow him to leave India. But I saw his son and his charming daughter-in-law, with their little adopted girl who sang and danced one of “grandpa’s” poems—lots of other Indians, too, including one of Gandhi’s best friends and lieutenants, sent by him as a delegate to a Congress of “War Resisters” in Austria, who’d been attacked in Graz and beaten across the face by a band of Austrian Fascist nationalists: he had a deep wound on his forehead. Such is the welcome given by European civilization to Asian barbarity! (You know that at the last Congress of the Second Internationale this spring, the European Socialists classified the oppressed peoples into three categories of worthiness or unworthiness—the first of which, of course, is far below the Europeans—and put India in the second category, not yet sufficiently evolved to have the right to emancipation! You can see there the influence of MacDonald and his Labourites!) . . .

372. Romain Rolland to Jeanne Challaye (France)

Villeneue (Vaud) Villa Olga
25 November 1928

. . . . Do you know that Lajpat Rai, the great political leader of the Indian Swarajist party who died recently, was very probably murdered? In any case he’d been wounded seriously in the region of the heart some
days before his death. And it wasn’t in a dispute between Hindus and Muslims, as several Muslims were also attacked, apparently at the same time, by government agents.

The English press is keeping silence and throwing flowers over the corpse. Our first really reliable report was from Gandhi.

This will make the December Congress an extremely violent affair.

Lajpat Rai, the first to be arrested during the Bengali insurrection of 1905 (whose arrest at that date sparked off an era of terrorism) could well by his death give the signal for the great uprising. . . .

373. Romain Rolland to Claude Salives (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, Christmas 1928

. . . . It’s so easy to repeat: “The Orient sleeps!”

When I wrote my *Gandhi*, for thirty years already Gandhi had been fighting, suffering and conquering; our Indologists knew it, but were careful not to say anything about it! Then when I did speak about it, they resented it and they still haven’t forgiven me.

For a century now there have been heroes and saints initiating and controlling an immense spiritual movement in India. Who has there been to tell us about it?

A month ago, India’s greatest political leader, Lajpat Rai, a man who sacrificed everything to his people (I knew him here in Switzerland) was murdered by the British police. Where was the newspaper to make us realize the seriousness of the event and its immense repercussions all over India, now on the brink of declaring her independence? . . .
374. Romain Rolland to Pastor Henri Roser

2 November 1929

... It is of the highest importance that a spiritual group as pure as yours should have arrived at this necessary admission of the fact of class warfare, in which the capitalist system is the aggressor, and the moral obligation facing all men of upright conscience to take the side of the oppressed classes. Your decision, maturely thought out and stated in glowing terms, will be of great weight in the balance of the future; it will sway the undecided souls to whom the phrase class war was the frightening synonym of civil war and who thus passively left it to "Caesar" to control human society, without heeding that social justice and the dignity of the human personality, insulted, outraged and crushed by the present system, are in the province, not of "Caesar", but of "God"—I mean the Soul. I have no need to add that, like you, I am convinced that the supreme weapon in the necessary fight for the creation of a juster society and a better humanity is heroic Non-violence, the most victorious examples of which are set by Gandhi. And this Non-violence implies a power of love and selflessness of which voluntary poverty and individual renunciation form the surest shield against that scourge of the modern age, that blind principle of demoralization and destruction, which is called Money....
375. Romain Rolland to Jacques Mesnil (France)

November 1929

... India is not lacking in heroes ready for complete self-sacrifice, but a few thousand heroes do not make up for lack of organization, and I fear that the struggle for independence may be anarchical (in the worst sense of the word). The only moral authority dominating the country is Gandhi, but he may well disappear in the first massacre (and perhaps he'll do nothing to avoid it). In any case, Jawaharlal Nehru is a character of proven nobility and great purity. I know him fairly well; he's been to Villeneuve. As long as Gandhi is beside him, he will be the best leader of the independence movement. Left to himself, his very impressionable, generous and violent nature may lead him to do something imprudent. What he needs is not to be stimulated, as you think, but to be moderated (which does not mean diluted!)...

376. Romain Rolland to Andre Suases (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
4 March 1930

... You judge Vivekananda's and Gandhi's faces very well from their portraits. But this gives you an example of how impossible it is for portraits to render the extraordinary fascination of certain faces. It's particularly striking with Gandhi; there's not one person I know who's seen him who hasn't said that the first impression he gives is of absolute ugliness and insignificance, then in
one brief moments he overwhelms you by the spirit which lights up his eyes and impregnates the least little folds of his skin— it’s a real case of fascination. And it’s once and for all; I don’t know one person who’s been able to escape from it afterwards. The same goes for Vivekananda, except that he captivated people by something regal and Handelian about him, whereas Gandhi conquers by disarming calm. I should love to see and judge for myself that toothless smile which must be such a curious marriage of Voltairean irony and the tenderness of St. Francis. (For there’s a strong dose of mischief in the dear man! If I had to write his portrait again, there’d be plenty of touches to add which I’ve since acquired. No one observes souls more sharply, or facts more exactly.) . . .

Romain Rolland to Eugen Relgis (Rumania)

Villeneuve, 29 April 1930

. . . . In general what seems to me most urgent, as also to Pierre Doyen, Han Ryner, Einstein, Delpeuch and Stefan Zweig, is to set aside all doctrines for the time being and come to an agreement on a precise action, a collective “No”! For war is an action, not a doctrine, and when it breaks out there will be no time for Byzantine discussions on the sex of the angels. We shall have to say ‘Yes!’ or “No!” to war on the spot, and thereby accept all the terrible consequences for ourselves and those closest to us.

But before accepting them we first ought to have foreseen them, and this is what, to my knowledge, no one has yet done—perhaps because no one dares to. We must not delude ourselves, or confine ourselves to vague speculations. We should look at precise cases for each of the peoples concerned, asking for example: “Suppose the Fascist Italian armies invade and devastate Southern
France; suppose their air force bombs and destroys cities (or, for the Italians, the same case the other way round), what should we do?” I have no doubt about the replies of Gandhi, Birukoff, Bulgakoff, Premysl, Pitter, etc. But what about the rest, those who are not supported by a religious sentiment of any kind? . . .

We ought to free ourselves from abstract questions, and confront our minds with the cruellest possibilities which they try to avoid thinking about. Pacifist mobilization needs extensive preliminary intellectual exercises, so as to rehearse the parts to be played.

. . . . Gandhi’s text was misread. The illegible word was not “not”, but “that”. The meaning of the sentence (which should not be divided by a full stop) is “that world peace is impossible as long as the exploited nations are not free” . . .

378. Romain Rolland to Charles-Marie Garnier
(France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
11 May 1930

. . . . I imagine that those to whom we first turn in other races are those who turn to us. Gandhi and Vivekananda, though being of the essence of old India, have absorbed much from the West. We can recognize ourselves in them. . . .
379. Romain Rolland to Jacques Mesnil (France)

Villeneuve
Wednesday, 17 September 1930

... Plenty of visitors at the moment; among them our Indian friends, Tagore and Kalidas Nag. The latter tells me that Sylvain Lévi hasn’t forgiven me for my Vivekananda any more than he has for my Gandhi. He wants to keep India in the museums and the archives; all life forbidden! Not that it needs his permission. ... 

380. Romain Rolland to Reginald Reynolds
(Great Britain)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
19 September 1930

... I was very pleased to receive your letter. I know you by your messages from India, which we received and which my sister read to me (unfortunately I do not read English well). We liked their forceful frankness, penetrating eye and sense of humour. You have done good work, and I know from C. F. Andrews that you are carrying on in England. It is sad, but understandable, that the truth is having so much trouble to make itself known. The British economy has got so used to living off the exploitation of India that it has become almost impossible to break away from it without causing possibly mortal sufferings to the whole present social state. In these circumstances, people prefer to hide their heads under a stone, like the ostrich, and pretend that they see nothing. Which
means that they'll be all the more harshly driven into the wall at the hour of reckoning; it's the "Dike" of iniquity. Once you're caught in its snare, you can't break away; you have to pay, and all too often the innocent pay for the guilty. I know that Gandhi's generous mind is concerned at this inextricable situation, and that he would have liked to spare England the material trials he foresees for her. But the blind ostrich won't let him.

I have the same conception of Peace as yourself. My motto, written at the head of the latest volume of my novel, Méré et Fils, is Spinoza's strong words:

Pax enim non belli privatio,  
Sed virtus est, quae ex animi fortitudine oritur.

The "pacifism" of "good people" (It's not very much to be "good people"! What we need is "brave people") is fatal to all virtues, and above all else to energy, the mother of them all—energy of thought which does not evade the issue and dares to be sincere with itself—and energy of the will which dares to say what it believes to be true, and to act on what it says.

The emasculated "pacifist" movement has allowed itself to be taken in by the deceptive mask of today's democratic states, who are ruining their peoples producing armaments for the most ferocious of wars. This mask must be torn away; no dealings are possible with hypocrisy! Frank violence is worth more than that; it is healthier even when it kills.

It is infinitely regrettable that your "great leader" couldn't visit Europe, as he thought of doing in 1928, before beginning the great struggle for India. I wish he could have made contact with our best Europeans and worked out with them some principles for action, and above all means of applying them, appropriate to the conditions and character of the West. Maybe you could think about collecting and editing a Gospel of action for Europe, along with
Andrews, based on Gandhi's latest writings (his discussions in *Young India* and his continuing meditations, which seem to have matured and clarified his thought further over the last five or six years).

It's no use shutting him up in a prison; his spirit is and always will be present among those who know him —like the spirit of the Man who came to sit at table with his disciples in Emmaus. You will bear the reflection of his halo upon you for the whole of your life. Pass it on! That is your portion.

I shall send you a few words¹ for Mahatmaji's birthday. Please add my name to yours on the telegram you send him. You could also add that of the venerable Paul Birukoff, the faithful friend and devout secretary of Tolstoy.

. . . . . He always keeps Gandhi's portrait above his bed, facing that of Tolstoy. Make a point of sending him your excellent little brochure, and if you have any more copies available, please send a few to my sister, Madeleine Rolland (same address as mine). She could use them, on the one hand for the archives of her Women's International League for Peace and Liberty (French section), and on the other for the "French Satyagrahists". In general it would be worthwhile to send my sister the published documentation on India as it appears (except *Young India*, which she takes regularly), as she could pass it on in France to the small groups most eager to help the cause.

¹ See item no. 158.
381. Romain Rolland to Albert Einstein (Germany)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
12 October 1930

... Nothing seems to me more appropriate to the celebration of one of India’s spiritual leaders than to express, as you wish to do, our moral adhesion to the principle of non-acceptance without violence, which in our civilization is translated into the refusal of military service.

You know that this is my conviction as well. I should merely like to be sure that we never forget, and we never let those who listen to us forget, that in our violent Europe, on the eve of a new attack of delirium tremens, this refusal has, or will have, self-sacrifice as a necessary consequence. Those over whom we have spiritual charge must not be allowed to form illusions on the strength of our words; they must realize that we are leading them to almost certain martyrdom. If they agree to this, then so do we. In our hard human life, martyrdom is almost always the necessary stage through which reason must pass in order to progress into the world of facts. . . .

382. Romain Rolland to Blanche Metayer (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
21 October 1930

... Here is a leaflet from the Friends of India. If you are interested in the present movement, I would encourage you to fill in the little form and join this group. It includes Gandhi’s noblest and sincerest European friends.
Write and mention my name to the secretary, Reginald Reynolds, now back from India, where he took part in the movement.

Apart from Gandhi's little weekly review, *Young India*, which we can now receive only secretly, you could subscribe to the excellent monthly review of Ramananda Chatterjee, *The Modern Review*, 210-3 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. Although its main concerns are literary and philosophical, it carries a great deal of information about events in India.

I have every confidence in the success of the great struggle. India will conquer her independence; of that there is no doubt. But there will be many sufferings on both sides. The Labour Government doesn't understand what's happening, and is blindly obstinate. . . .

383. Romain Rolland to E. Liechti (Switzerland)

*Villeneuve, 14 November 1930*

. . . . I read this in the "Confession of faith by a recent convert to Christian anti-militarism" (No. 25 of *La Résolution Pacifique*):

"Mahatma Gandhi was not originally a Christian. . . but I learn with joy that he has become a Christian. ..." This is wrong. Gandhi is not a Christian and will never be one, although he has a profound respect for Christianity; he formally disapproves of all conversions from one's native faith to another, and his own remains Hinduism.

Here are some extracts from a categorical declaration which he made at the meeting of the Council of the Federation of International Fellowships at Sabarmati on 13-15 January 1928, which I quote in my work, *La Vie de Vivekananda et L'Evangile Universel*, Vol. II, pp. 154-156:
“All religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism. . . . The thought of conversion is impossible. . . . The object of the Fellowships ought to be to help a Hindu to be a better Hindu, a Muslim to become a better Muslim, a Christian to become a better Christian. . . .

“We must eliminate from us any secret pride which would tell us that our religion is the truest and that the others are less so. . . . Our attitude towards other religions ought to be absolutely frank and sincere. Our prayer for others ought never to be: ‘God, give them the light Thou hast given to me!’ but ‘Give them all the light and truth they need for their higher development. . . .’ If some persons think that they ought to change their religious ‘etiquette’ by conversion, I cannot deny that they are free to do so, but I am sorry to see it.”¹

There’s no room for ambiguity in such a declaration. We can say, if we like, that the Hindu Gandhi is closer to Christ in heart and spirit than the degenerate Christians of today, but we have no right to make him into a convert. . . .

384. Romain Rolland to Pierre Cérèssole (Switzerland)

30 November 1930

. . . . There is nothing more in humanity’s interest at this moment than the recovery of its faith in an incarnate, real, living ideal, an ideal which can be seen, touched and watched as it works. And this can only be the work of six, five, four, three, two, perhaps even only one “just man” of Israel, as long as he is without compromise and follows through his “justice” to the end—a man who is not content to speak and write about it, but who will act it,

¹ Published in La Révolution Pacifique, No. 26, 1930
will live and (better still) die for it. It is in this respect that Gandhi is good; Christ was better, but there’s no saying that Gandhi will not emulate him. He’s not lacking in the calm will power necessary for it. . . .

385. Romain Rolland to Runham Brown (Great Britain)

20 February 1931

. . . . It must be said clearly and without illusions: There is no practical means of abolishing war promptly other than abolishing the present system of society and government which generates wars! In practice, the revolutionaries are right; a social revolution is necessary. And this revolution must be international or nothing.

This is not to say that the principle of non-violence must be abandoned! Our great guide M. K. Gandhi has proved to the world that non-acceptance without violence can be the most effective means of revolutionary action. But for this effectiveness to be real and powerful, it needs to be, as in India, collective and vigorously organized; and in this respect Europe is still not out of the kindergarten. But it’s never too late to learn. Let War Resisters International organize itself in a military way! (Why should I be afraid to use the word? Non-violence is the greatest of battles.)¹ . . .

386. Romain Rolland to Edmond Privat (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, Friday, 6 March 1931

. . . . Believe me, all these problems have been nagging at my mind for the last ten years or more; it’s not

¹ Reply to a questionnaire about a declaration by Albert Einstein to the New History Society of New York, 14 December 1930.
for nothing that I can't sleep. Hardly a week goes by when I am not called upon to give some advice about one or another burning issue arising from the difficult situations and terrifyingly complex duties facing us today. It's unfortunate that my ill-health doesn't allow me to speak in public, also that I have not been able to find a team of helpers and companions in France. Just think (I can see it more clearly after a close re-reading of Gandhi's *Experiments with Truth*) of the thirty years of groping behind these *Experiments*, carried on ceaselessly and openly, with the help of small armies of friends and disciples discussing their problems of conscience with him publicly in his journal! How could we hope to sort out our even more complicated problems in a few brief conversations!

I say "more complicated" because Gandhi was concerned above all with India, and from that point of view the situation was relatively simple—how much more simple than the one presented to us by the terrible political, social, moral and religious complexities of Europe and the world today! . . .

387. Romain Rolland to Edmond Privat (Switzerland)

*Saturday, 7 March 1931*

. . . . Another thing, don’t forget when you talk about Gandhi that with him, too, *Truth* dominates even *Ahimsa*! Don’t cover up the breath of combat running through his whole life which not only made him recruit soldiers for England as late as 1918, even when Andrews had denounced her iniquitous secret pacts to him, but still today makes him advise his Indians: “If you are not sincerely and loyally non-violent, if you have non-violence on your lips but violence in the depths of your hearts, then it is better to
be frankly violent! Go out and fight! That way you will be nearer to Truth.”

Whatever we think or do, we must maintain in ourselves and those close to us the atmosphere of heroic truth, with no blurring of the outlines! . . .

388. Romain Rolland to Camille Rouge (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
12 March 1931

.... I have just read the French editions of Gandhi’s Autobiography, which is to be published by Rieder, and I have written a long preface to it. I recommend you to read this holy work—this breviary of the “Search for Truth” in the midst of action. I think it will do for many souls of today what was done for so many souls in the past by the Imitation of Jesus Christ. . . .

389. Romain Rolland to Charles Baudouin (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 14 March 1931

.... My dear friend, please don’t believe that I approve of violence! That I never shall. But there are many things in the universe which I’m forced to accept without approving of them—starting perhaps with life itself, since destiny forces us to live by killing other forms of life. If I were in control of the circumstances, the whole problem of present action would be, for me, how to marry Non-violence with Revolution; and my recent reading of Gandhi’s Autobiography (I’m doing a preface for the French edition), a wonderful breviary of reason and action, has proved to me that such a union is possible and fruitful
in certain conditions. We must seek to bring about these conditions in Europe; but they won’t be brought about in a hurry, and meanwhile I’m forced to see the facts—and the great conflict building up between the two camps. (No more than two! This is clear-cut. The other distinctions are fading away every day.) And my reason agrees with my heart in telling me which of the camps I must espouse in its claims and its hopes. Am I to remain prudently silent and stand aside to watch, then flourish the victor’s rosette when fate has decided the outcome? That’s not for me! . . .

390. Romain Rolland to Edmond Privat (Switzerland)

5 May 1931

. . . . You know that a few years ago Gandhi was on the point of coming to Switzerland. He was more or less waiting for my reply before he decided, as he wanted to meet me. You may well imagine how much I wanted it too! But I still thought it better to dissuade him. I should have liked him to come with the clear intention of making contact with the young people of Europe who support non-resistance, so that he could listen to them and give them guidance, not just so that he could talk with me; I didn’t feel myself worthy of him, and I knew he was harbouring illusions about me, fostered no doubt by our mutual friend “Mirabehn”. I didn’t feel I had the right to take up even a few days of his precious life, which belongs to his people and the whole of humanity. In addition, Gandhi wasn’t in the least tempted by the prospect of exchanging ideas with the youth of Europe. He’s a prudent nature who goes one step at a time and acts as if he believed in the old proverb that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”, and he has always refused to intervene in the
problems of Europe before those of India were settled.

It still remains true, though, that even at that date—and how much more so today!—I felt it indispensable that this confrontation of Gandhi with Europe should take place—and today I should feel more qualified and less unworthy to talk about it with Gandhi.

Gandhi’s doctrine of faith and action is holy, and it has triumphantly proved its effectiveness in India. In my last article in *Europe* (15 April) I dwelt on this point again. But it is not an “Absolute” (he himself doesn’t see it as such; remember what he has written about his experiments always being relative in character, even those closest to his heart). Neither is India an “Absolute”. The great question today for all of us who are sincere and selfless seekers after truth is to decide how to reapply the Indian experiment to Europe (and the world).

*The basis of the faith, for me, remains inviolate.* This is *Love*—love in the sense of *Caritas*, not abstract or sentimental, but active; love for the good of other creatures, and the consecration of the self to the service of the community. *Ahimsa* is one of the sublimest expressions of this, and Gandhi’s *Non-acceptance*, his organized *Civil Resistance*, is at present the finest tactical form of it available to humanity.

What we now have to decide is whether it meets the needs of present action in Europe,—and, in a general way, in any country which is not naturally adapted to it, as India is, by special conditions of religious thought and age-old traditions of social life. I’m merely asking the question, not prejudging the answer or answers.

I should like it to be possible at the next International Congress of Non-resistance (a deplorable phrase which I wish we could wipe out of our minds, but it’s left its mark, even when our thoughts protest and cry out the very opposite—*resistance of the soul to the end!*).—I should like it to be possible for Gandhi to intervene at that Congress, as
no doubt he'll be in Europe at the time, and thus have the problem fully discussed. But I'm afraid Gandhi's obsession with the Indian political question, his fatigue and his instinctive distaste for tackling European problems will all prevent my wish from coming true.

And yet . . . and yet! . . . How useful it would be, even for Gandhi, to broaden his horizon at this hour! What he's published recently about the questions of class and the proletarian struggle shows that he's almost completely unaware of the new phase which the world has entered as it goes its bleeding way. All he sees before him is the inequality of classes in a patriarchal society in which there is room for brotherly fellowship; capitalism appears to him in the form of the great mill-owners of Ahmedabad, worthy and pious people, open to the influence of his words and keeping in contact with their workers. He has had no dealings with the new faceless and heartless power of Money, large anonymous companies, international consortiums, blind monsters much more terrible than the "Machine" against which Tagore and Gandhi have shot so many useless arrows,—for Money is the invisible Machine, and it is this which today commands States and public opinion. Can our tactics be the same against a tyrant, however ferocious, against several hundred princelings (ministers and representatives of a nation), against even a whole people of flesh and blood,—as they need to be against forces without a face, without a name, without anything human left about them?

Then, again, what a lot of problems there are in the application of absolute non-violence! Its personal application (I mean on our own behalf and at our own expense) is only the smallest aspect of the question. When it comes down to it, it's not really difficult for men of our sort to sacrifice ourselves to what we believe to be true! But what about sacrificing other people? Is this sacrifice in itself not an act of
violence? And does not non-violence imply thousands of sacrifices in advance? It’s all very well for those with the will and the conscience, but what about those who haven’t been consulted, the unconscious, the “innocent”? I haven’t the time to go into details here, but I keep coming back to those three little girls in Upton Sinclair (at the end of his novel *Oil*), thrown into a vat of boiling coffee. . . . If you had been there, what would you have done? And what would you do to prepare against the imminent visit of a punitive expedition? The European supporters of non-violence really must be in possession of a firm doctrine, evolved from conscientious discussions and trials, so as to be ready for all eventualities in the harsh and cruel years of large-scale conflict which are the straits through which the march of humanity is fated to pass. If they allow themselves to be taken unawares, they will founder in the depths of despair, which will leave them either discouraged or as fierce as all the rest. Nothing must be left to chance.

Perhaps you will understand now why I believed it necessary to sound the alarm to wake up the over-placid non-violent”! May I add that over the last ten years I have gradually become disgusted at the sight of certain of my friends among the French intellectuals, too easily contented with their comfortable “non-violent” attitude and casually making non-committal protests by putting their signatures to inoffensive newspaper petitions, without compromising anything of their nice calm bourgeois situation! —Although I’m incapable of dipping my hands in violence on my own account, when I compare the attitude of these white-handed Pharisees to that of a Lenin, risking his life and risking bringing down infamy and curses on himself in order to tear millions of the oppressed out of the hell in which they lived, the latter seems to me not only more virile, but even more genuinely loving, more in conformity with the inner law of sacrifice in the service of humanity!
If he made mistakes, they sprang from his mind, not his heart; but his mind was confronted with the need for immediate action. He had to act, and not acting was in itself a form of action (as Krylenko proved to thousands of workers in Petrograd in the October Days—see John Reed’s fine book*), as it meant leaving action to the worst elements. What the present hour needs is a watchword for action. Come together and discuss it! First you must be thoroughly familiar with it and agree to disseminate it.

391. Romain Rolland to Charles Bernard (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 26 May 1931

.... Apart from my personal work, I have recently written quite a long introduction to Gandhi’s *Autobiography*, for the abridged French edition which has been published by Rieder in Paris. I recommend you to get hold of this book, in which one of the world’s great leaders reveals himself with absolute sincerity and not a shade of vanity.

392. Romain Rolland to Abbe Alfred Martin (Belgium)

18 July 1931

.... Above all I would recommend you to read Gandhi’s admirable *Autobiography* (or more accurately, *Story of My Experiments with Truth*). A good abridged edition has appeared in French translation two months ago, published by Rieder in Paris, 7 Place Saint-Sulpice, with quite a long introduction by me.

I have also written a preface to a collection of Gandhi’s

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*Ten Days that Shook the World*
articles published a few years ago by Stock, under the title, *Lajeune Inde*.

This last title (meaning *Young India*) is that of the weekly journal which for ten years or more Gandhi has been publishing and writing, almost entirely by himself, at Ahmedabad—ceaselessly in direct contact with his people, discussing things with them and directing them. . . .

393. **Romain Rolland to Lucien Price (U.S.A.)**

*Lugano, Park Hotel*

*Wednesday, 12 August 1931*

. . . . I shall stay in Ticino until the beginning of September, unless I’m called back by Gandhi’s arrival as he passes through Villeneuve. (He intends to come and see us either coming or going, and Madeleine is already thinking about renting the goat which is to provide the milk for his meals; we can see it already, gambolling on the lawn of the Villa Lionnette. . . .)

394. **Romain Rolland to Erich Schramm (Germany)**

*Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga*

*22 September 1931*

. . . . My health, very much shaken this year by several bronchial attacks in succession, obliges me to stay in my room, or indoors, this winter.

The same reason prevented me from going to greet Gandhi at his disembarkation in Marseilles, but my sister did it for me; she carried him my message, and Gandhi told us he hopes to pass through Villeneuve on his way back to India from London.
I had occasion to write to him yesterday\(^1\) to pass on an ardent request from some youth groups in Southern Germany and Switzerland, inviting him to come and speak to them. I doubt whether he’ll find time for it in these days of discussions with such decisive importance for the future of India—and of Europe. But I hope he will at least send a message to the German youths, and that is what I am asking him to do. . . .

395. Romain Rolland to Rene Arcos (France)

_Villeneuve, Wednesday, 23 September 1931_

. . . . Yes, I’m back in Villeneuve, more or less restored and refurbished by the Lugano sun; I found my sister there who is slowly recovering. The bad weather prevented me from going to meet Gandhi in Marseilles, as we had arranged between us, but my sister braved the risks to her health to carry him my message, and she spent all the morning of his arrival with him on the boat, present at the procession of journalists and official delegates passing before the little man, who received them all with his mischievous humour. It was very interesting, and she brought back an impression of the day which goes beyond even what she expected. Gandhi is in excellent health, in good form and with a lively, lucid and precise mind, which runs little risk of being caught in the honeyed webs of European intrigues in which the innocent Tagore got his wings stuck. I’m not worried about the outcome; Indian independence is certain, and I find it hard to believe that Great Britain won’t have the wisdom to consent to it in the best possible conditions. Otherwise India will impose it on her; Gandhi’s troops are ready for all eventualities. They are mobilised in India

\(^1\) This letter has not been found.
by Jawaharlal Nehru, who is a second Gandhi, younger and more inclined to vigorous action. Just one cable and the order is given for the whole of India. Is the British Empire, short as it is of gold, still capable of waging the necessary war? How many days can it last? Our Reynauds will have to lend them their powder to keep the cannons fed.

. . . . I forgot to say that Gandhi will very probably come to Villeneuve. He has promised to do so.

. . . . Talking about the press reports about Gandhi which you read, to see if there was any note of my presence, there's one little observation worth making. Only the Marseilles and Southern press referred (naively), not only to the presence of my sister, but even to what Gandhi said about me to the students of Marseilles. (He told them that if he had any links with France it was through me.) The Paris press, following orders from above, cut out all the references to my name. What fools! Now all my friends abroad are aware of the boycott and are exaggerating it. It's grist to their mill. . . .

396. Romain Rolland to Lucien Roth (France)

25 September 1931

. . . . My sister saw Gandhi for a long time at Marseilles, and he has promised to come and see us in Villeneuve. We still don't know when he will come, though; it may be at short notice, for a weekend, or at the end of the conference on the journey from London to Bombay. How pleased I should be if you could see him too! . . .
397. Romain Rolland to Louis Guilloux (France)

Villeneuve, 10 October 1931

. . . . You believe you know “the communion of men all equally tortured by the same anxieties” . . . You know it only in the distress of Europe, of France, which compared to that of nine-tenths of the earth is still a privileged state.

Recently, when Gandhi went to visit Lancashire, whose working masses have been ruined by the Indian revolt, he didn’t hide to the people there (who nobly received him and understood him) that though he was sincerely sorry for them in their distress which he had caused, he could in no way be shocked or restrained by what he saw, for the distress of Lancashire compared to that of India still looked like luxury.

The British Empire’s experience with India, off whom it has lived for a century and a half and as a result of whom it will die, is merely the prelude to that of the whole of the West with the rest of the world. . . .

398. Romain Rolland to Mme. Paul Birukoff (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 10 October 1931

. . . . I am greatly grieved at the death of our dear Paul Birukoff. I felt a filial affection and veneration for this holy figure; through him I saw and heard Tolstoy, purer, gentler and more “kindly”. I am most upset that he passed away before having the supreme joy I hoped for him, that of meeting Gandhi. (It was one of my dreams to bring
Gandhi to see him if he came to Villeneuve, as I have been given to hope that he will. He would have offered him Tolstoy's greetings, and would have been worthy to receive Gandhi's homage on Tolstoy's behalf.

399. Romain Rolland to Mme. Paul Birukoff (Switzerland)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
21 October 1931

... I have received a brief letter this morning from Gandhi, and am sending you a copy. It is consoling to think that your dear husband was at least able to write to Gandhi on the eve of his death and send him his last greetings, at which Gandhi was deeply moved.

It is more or less certain that Gandhi will pass through Switzerland. He has said so again today through Miss Slade (Mira), who has written to my sister. Unfortunately the date is not certain yet. It depends how long the Round Table Conferences last; they may be over by mid-November (or even before), or they may go on until December. Gandhi will not leave London before they end. (It is very probable, I might add, that they will come to nothing; Gandhi foresees this, but it is not affecting his optimism.) I should have very much liked you to be able to meet him when he comes.

400. Romain Rolland to Charles Baudouin (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 29 October 1931

... Gandhi will no doubt spend a few days with us in mid-November. Would you like me to give you notice of it? (But don't tell anyone about it!)...
401. Romain Rolland to Berta Schleicher (Germany)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
11 November 1931

.... Gandhi is still keeping us in suspense about the exact date of his arrival, but the latest news from him which arrived yesterday says it will be in the second half of this month. The Indian National Congress, whose delegate he is, is recalling him as soon as the London negotiations are finished, without leaving him time for his planned European tour. Villeneuve alone is excepted, as it is on the direct route back. So we shall be expecting his arrival starting from about 20 November, and he will be staying here a few days.

In these conditions, I shall have to ask you if you wouldn't mind putting off your journey to Switzerland next month, when we should risk being disturbed in our (or rather your) work.1 But we shall be free from the second week in December, by which time our Indian visitors will certainly have left for India where, alas, the struggle will begin again....

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1 Preparation of a German-language edition of a selection from the correspondence between Romain Rolland and Malwida von Meysenbug.
402. Romain Rolland to Charles Baudouin
(Switzerland)

Wednesday, 2 December 1931

.... Our Indians are arriving on Sunday evening and staying until Friday evening. On Tuesday from 4 to 9, several meetings have been organized for G. in Lausanne. There will very probably be another one in Geneva; in any case Gandhi will be going there. Monday is G.'s silence day (but he'll listen). I can't say whether there'll be any excursions organized for the other days; G. seems to wish it. I wanted to be sure you knew. (Don't talk about it to anyone else!) Perhaps it would be best to telephone the day before, so as to be sure of finding him. . . .

403. Romain Rolland to Lucien Roth (France)

4 December 1931

.... Gandhi is definitely arriving in Villeneuve on Sunday evening, 6 December, and will stay with us (in the Villa Lionnette, which is independent of mine) until the evening of Friday 11th. On Tuesday he will hold four successive but different meetings in Lausanne, both public and private, between 4 and 9 p.m. (Among others, Pierre Ceresole and the International Civil Service will be there, along with the conscientious objectors.)

I know your health and other occupations will not allow you to be there, but my sister wanted us to send you the invitation cards (or rather have them sent from Lausanne).
This is to let you know in advance. In any case you will be with us in our thoughts in the coining days. . . .

. . . . I shall have to refrain from going with Gandhi to Lausanne or anywhere else. The most I shall be able to do is to go from one villa to the other. Broken down old soldiers!

. . . . Naturally we’re assailed on all sides by requests—and offers—for Gandhi. The Vevey dairymen’s trade union (and the Socialist municipality) telephoned yesterday to ask for the honour of “purveying to the king of India” (sic!) during his stay. . . .

404. Romain Rolland to Frans Masereel (France)

Villeneuve, Saturday, 5 December 1931

. . . . Gandhi is arriving tomorrow, Sunday, and will stay with us until Friday 11th. He’s coming with a whole entourage of Indians and admirers from all lands, whom he drags along behind him willy nilly like a tail. It’ll be an interesting five days, but we shall have our work cut out. The telephone has been ringing incessantly for a week, and the mail . . . well, it’s enough to drown one! We are receiving the strangest of messages; some real curiosities as well. The local trade union has placed itself entirely at the disposition of the “king of India” (sic!), to “purvey” to him while he’s here. . . .

405. Romain Rolland to Claire Geniaux (France)

Villeneuve, Tuesday, 8 December 1931

. . . . It’s quite true that Gandhi is my guest at the moment. He arrived on Sunday and is staying until Friday, and we have already had long conversations. As I thought,
he is very simple, very modest and very sure of his methods and his faith. It is true that he refuses to be distracted from his Indian task; he leaves it to others to apply to Europe his tactics of combat without violence, and he believes that the victory of India will be of use to the rest of the world. This evening, in meetings in Lausanne, he is to meet Pierre Cérésole, leader of the International Civil Service, and perhaps Einstein. As to what’s waiting for him when he arrives in India: prison, deportation, etc., it doesn’t affect him in the least. He finds it quite natural that he and his people should have to suffer cruelly, and he talks of it gaily. . . .

406. Romain Rolland to Berta Schleicher
(Germany)

Villeneuve, Wednesday, 9 December 1931

. . . . Gandhi has been with us since last Sunday, with some of his Indian disciples, and will be staying until Friday 11th. They’re going back to India via Brindisi. . . .

407. Romain Rolland to Pastor William Genton
(Switzerland)

Villa Olga, Villeneuve, 10 December 1931

. . . . Having been born and bred a Christian, I have often been struck by the fact that today’s Christians are men of little faith. I have often wondered why they bring God into their thoughts at all, for they generally act not according to God’s absolute principles, but on reasons of personal appropriateness and expediency. The least one can say is that they show only a very limited confidence
in God, and they trust less in His aid than in that of their own strong arms.

Since I am now detached from the Christian religion, I am not commenting or passing judgment on this attitude; I am merely noting it as a fact.

In no sense is this attitude shared by Gandhi and the elite of Hindu believers following him.

I am very familiar with the basis of his thought on Non-violence and Non-acceptance without violence (which it is completely absurd to call “Non-resistance”, since it is an extreme resistance, carried to the furthest limits of heroism; that of the man marching out to suffering and death with open arms, not only without countering violence by violence, but even countering hatred by love).

This faith, this law which Gandhi has followed and applied in action for thirty years, is absolute, with no compromise and no exception.

It is not enough to say that it would not vary if it were faced, not with the English, but with the Russians, the Italian Fascists or the Chinese. Even if it were up against thirty million legions of the devils of hell (as Luther might have put it), it would still not vary.

Here again I’m not commenting or judging; I’m noting and asserting a fact, for such is the exact and absolute truth. It’s clear that you’re not aware of the physical and moral intrepidity of the men and women formed by the Mahatma’s example and faith. But if you re-read the acts of the Christian Martyrs, you would find among these men, still illuminated by the living memory of the Man who bore his own cross, the same calm and joyful exaltation of sacrifice.

You also seem to me very ill-informed about English oppression in India which is just as brutal and inhuman as that of Mussolini in the Italian countryside. Naturally it has the same cautious respect for Gandhi that the Tsarists
felt obliged to show towards Tolstoy, though at the same
time deporting or hanging those who adhered to his views;
no despotism wants to arouse world opinion by striking at
certain too highly placed heads. But whereas Tolstoy was
content to moan about the exceptional measures protecting
him, Gandhi can and will break through them by marching
in the front ranks of the masses he is leading to the sacrifi-
cence. All your doubts on this subject will be removed in
the very near future. This winter will not pass without the
campaign of Non-acceptance being revived all over India,
and none of the Indians I am seeing is unaware of the thou-
sands of sacrifices which will be the ransom of their inde¬
pendence. But whatever the toll of deaths and sufferings
may be, India and her leader will pay it. Need I add
that the greatest joy of a man like Gandhi would be to be
killed for his faith? It's not impossible to believe that this
is how it will be. . . .

408. Romain Rolland to Erich Schramm (Germany)
Villeneuve, 14 December 1931

. . . . Here are Gandhi's replies to your questions; they
were noted down as he was speaking:
1. What do you call God?

"God is not a person, but an immutable law. And in this
case the law and its Maker are one. In ordinary experience the
word "law" means books of law, but here when I speak of law,
I mean the living law. That is what God is. And this law
does not change; it is eternal. It is not a personal God who
changes with changing circumstances. God is an eternal principle,
and that is why I have said that Truth is God."

Note well that he does not say "God is Truth"; this is
a distinction he had dwelt on several times. For "truth"
(the divine) can be found among men (notably scientists) who profess and believe to be atheists.

2. Do you trust the Christians, etc. . . .

Gandhi replied explicitly to this question at the Lausanne meetings. This is how he sums up his views on the subject:

“Christianity is good, but the Christians are bad.”

3. Would you join an organization for a universal religion, peace, etc. . . .

Gandhi replies that if the questioner wants to know if he favours a universal approach to peace and affectionate co-operation between all men, the question is more than superfluous, since that has been the aim of his whole life. But when it comes to joining an organization, of whatever kind it may be, he refuses:

“I have often been asked to associate myself with some particular organization and I have always said no! In London I refused to allow my name to be associated with a league calling itself the “World League of Ahimsa”. I even refused to put my signature to the journal they published. So my reply here, as always, is no!

Those, my dear Mr. Schramm, are the exact replies. Forgive me for not being able to receive you these last few days. I was very unwell with ‘flu when Gandhi was staying with me, and I had to reserve all my strength for the long conversations I had with him. . . .

409. Romain Rolland to Ré Meynard (France)

Villeneuve, 16 December 1931

. . . . Gandhi did indeed spend five days here, and though his visit brought us much joy and instruction, it also considerably added to our tasks; for a week life was an uninterrupted tornado of telegrams, telephone calls, letters and packages, and an invasion of visitors from far and near.
We still haven't finished winding up the legacy of intruders which he left us. But his words have been profoundly moving to thousands of people, and the bourgeois press is foaming with rage today.

410. Romain Rolland to Henri Hisquin (France)

Villeneuve, 16 December 1931

... Gandhi did indeed spend five days here, and he left us a rich harvest of thought—both from our private conversations and from the meetings we organized for him in Lausanne and Geneva. With his calm sincerity, he gave a rough shaking to the stick-in-the-muds along our frog-pool of a lake. He even peacefully tweaked the long Calvin-esque nose of the *Journal de Genève* with its arrant lies. So the great bourgeois press is foaming with rage. But thousands of little people have been moved to the depths of their beings, and their touching messages bear witness to the fact; I was submerged with them last week. As to the conversations and discussions, both private and public, with Gandhi, I have been setting down my memories of them for the last week. His thought couldn't be clearer or firmer in any detail, and I am certain that if he lives ten more years (as he may well do; his frail appearance gives a false idea of his solid constitution) we shall see him, after the struggle for independence, engage a new and complementary battle with the same weapons against native capitalism in India. He has said straight out: “I make no distinction between native capitalism and English capitalism. ... But in the struggle for independence I do not want to make the problem even more difficult than it is already.” To each day its own problem, and one step at a time! His steps are giant strides, and they go straight ahead. ...
411. Romain Rolland to Pastor Paul Leenhardt
(France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
20 December 1931

... A year ago in the Moscow press (by way of example), I defended individualism and "humanism" (to avoid saying "humanitarianism") against some Bolshevik writers* who were courteously reproaching me for not breaking free from these ideals (by the way, I understand perfectly how disgusted they are by the hypocritical use of these great words by the rhetoricians of the West). This debate went the rounds of the Russian press; it even got in among the young workers in the factories, some siding with me, others against; even "officials" have publicly written: "Rolland is right: true humanism and healthy and full individualism are the ideals we seek, the ideals at which we must arrive. Bourgeois thought in the West, which swears by them, is not really serving them; it betrays them." I have some interesting letters from young workers on the subject. ... In the same quarters I have asserted my friendship and admiration for Gandhi which had been reproached in me as a weakness; and my quoted words have given many young Communists food for thought. ...

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* Letter to Fedor Gladkov and Ilya Selvinsky, February, 1931
412. Romain Rolland to Georges Pioch (France)

Villeneuve, 23 December 1931

. . . . As to Gandhi and Mussolini, here are the facts. At one of his Lausanne meetings, Gandhi was expounding his doctrine of *absolute* non-co-operation with the state. Ceresole, the noble director and founder of the International Civil Service, raised the objection that not all states are equally bad and not everything is bad in the state; are there no functions within it with which one can and should co-operate?

Gandhi replied, with his usual clarity:

". . . . There is no state, *even run by a Nero or a Mussolini*, which has no good things in it. But we must reject the whole from the moment we decide not to co-operate with the system. . . ."

(There follow some very interesting explanations and expansions of the idea, based on precise examples in India; but this quotation is enough here.)

You can be sure that *there is no “naivety” in Gandhi*. Nothing takes him in, and he goes straight ahead on his way without hiding anything—without worrying about the policemen who escorted him from London to Brindisi without straying an inch from his side, along with the ever-growing snowball of their Swiss and Italian colleagues. Everything he thinks he says aloud; the police and the *Duci* waste their time on him.

. . . . The interview with Mussolini took place in the presence of three witnesses brought and chosen by Gandhi, including his two secretaries. The content will be known later if Gandhi chooses, and we can be sure that Gandhi
calmly stated his undisguised thought. What I know of Tagore’s visit to Mussolini allows me to reconstruct the scene. Tagore told the Duce that he was horrified by violence, and the Duce, inclining, replied: “Me too!”

Let’s all sing the immortal fugue from Falstaff (at the end of the comedy): “Tutt’è burla....”

413. Romain Rolland to Lucien Roth (France)

24 December 1931

Don’t count on the Swiss press for a report of Gandhi’s meetings; they would have stifled the slightest report of his passage through their country if they could! Gandhi’s words, clear and calm, gave such a lash to their hypocrisy that the Swiss bourgeoisie is kicking itself for having allowed him to be heard. After the first meeting in Lausanne, the order went out to the radio not to broadcast the Geneva meeting on any station, either Swiss or German (as had at first been arranged), and the whole press hammered him with a few words of scornful derision. (The only exceptions are the small and insignificant leaflets put out by the French Swiss conscientious objectors and La Sentinelle of La Chaux-de-Fonds, and the only editor of that capable of understanding Gandhi’s ideas, Edmond Privat, has left with him for India.)

How I wish I could share with you the long conversations I had with Gandhi!—every morning for five days, from 9 to 12, to say nothing of the other occasions. I took exact notes of them, but alas, I am so overladen with work (and these extra jobs have made me all behind) that there’s no time today to repeat to you the most precious things that were said. I found him absolutely sincere, absolutely firm and steadfast in his path. Alongside him all our own conscientious objectors, Pierre Cérésole and his
phalanx of the International Civil Service, looked like timid and stammering children. In Lausanne Gandhi laid down his doctrine of absolute non-co-operation with the state which generates armies and war; non-co-operation not only with the army (which is too little!) but with every activity of the state, rights and duties, tasks and privileges. Cérésolé, who tries to reconcile his duty as a Swiss citizen with the voice of his conscience and was profoundly disturbed, made an attempt to distinguish between good and bad states; but Gandhi replied calmly that even the worst states, “those of Nero or Mussolini”, always have something good in them and that this is no reason for not rejecting them as a whole. In Geneva he made a clear pronouncement on the double problem of militarism (even that which claims to be in self-defence) and capitalism. He said that the only real force in the world was Labour, and that if the workers realized this they would only have to stand and show themselves for the whole of capitalism to crumble. For his own part, he added that he makes no distinction in India between native and British capitalism. It’s very clear that if he lives ten more years (as he may well do; his apparent weakness gives a false impression of his unshakable solidity) he will take the lead in the Indian social movement when the national question is settled. For the moment he is expecting (as we all are) a cruel British drive to crush Indian independence; the least he anticipates for himself is deportation, and he is going to face it with laughter on his lips. For he doesn’t smile, he laughs, with his toothless mouth wide open, panting like a big friendly dog rubbing his wet nose against your shoulder. That’s how he embraced me, but it was his head, not his nose, which was wet because of the rain; his shaven head with grey stubbly hair. Each evening at 7 o’clock there were prayers in my ground-floor lounge. (Every night, too, at 3 in the morning, but I wasn’t present at those.) They were fine old chants, from the
Gita and the tale of Rama and Sita, which reminded me of our Gregorian chant. Then at the end he asked me to play him some Beethoven (he knows that Beethoven was the link between his great disciple Mira (Miss Slade) and myself, and that I then became the link between Mira and him; thus the gratitude of all three of us goes back to Beethoven). I played him the Andante from the Fifth Symphony, and added the Elysian Fields (the flute melody) from Orfeo.

Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal, the two secretaries and disciples who were with him, are admirable young men, full of talent and born artists, but they sacrificed everything to him and they regret nothing, delighting in the extraordinary atmosphere of purity and heroism which radiates from the man and his Ashram. But Mira dominates them all in the Ashram by her nobility and beauty; she's an unforgettable vision, like a young Demeter. It's nearly ten years ago that I knew her for the first time in London, at a time when she did not know where to turn and some instinct drew her towards me; then she stayed in Villeneuve for two successive years (at a distance, though, and seeing me only once or twice in three months), and the same instinct led me to direct her towards Gandhi. It's safe to say today—and she says it too—that this was a real illumination, for she found there a task predestined for her from all eternity, her mission, her master and her homeland; her role there is a large one and it will go on growing. She has become purely Indian, but she has brought as a dowry to India the active intelligence of a European and gifts of practical organization which marry admirably with those of Gandhi.

They would both like to see me there, but what little life I have left to me is not enough for poor unfortunate Europe. As to that problem, Gandhi is well aware of the tragic destiny threatening Europe. (I told him about it; Monday was his “silence day” when he says nothing, but he listens, and I took my chance.) But he refuses to occupy
his mind with it at present. He is a man of action, completely taken up with the action he is at present pursuing, and basing it solely on his personal experiences—and he admits himself that his personal experiences are not enough for our Europe; they are valid only for his 300 million Indians. It's not that he isn't intimately convinced of the effectiveness of his non-violent methods for all mankind, but the terms of their application vary according to peoples and circumstances, and he says it's not for him to decide them for Europe; Europe herself must give birth to another Gandhi. He also thinks that the most useful thing he can do for the world is to carry his action in India forward to victory, for when (he says "when", not "if") this victory is obtained, its radiant power will act on Europe. This is what he thinks about Europe at heart: "O men of little faith! You cannot believe without touching. Well then, touch! We shall show you our crucifixion and the lance-thrust in our side."...

414. Romain Rolland to Lucien Price (U.S.A.)

Villeneuve, 25 December 1931

. . . . . Your article in the Globe¹ on our meeting with Gandhi touched me no less than your most welcome letter.

. . . . . How pleased I would have been to have you here during our Indians’ stay! They were here for five days, from Sunday evening to Friday 11th in the afternoon, staying in the Villa Lionnette. The little man, spectacled, toothless, enveloped in his white burnous, legs bare, skinny and stilt-like, like a heron’s, head bare and tonsured with rough stubble damp in the rain, came up to me with a jerky laugh, his mouth open like a good dog

¹ A Boston newspaper
panting. He rested his cheek on my shoulder, putting his right arm round me, and I felt his grey head against my cheek; the kiss of St. Dominic and St. Francis (hark at me boasting!) With him were Mira (Miss Slade), proud of features and with the august bearing of a Demeter, and three Indians, a young son of Gandhi called Devdas, with a round and happy face (a nice lad, not fully aware of the great name he bears), and two secretaries and disciples, young men of rare qualities of mind and heart: Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal.

Since I’d managed just before he came to pick up a bad cold on my chest, Gandhi came to me each morning in the first-floor room in the Villa Olga where I sleep (you remember it), and we had long conversations. (My sister served as interpreter, helped by Mira, and I also had a Russian friend and secretary, Marie Koudacheff, to note down our conversations. Schlemmer, our neighbour in Montreux, took some good photographs to capture the scene.) Then at 7 in the evening, in the ground-floor lounge, there were prayers, with the lights out, the Indians sitting on the floor, a little assembly of the faithful in a group round him: a series of three fine chants, the first taken from the Gita, the second an ancient hymn based on Sanskrit texts, translated by Gandhi, the third a canticle to Rama and Sita, intoned by Mira’s grave and warm voice. These fine recitatives, unfolding calmly in the night, were separated by periods of total silence. Gandhi holds prayers again at 3 in the morning, for which he would wake up his hard-pressed staff in London when they’d only got back at 1 o’clock. He’s an unbreakable little man, though he looks frail; tiredness is a word he doesn’t know; he could spend hours answering every point thrown at him by a listening crowd attacking him, as he did in Lausanne and Geneva—sitting on a table, his voice staying clear and calm, striking back at both declared and undeclared adversaries (and there was no lack
of them in Geneva!) with harsh truths which left them
dazed and choking. The Swiss bourgeoisie, militarist and
nationalist, which first received him with astute courtesy,
was trembling with rage when he left, and I believe he
would have been forbidden any more public meetings if his
stay had been longer. He expressed himself in the clearest
and most unequivocal terms possible on the double question
of national armies and conflicts between capital and labour;
I myself spurred him on considerably in this latter direc-
tion. His mind advances by successive experiments on ac-
tion, and he sticks to a straight course, but he never stops,
and one could easily make mistakes if one judged him by
what he said ten years ago, as his thought is in constant
evolution. I’ll give you just one typical example. He was
asked in Lausanne to define what he meant by God. He
explained how, among the thousands of names given to
God in the Hindu scriptures, he settled in his youth on the
word *Truth* as the most essential definition. So he said
“*God is Truth*”. “But”, he adds, “two years ago” I went a
step further, to say that “*Truth is God*”. For “even the athe-
ists do not doubt the necessity and the power of truth. In
their passion to discover truth, the atheists have not hesi-
tated to deny the existence of God, and, *from their point of
view, they are right.*” This detail alone will give you a
glimpse of the boldness and independence of this religious
spirit of the East. I’ve noticed similar details in Vivekanananda.

For his brief journey to Italy, I spent a long time put-
ting him on his guard, and I sent him to one of my friends
in Rome, General Moris, who made him his guest and kept
him out of some of the traps. (N.B. There’s no point in
mentioning his name if you have occasion to speak about
this in public; it would be held against Moris.) When
he saw Mussolini, he took the precaution of having two
witnesses with him, Mira and his secretary, to prevent his
words from being deformed, and I’m sure he expressed
himself with his usual liberty. Gandhi’s account of his interview with the Duce, echoes of which have reached me, is full of humour; we’ll talk about it again. In any case he hasn’t been taken in; there’s no political trick that can catch him out. His own policy is to say everything he thinks to anyone; there’s never anything hidden. So the two Herculean policemen bestowed on him by England, who escorted him to Brindisi, swollen on the way by their Swiss and Italian counterparts, didn’t earn their money—unless they forged false reports! (Of which there was no lack in the Fascist press.)

On the last evening, after the prayers, Gandhi asked me to play him a little Beethoven. (He doesn’t know Beethoven, but he knows that Beethoven was the link between Mira and myself, and that I was then the link between Mira and him; thus in the end all our gratitude goes back to Beethoven.) I played him the Andante from the Fifth Symphony, and I added Gluck’s Elysian Fields (the orchestral piece and the flute melody). He is very affected by the religious chants of his country which are related to our finest Gregorian melodies, and he has worked to collect them. We also exchanged our ideas on art, a notion which he does not separate from that of truth, nor from that of joy which he says truth should bring. “Sat-chit-ananda” . . . “Sat” means “truth”. “Chit” means “that which lives” and “true knowledge”. “Ananda” means “ineffable joy”. But it goes without saying that for his heroic nature joy is not found without effort, nor indeed without harshness. “The seeker after truth has a heart tender as the lotus and hard as granite.”

These, my dear friend, are just a few shreds from these last few days, of which I have taken detailed notes. What I haven’t told you about is the whirlwind of tiresome, curious and half-mad creatures let loose on our villas as a result of his passage. The telephone never stopped ringing, photographers in ambush were letting fly from every bush. The
Lake of Geneva Dairymen’s union wrote that they hoped to be “purveyors” to the “king of India” while he was staying with me. We had letters from “sons of God”; and there were Italian women writing to the Mahatma to ask him for ten numbers for the next draw in the “Lotto” (the weekly national lottery)!

415. Romain Rolland to Gabriel Belot (France)

Villeneuve, 25 December 1931

... We’ve had the pleasure of having Gandhi with us for five days. You know his thought through my books; what you don’t know is his laughter, his open toothless laugh like a good dog panting. He’s quite straightforward, quite frank and quite sincere. He’s going right ahead on his way, and like the “Rattenfänger” (The Pied Piper) in the legend, there are a hundred men and women following him.

416. Romain Rolland to Stefan Zweig (Austria)

Villeneuve, 30 December 1931

... The passage of our Indian guest, who stayed five days with us, has left us with rich memories. We had long conversations with him, and I have taken exact notes of them. He’s just as I thought he was, the most sincere and upright of men, but lucid and subtle too, with a sense of humour, enjoying a laugh and nobody’s dupe. I didn’t detect the least shadow of vanity in him, no infatuation with himself or his ideas, no dogmatic or pedantic stiffness. After stating his convictions, he added: “I well know that the same self-confidence may be the sign of delusion or idiocy. It may be that I am wrong. But I do not believe I am, for I propose nothing that I have not personally experimented,
and my experiments have brought me confirmation over thirty-five years of public action both on myself and on thousands of people.” On another occasion, at the Paris meeting, he said: “If there is a science, it springs from self-knowledge and action.” Ideological discussions are useless. “Only direct experience counts.” But even this does not tie him down; his mind, which is prudent and steadfast and unwavering, never comes to a standstill; he is constantly in evolution. To give a small characteristic example of it, he said (we found out) at one of his Lausanne meetings that truth had always been his passion, ever since childhood, and that among the thousand definitions of God given in the Hindu scriptures, he’d stopped at: “God is truth.” “But,” he said, “two years ago I took a step further; I reversed the formula and I now say: ‘Truth is God.’” (which permits him to annex even the atheists who, out of a sincere passion for truth, deny God. “And from their point of view,” he adds, “they are right.”) You see the breadth of this Indian mind—I’d already studied a splendid specimen of the breed in the person of Vivekananda.

As to what you write about his attitude to machinery, well, it’s a most strange error, fostered by the German press which has never taken the trouble to make a close study of Gandhi’s thought and action because at heart it has no sympathy for him. Gandhi—today’s Gandhi—in no way condemns machinery or industrial techniques, in so far as they bring help and relief to humanity; his quarrel is merely with their murderous excesses and the morbid myth of economic overproduction. When you look at India, you find a very special situation. The Indian climate does not allow the peasants to work on the soil for more than four months in the year at most. Since English domination has undermined the village crafts which added to the insufficient profits they drew from the land, millions of men have been reduced to poverty and malnutrition. The most urgent problem is to
bring back craftsmanship, of which the simplest form, accessible to all and bringing in sure returns, is the spinning wheel. This is just common sense, and it’s absurd to think that Gandhi would dream of applying it in Europe. All he would do would be to encourage the workers of Europe to create independent trades for themselves outside the large industries, which would enable them to sustain with some chance of success their inevitable struggle against the bosses who try to exploit them.

In Geneva he spoke out with absolute clarity on the question of capital and labour—which made the bourgeoisie choke with rage and unleashed all the big French Swiss papers against him. He sided absolutely with labour, and he clearly declared that he drew no distinction in India between foreign and native capitalism; when the time comes he will march alongside Indian labour against Indian capitalism exploiting it. But very naturally he says he “doesn’t want at the present moment to complicate the national struggle by bringing in these bones of contention straight away”. Sufficient unto each day is its task! He’s man enough for ten more years of combat. His frail appearance gives a false idea of the unshakable solidity of his body and his will. Not for a minute, even in the most harassing meetings, was there ever a trace of tiredness in his voice or wavering in his mind. When he walks on his skinny heron-like legs, he doesn’t walk; he runs like a hare, and there’s no one who can follow him; in Rome he left a trail of journalists behind him, and the policemen attached to his heels by the tender care of the authorities (there were two huge English policemen escorting him from London to Brindisi, reinforced on the way by the French, the Swiss and the Italians) had a hard job to do—and a useless one, as he says everything he thinks out loud to everybody; that’s his policy.

In Rome I put him on to an old friend of mine, an
anti-Fascist Italian general, who made him his guest; I’ve heard some amusing details of his interview with Mussolini, to which he took the precaution of taking three trusty witnesses, including his two secretaries. While on the subject, the two Indian secretaries struck me greatly; two young men, very artistic and pure in heart, with a rare distinction of mind, who have sacrificed everything to him and do not regret it. I say nothing of our friend Mira (Miss Slade), who is an admirable vision (a sort of young Demeter). She told me much about the intimate side of Gandhi and the Ashram.

417. Romain Rolland to Esther Marchand (France)

Villeneuve, 30 December 1931

... May the year 1932 find us ever valiant, both in body and in mind, for it will bring plenty to disturb us! Our French politicians have shown such folly in heating up the European stewpot that one of these days it will explode. All the letters which reach me from Germany are anxiously anticipating a sort of St. Bartholomew’s Eve which will be the prelude to further catastrophes. Armies of despair and wretchedness are on the point of springing from the soil.

Gandhi has left his calm among us in the midst of the storm. He stayed five days with me, going off only for a few hours of public meetings in Lausanne and Geneva. He made a profound impression among thousands of people, but he made the great bourgeois press of French Switzerland choke with rage when he calmly unmasked their lies and exposed the guile behind their questions in his public discussions. He expressed himself in public with total clarity on the double question of militarism (even the Swiss kind) and the struggle between capital and labour. We had long
private conversations, my sister serving as interpreter, with the help of the admirable Mira (Miss Slade); I took exact notes of them. Meeting Gandhi in the flesh neither disappointed nor surprised me; he’s quite straightforward, quite sincere and quite upright. His convictions are firmly based on his experiences in action over thirty-five years, but his thought has never come to a standstill; it never ceases to evolve, both on the social and the religious field. Here’s a small but typical example: since childhood, Truth has been his passion, and he’d come to state his faith as: “God is Truth.” Two years ago he reversed the formula, and he now says: “Truth is God.” This looks insignificant, but there’s a world of difference, as his new Creed also embraces atheists who have a passion for truth. What I did learn from seeing him was what an extraordinarily solid creature he is; his frail appearance is deceptive. His voice and his frame are unshakable; he could speak for days on end to thousands of people without tiring his vocal chords, and when he goes for a walk on his heron-like legs, he runs along so quickly that even the best walkers have difficulty in following him; (on the Monte Mario he left a trail of panting journalists behind him). As to the European cold about which you were worrying in your letter, he’s used to it because of his stays in the Himalayas; for the five days and nights he spent here, when the weather was rainy and freezing, he always had all his windows open, day and night; bare legs and bare head, too, in all weathers. He wasn’t disappointed in London, as he told my sister what the outcome would be when he arrived in Marseilles; he’s going back with a smile to throw himself into the gulf that awaits him, for he foresees the cruellest of repression from England, with thousands of sacrifices and certain victory for India at the end of it. I was wrong to talk of his smile; it would be better to say his laugh, for laughter is his habit, frank and toothless. He has a good sense of humour, and there’s no risk of his being
taken in by any political ruse; he can see under the masks. But it causes him no bitterness; he goes straight on his way, and the policemen escorting him (two huge British officers who stayed hard on his heels all the way from London to Brindisi, reinforced on the way by their French, Swiss and Italian colleagues) were wasting their time, as he says all he thinks straight out to everybody; that’s his policy.

Each evening at 7 o’clock in my ground-floor lounge (and in his room at night, at 3 a.m.—only I wasn’t there) there were prayers; lights out, sitting on the carpet; always a series of three fine chants (of which the first two varied): the first an extract from the Gita, the second a Vedic hymn, and the third litanies to Rama and Sita, intoned by Mira’s grave and warm voice. On the last evening when the lights came on again, he asked me to play him a piece by Beethoven. He doesn’t know the man\(^1\) but he knows that Beethoven was the link between his great disciple Mira (the English admiral’s daughter) and myself, who then became the link between Mira and Gandhi, so all three of us owe our gratitude to Beethoven. I played him the Andante from the Fifth Symphony, and I added the Elysian Fields from Orfeo (the first orchestral melody and the flute melody, for I know from Tagore’s example that there’s no page of European music better attuned to an Indian’s sensibilities).

In Italy I recommended him to a very trustworthy old friend in Rome, with whom he lodged, on the Monte Mario, and who was able to defend him. Whatever lies the Fascist press may have peddled around (which was easily foreseeable), the necessary precautions were taken to prevent any suspect conversations from taking place without reli-

\(^1\) But on the other hand Gandhi’s two Indian secretaries, young men of rare distinction of heart and mind, know Beethoven and speak of him with emotion. (R. R.’s note).
able witnesses. At his interview with Mussolini (Gandhi is a Head of State, and must take account of certain necessities of State) he had three chosen witnesses with him, including Mira and his secretary Mahadev Desai, and I’m sure he calmly expounded his thoughts without compromise and without disguise; Mussolini probably did what he did for Tagore (who, for his part, was taken in), which was to reply, when Tagore said he was “horrified by violence”, by inclining and saying “Me too”. Gandhi makes no mystery of what he thinks of Italian Fascism; replying in one of his Lausanne meetings to Cérésole, who was trying to make a distinction between good and bad states for purposes of practising absolute non-co-operation, Gandhi answered calmly: “Even the worst states, those of Nero or Mussolini, have some good in them. This is no reason for us to draw any distinctions; we must reject everything in them as a whole, if we are their citizens. . . .”

418. Romain Rolland to Clara Beerli (Switzerland)

31 December 1931

. . . . I’m happy that you were able to see Gandhi among us. He left much light in his passage. On the last evening I played him the Andante from the Fifth Symphony, and I added the Elysian Fields from Gluck’s Orfeo. Schlemmer of Montreux took some very good photographs; I’ll try to get him to print some in post-card format and I’ll send you some. . . .
419. Romain Rolland to La Révolution Prolétarienne

.... I am sending you a copy of Gandhi’s replies. ... I guarantee their accuracy, but it would be useful to complement them by the numerous other replies by Gandhi to similar questions, either in the Geneva and Lausanne meetings, or to the young Indian Communists in London. It is unfortunate that there is no social circle in France which receives the weekly journal Young India, which Gandhi has been publishing in Ahmedabad and filling with his thought for the last ten years or so. His thought has never ceased to evolve, and it never will. Gandhi’s very essence is movement; he experiments as he acts, and he moves one step at a time, but without stopping. One of the most striking examples of this evolution—although it has only an indirect effect on social action—is the fact that a man of faith like him, exactly two years ago (he said so himself in Lausanne) should have turned round his article of faith, “God is Truth”, to say “Truth is God” (or divine)—which opens the door (he says so himself) to all free and honest thought, even atheistic, and above all to science.

I’m convinced that if he lives ten more years—and I hope he will; he’s a frail-looking little man, but he’s solidly built—we shall see him at the head of the Indian proletariat leading the same war of “Non-co-operation” against the Indian capitalists, a war which can and will strangle them effectively and promptly.

He aroused the bourgeois press in Geneva and Lausanne against him after he publicly appealed in Geneva

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1 Published in La Révolution Prolétarienne, 8th year, No. 123, January 1932.
to the all-powerful force of Labour, which does not know its own strength yet would only need to stand and show itself for the whole of human exploitation to crumble. I know that Camille Drevet, secretary general of the Women’s International League for Peace and Liberty had the whole Geneva meeting taken down in shorthand. For the Lausanne meetings (there were three in succession) I fear this may not have been done, which would be a pity, as in the private discussion between Gandhi and Cérésole (of the International Civil Service), Gandhi had some harsh truths to set against the thesis of Cérésole and Einstein; he argued that the refusal of military service was only a secondary episode in the real fight which needs to be fought, which involves a total refusal to co-operate with the exploiting and militarist State of today; refusal to pay taxes, refusal to hold posts, refusal even of the apparent or superficial social benefits which the State confers or claims to confer upon the community. . . . There must be a total void round the State, making it impossible to breathe. The calm with which this quiet-voiced little man dictated his orders, which he is prepared to apply himself and to impose strictly on his army of “Non-acceptance”, added greatly to the powerful impression he made. But since then, bourgeois opinion has been unleashed against him. Some papers in the Vaud have even gone so far as to denounce him as an accomplice of Moscow, in Switzerland to disarm her and hand her over defenceless to the machinations of the Communists. . . .

420. Romain Rolland to Marcel Lob (France)

Villeneuve, 1 January 1932

...... Yes, we have been visited by Gandhi; he stayed five days with us, enough to leave a trail of light in the country among the simple people, and unatonable resentment
among the bourgeoisie of the League of Nations and the Journal de Genève. He spoke frankly and clearly, in that calm voice of his which imposes silence on crowds a thousand strong, about the two questions of militarism (even, indeed particularly, the neutral and "defensive" type) and the struggle between capitalism and labour. If he lives ten years, we shall see him taking command of another social campaign in India when the national struggle is over.

I'm sure you'll have had the sense not to give any credence to the false reports about him propagated by the Italian Fascist press; there's not a word of truth in them. He was the guest in Rome of an old friend of mine who is fundamentally opposed to the regime, and whatever interviews he may have had were always in front of witnesses chosen and purposely brought along by himself. He's nothing less than naive; he can see under the mask. Then again, in a public meeting in Lausanne, talking about the absolute non-co-operation, the total refusal which must be proffered to those States which generate armies and hence wars, "even if they have something good in them, as do all states, even the worst", he casually added: "such as those of Nero or Mussolini". So if he went to see "Nero", you can be sure that he spoke to him with the imperturbable frankness of one of the fishermen of Galilee; and I don't doubt that "Nero" replied, as he did to Tagore's remark that he was horrified by violence, by saying: "Me too." The worthy poet believed it; but the fisher of men is not a poet. He's like you and me, he thinks in prose. . . .

421. Romain Rolland to Frans Masereel (France)

Villeneuve, 4 January 1932

. . . . Over and above my usual load of responsibilities and health problems, Gandhi's arrival caused a
good bit of commotion. The calm and frail little man (as hard as nails in reality) dragged all sorts of odds and ends of humanity along in his wake: journalists, disciples, photographers, idlers, policemen, politicians, eccentrics—who all conscientiously trampled over my garden for a week and kept my telephone ringing from morning till night. Gandhi was the only one not bothered by them. The large British security agents—as tall and thickset as your Equihen sailors—who didn’t stray an inch from his heels all the way from London to Brindisi and were augmented on the way by their French, Swiss and Italian colleagues, got their money on false pretences, for he says all he thinks out loud to everybody. That’s his policy; it isn’t within everyone’s reach, though, and you have to be very sure of yourself and the three hundred million-strong people following you! I had long private conversations with him; he’s absolutely sincere, but this doesn’t rule out subtlety and humour. He won’t be taken in by any political ruse; he sees under the mask, and he laughs, the good toothless laugh of an old dog panting. . . . He went off with this laugh on his lips, to unleash the revolt of a fifth of humanity. The least thing he expects for himself is to be deported, but he hopes for more! He is so certain of victory. . . .

422. Romain Rolland to Rene Arcos (France)

Villeneuve, 4 January 1932

. . . . I should have liked to follow Gandhi to India, and he would have liked to take me.

I’ve just this minute received from Bombay a telegram announcing his arrest, along with the other Congress leaders. It was expected, and he went off laughing—his good toothless laugh like a good dog panting—to face deportation or death. The latter will probably be spared him, if pos-
sible, by the British Government, too well aware of what it would cost. But the repression will be cruel, and the retaliation will not be weak. The duel to the end has begun, and the Indians are on good form. Hundreds of thousands are joyfully prepared to die; they are certain of victory.

Your reflections on Gandhi at Magic-City need some small comments: 1st., don’t forget that Gandhi travelling in Europe was not a private individual, but an ambassador of the Indian National Congress and acting as its delegate; he was the representative of a people, and couldn’t express himself in public, while abroad, with the full liberty of a man who only has to answer for himself: 2nd., don’t forget that, contrary to what we usually see in Europe, Gandhi not only avoids saying things he doesn’t put into practice; he also invariably surpasses the measured prudence of his words by the boldness of his action. He dreads making promises before keeping them, and he laughs at people who are full of brave words. But you can be sure that if he lives a few more years he will go further than many of our most advanced Parisians—including the Communists.

I had some long conversations with him, and I’ve taken precise notes. He’s a man of complete honesty, who wouldn’t say a syllable more than he thinks (or better still, more than he has experimented with carefully in action) but who never stops experimenting and advancing! His mind is in constant evolution, and always in a straight line. He keeps an iron discipline over himself and those who follow him, and his frail appearance is the only deceptive tiling about him, for he’s as hard as nails; his skinny heron-like legs run like the wind, and his calm voice could talk for twenty-four hours without a trace of fatigue. I also much appreciated the two young Indian secretaries who were with him, intellectuals of high worth who have given up everything to follow him. I say nothing of his great disciple Mira (Miss Slade), an old friend of ours,
since it was I who gave her to Gandhi. It was a good gift, and he feels its value.

423. Romain Rolland to Jean-Richard Bloch (France)

Villeneuve, 4 January 1932

.... I don't see that the whole world is prey to the panic of which you speak; it's just that the teeth of the West have suddenly begun to chatter (and high time too!). I assure you that the letters I get from young workers in Soviet factories are full of joy and confidence, and if you'd seen my recent visitor—Gandhi—you'd have seen a perfectly calm and peaceful man. Before I saw him I didn't know his good toothless laugh like an old dog panting. The rest of him I knew and merely confirmed; his total sincerity all the time, so natural that one wouldn't think it possible that anyone could be different. There's nothing stilted or doctrinaire about him, nothing fixed; his mind is still young and lively, and in constant, though patient evolution— as much in the social as in the metaphysical or religious field. He doesn't see much value in books, but sees a capital importance, almost to the exclusion of all else, in experimentation by action. This alone is his guide, and he is always ready after some new experience honestly to correct the conclusions, always provisional, and the rules of action he has deduced from his thirty-five years of continuous experiments on human individuals and groups—ever since his starting point in South Africa. I need hardly say that he expected to be arrested, even deported, on arriving in Bombay. His young Indian companions (two men with characters and minds of rare worth; intellectuals and artists who have sacrificed everything to him) showed the same calm joy at the thought of the terrible struggle about to begin, which will bring India so many sufferings to
endure with open arms. (Not that all arms will remain open for long! But I’m only talking here about the Theban Legion of hundreds of thousands of non-acceptors.) We had long private conversations, of which I took detailed notes. Art was not excluded from our thoughts; the fine old chants from the Gita and the canticles to Rama and Sita bathed the walls of the Villa Olga on more than one evening. Gandhi loves them dearly, and in the enforced leisure of his imprisonments he made a collection of them, still only in manuscript, translating the poems from Sanskrit into English. On the last evening he asked me to play him something by Beethoven; for he knows that Beethoven was the link between his great European disciple Mira (Miss Slade) and myself, who then did the same between her and Gandhi. So all three of us brought our gratitude back to Beethoven.

His two meetings in Geneva and Lausanne caused splutterings of rage from the bourgeoisie of the main French Swiss papers and the League of Nations. He said straight out what he thought, not only about militarism, but even about the struggle between capital and labour. If he’d meant to stay a few days more, I’m sure they’d have refused him any more public assemblies. The Montreux gutter press, in a rage, said on the day he left that the best thing he did in Switzerland was to clear out! But he left his imprint in the minds of hundreds of simple people; I know something of it from all the letters that have passed through my hands. It’s worth noting too that the old pastoral Switzerland at once thrilled to the voice of the Himalayan goatherd. The dairymen’s union in Vevey sent me a pompous address, saying they hoped to have the honour of "purveying to the King of India" (sic)! during his stay by Lake Geneva.

I told you that Gandhi’s laugh was the only new discovery I made about him. There’s another, though; the
frail appearance of the little man is the only thing about him that’s deceptive. He’s as hard as nails. He runs along on his skinny legs like a deer, and he could talk to crowds for twenty-four hours at a stretch without a crack in his voice or in his train of thought. If no one kills him, he hasn’t reached the end of his battles. We would do well to draw inspiration from his recipes for mental and dietary hygiene; a “silence day” every week, and goat’s milk and raw vegetables. That’s how he has deadened his excessive nervous tension. . . .

424. Romain Rolland to Marianne Rauze (France)

Villeneuve, 9 January 1932

. . . . There’s no sense in the report, and Werner Zimmermann has no competence to speak in the name of Gandhi, who’s no more interested in his “franchism” than in his “nudism”.

. . . . Gandhi foresaw the failure of the Round Table Conference in advance. It was inevitable, since Gandhi, as the delegate of the National Congress of All India, had come to demand absolute independence and autonomy for India, not just dominion status any more. This is clear from the series of debates in the Young India weekly, or in the Manchester Guardian weekly. . . .

425. Romain Rolland to Re Meynard (France)

Villeneuve, 17 January 1932

. . . . Until today we have still been able to receive direct and detailed reports from our Indian friends, but it is probable that this will soon be cut off, if it hasn’t already happened. The supreme battle is joined. Gandhi has
exhausted the last attempts at conciliation. *Alea jacta est.* England wanted the fight, and England will have it. There's nothing to fear at present for Gandhi's life; the British Government isn't so stupid as not to realize that he's the best card to have up their sleeve in case of defeat. With Gandhi dead, India would be redoubtable; he is the tiger-tamer. But it shouldn't be thought that Gandhi's friends, and particularly Gandhi himself, appreciate this immunity very much! If it were to last, he'd find it as bitter as Tolstoy found his when the Tolstoyans were being deported or hanged. But Gandhi is more energetic than Tolstoy, and will always find a way to share in the dangers of his people; his warmest desire is to be killed at the head of his army of non-violent non-acceptors. I wish it for him too—as the crown of his life and for the good of the world, in which no true progress can be achieved without the sacrifice of the best men.

426. Romain Rolland to Ferenc Hugai (Hungary)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
20 January 1932

.... You know that last month I had a visit from Gandhi, who stopped five days with me before returning to India. I found in him not only a wise man, but a good and gay companion, joining subtlety and humour to firmness of mind.

427. Romain Rolland to Waldo Frank (U.S.A.)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
26 January 1932

.... In the eyes of thousands of men who at the present moment consider it intolerable to maintain the present
capitalist and imperialist society and have resolved to change it, the great and ambitious Indian experiment with *Satyagraha* is the only chance open to the world of achieving this transformation of humanity without having recourse to violence. If it fails, there will be no other outlet for human history than violence. It’s either Gandhi or Lenin! *In any case, social justice must be achieved.*

**428. Romain Rolland to Edouard Schneider (France)**

Villeneuve, 27 January 1932

. . . . I should like to reply briefly to your last letter. I feel far removed from your way of thought, which, like that of most French intellectuals, is far too passive, discouraged before going into action and following the line of least resistance. It may well be that the average Frenchman is far removed from the heroism of Gandhi, or indeed of Lenin; the average has always been what was represented in the French Revolution by the “Marais”. But it’s not the role of the men of the summits—whether they’re mountains or just hills—to resign themselves to what goes on in the marshes. If they do (and that’s what they are doing in the West today), then I don’t care any more about the West, and the Fates that lead the species won’t care about it any more than me; they’ll trample the whole lot underfoot, and a good job too. It was only yesterday that I was writing to an English friend upset about events in India: “In the eyes of thousands—thousands of men who at the present moment find it intolerable to maintain the present society and have resolved on ‘social change or death!’; the great and ambitious Indian experiment with *Satyagraha* is the only chance open to the world of achieving this transformation of humanity without having recourse to violence. It’s either Gandhi or Lenin! In any case, social justice must be achieved!”
429. Romain Rolland to Esther Marchand (France)

Villeneuve, 29 January 1932

... Don’t worry about Gandhi! Prison is his time for rest and reading, and there’s nothing better for his health. His young companions who came here were waiting impatiently for their own arrest as a holiday period. The two secretaries, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal (two very artistic and refined men) said to me: “I’m setting aside your books on Beethoven for that time in the cells.” It’s the rank and file that are to be pitied. There, as here, the big names are treated respectfully, but in the countryside, where there’s no fear of witnesses, the Gandhist masses are treated with brutality. All the news reports are sifted; the European press publishes next to nothing, and what it does publish comes from the British Service. I’m giving a Letter from India in the next number of Europe, based on my personal sources of information....

430. Romain Rolland to Edmond Privat (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 29 January 1932

... I’m reading your articles in the local papers, and that’s about all the information to be found in the continental press. They’re keeping the silence marvellously well (the same goes for the radio; it’s always arranged so that time runs out before they get round to the Indian news). Everything is sifted. Working from my own resources, I’m publishing a Letter from India in the 15 February Europe and in some American reviews.
When you come back, would you be so good as to bring us No. 52 of Young India which we missed. It dates from last December and relates the closing stages of the stay in London.

I don't know whether Bapu is allowed to have books about questions unrelated to the Indian movement—or whether he really wants to get to know the problem of Italian Fascism, as he told me he did. I have quite a little library of documents in French and English on the subject. The question of Fascist syndicalism and pseudo-popular institutions is one of those on which Rome has put out most bluff. Bapu has better things to do now than to bother with European conflicts, but sooner or later it's essential that he should clarify his thought on these questions so essential for us in Europe; for there must be no risk of his being classed, on some misunderstanding, among the adversaries of those Europeans who represent and fight, not without suffering, for his ideas or for ideas related to them. I have already seen only too clearly that in France and Italy there have been unfortunate repercussions arising from his visit to Italy. I'm sorry to insist on this. . . .

431. Romain Rolland to Erich Schramm (Germany)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
31 January 1932

Thank you for your photographs of Gandhi and the article of which you were good enough to send me a copy. I gladly authorize you to publish it.

. . . . In return for your photographs I am sending you one by the photographer Rod. Schlemmer of Montreux, showing me with Gandhi in my study.

In the next number of the Parisian review Europe (15 February) I am publishing a Letter from India, based on
the direct reports that I've been able to get secretly from our Indian friends. I shall try to take it further in the following months. The whole European press is fed (on Indian matters) with nothing but British propaganda, which sifts and distorts the news. The fact is that India is in a state of siege and under a reign of terror; Reginald Reynolds in the last number of *Unity* could even speak of the "English Tsarism in Bengal!" Masses of people are going to prison, and Civil Resistance is going heroically on its way. What a great experiment for the world! It will decide all future methods of social action. It's either Gandhi or Lenin; there will be no other choice. The two different routes lead to the same goal; the overthrow of the evil old order, and the institution of social justice. . . .

425. Romain Rolland to Henry Prunières (France)

Villeneuve, 2 February 1932

. . . . As you may know, I had a visit from Gandhi, who stayed five days with me last December. Some day I shall have conversations with him to relate. For the moment I am going to try to give a monthly letter from India in *Europe*, based on personal reports from my Indian friends. How much longer will they succeed in reaching me, though? India is in a state of siege, and some provinces, such as Bengal, are being subjected to terrorism from the government. But all this was foreseen by Gandhi and his lieutenants, and the great experiment goes on. It will have grave consequences for the rest of the world. It may be the last brake which is still restraining the outburst of violence in the universal social struggle. For whatever anyone does now, this struggle cannot be avoided. The old society is condemned; it's digging its own grave. The present is a hard time to live through. But humanity has seen plenty of such things! Once
again it will learn how to adapt to new climates, how to find in them a way of life and a source of joy. I am not worried about the future.

433. Romain Rolland to Georges Bouche-Villeneuve (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
9 February 1932

... Thank you for your trust. Such a confession, which does you credit, is rare among men of your social situation, although I believe this latent distress is present in many people who prefer not to look at it.

If we were in India, this problem of conscience would be very simply solved. It is universally admitted there that, as part of the natural development of every man’s life, when he approaches fifty and has fulfilled his duty to his family and to society, he has the right to fulfil his duty to his inner God. He withdraws from the world and devotes himself to meditation. Or else, since the days of the new spirit springing from religious teachers like Vivekananda and Gandhi, who stimulated the great Indian awakening —since this spirit has turned the energies of contemplation towards social service, following the bold formula: “If you want to reach God, serve man!”—each man, freed from the bonds of family life, profession and clan, can devote himself to a higher and more universal kind of service. Western man has not conquered this right—or has lost it through centuries of living in a bourgeois society too rigidly enclosed in its own framework. You know that even a man like Tolstoy could not break free of it except by death.

I believe that this, among many others, is one of the causes of the social malaise which will sooner or later bring about a reshaping of the framework of society. Modern
Western man—whatever his appearances of happiness and success—in most cases dies unsatisfied, for he has not fulfilled some of the most profound demands of his nature.

There is no remedy at present, other than the very fact of a clear understanding of the state he is in and some veiled recourse to the inner life. But one can orientate oneself in the direction which the future broadening of society will take, and there’s more than one way of working towards this. The cardinal rule, above all others, is and must be the truth. One must be true, and true to oneself first of all.

I recently had occasion to discuss this at length with Gandhi. You remember the duel which Tolstoy fought within himself, to the very last, between Truth and Love. This duel does not occur with Gandhi, who cut through the whole question long ago. Truth is the sole master. In the past, Gandhi used to say: “God is Truth.” About two years ago, after a moral revolution gradually prepared by broad and patient experimentation, he reversed his formula, to say: “Truth is God”- which includes the sincere atheist and the free man of science. To test him further, I dwelt on the dangers for the weak in a truth which is too strong or too new. Gandhi did not falter, and found himself agreeing with a Goethe maxim which I quoted to him: “All laws and all moral rules come back to one thing, Truth”; also with the reasons given by Goethe: “A harmful truth is useful, because it can harm only for a moment and it then leads to other truths which will be ever more useful; while a useful error is harmful, because it can be useful only for a moment and it leads us astray into other errors which will be ever more harmful” I have made my choice, too...
434. Romain Rolland to Esther Marchand (France)

Villeneuve, 9 March 1932

.... I have received your letter about Miss Slade, and you’re quite right. I first knew her in London, about 1922 or 1923, during the 1st Congress of the PEN Club; she wasn’t on the Congress, but she took the chance to make contact with me. She was much concerned with music then, and passing through some very difficult years of crisis. She’s an excessively proud and passionate nature, and she asked my advice. She came to see me in Villeneuve, and I turned her attention towards Gandhi. She submitted herself to one or two years of harsh self-examination, then she took her decision and offered her services to Gandhi, who imposed another year of waiting on her and, when she came to India, a long and harsh discipline before finally accepting her. Now she has become his right arm in the Ahmedabad Ashram, and she’s a popular figure all over India.

Edmond Privat and his wife, just back these last few days from India, where they went with Gandhi and were present at his arrest, travelled all over the country and talked to the Viceroy, say that 95 per cent of all India—Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, etc.,—are now siding with Gandhi. The repressive measures (whose violence and, frequently, ignominy are carefully veiled in Europe) have caused the moderates and loyalists to form a coalition against England with the Gandhists. ....
435. Romain Rolland to Re Meynard (France)

Villeneuve, 18 March 1932

... If you can get hold of the last two months' copies of *Europe*, you will be able to read my *Letters from India*, based on reports which reach me secretly. There are about 60,000 people in prison; there is a state of siege in many provinces, and the soldiery is perpetrating all sorts of brutalities. But the spirit of India is unshaken. You shouldn’t form too many illusions on Gandhi’s “gentleness”. All those who know him, and his closest disciples, say that when he deems it necessary he is terribly hard, but without ever raising his voice by the slightest degree. Anyone who leads a people or a party must be capable of holding them with an iron hand, and you know that Jesus Christ himself “was no sugar daddy”, if we believe what Nicolas Poussin said to the Jesuit fathers who wanted him to portray Christ with an angelic smile.

436. Romain Rolland to Lucien Roth (France)

22 March 1932

... Just recently (10 March) Gorki wrote to me from Sorrento: “Our old age is a fine age! For it coincides with the rebirth of the new young forces of the universe.”

He is happier than we are; naturally enough, for he can see the youth in the eyes of his strong and victorious people. But since he is happy, we are happy too; we have the same reasons for it, and there’s more merit in it in the depths of our West.
It’s agreed that on no account can we allow this new world to be attacked without taking our stance on its side, as you write in your last letter. But here exactly is a case in which Gandhi’s Non-acceptance, if the working-class people of France could really understand and apply it, could be more effective than an armed revolt. For what would happen if the workers in the factories and shipyards were to declare a total strike, as Gandhi’s inflexible discipline would demand in such a case? The men in the army are no longer the main element in modern warfare; what counts is armaments, cannon, tanks, explosives, gas. All this is in the hands of the working people. If they knew how to say “No!” there’d be nothing to hold out against them.

No, I don’t believe there’s anyone yet in France in a position to write the story of my relationship with Non-acceptance (for Heaven’s sake, don’t keep using that word non-violence, which I’m killing myself trying to weed out of the true language of Gandhism; how could one describe the total strike of 300 million Indians, if carried out in the way Gandhi desires, other than as the supreme violence, which without noise and without fuss takes away air and life from hundreds of thousands of foreign parasites!). No, I don’t believe that this story can yet be written; for I don’t believe that anyone—even among my closest friends—yet knows or understands my true thought on the subject; I shall have to write it myself, and I hope I shall have time. It is very necessary for me to make some general collection of the articles and addresses which I have published in various places since 1920, and to retrace the story of my inner evolution in an essay which will form a sequel to my Adieu au Passé. I’m thinking about this project this year. But the conclusion of L’Ame Enchantée is taking up all my strength, and I have so little strength (and above all so little time) that I must wait until I’ve finished it before I can pass on to this other task. Meanwhile, the Indian
Resistance (don’t say Non-resistance!) is giving me an immense experiment to observe, whose development and conclusion are bound to have a crucial effect on how we envisage the social combat which we and our fellows must carry out in Europe, and on the value of the various tactics to be used. To decide these questions in advance would be the action of a man of dogmas and faith, not of an experimenter. There’s no substitute for direct observation of facts, and one of the greatest facts in human history is at present in progress. Let us watch what’s going on! . . .

437. Romain Rolland to Marcel Dichamp (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
17 May 1932

... I can’t give you a reply about Gandhi, as I’m short of time; just two words. Yes, I did talk to him about the U.S.S.R.—but do try and get a clear idea of his task, which is immense! He has three hundred million men to lead to victory and liberty, and these countless peoples have their own age-old body of thought, profound and many-formed. They need time to be brought to understand the thought of those other peoples, the hundred and fifty millions of the U.S.S.R. At the moment they haven’t the time; first let them achieve their own victory, then we shall see. It would be wrong to disperse their forces in the thick of the battle.

But this I can tell you: Gandhi’s intelligence is always free, fresh and ready to evolve towards a greater truth; all he needs is to examine things with his own eyes and his own hands, and to make his own experiments; he doesn’t believe in books, or even in what friends tell him. He’s right; one has to check everything oneself. If he lives ten years, he’ll go far. In any case he has lieutenants who go beyond
him, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, whom I know and whom he esteems. Be patient! First let them liberate India! That in itself is no mean task.

438. Romain Rolland to Erich Schramm (Germany)

Saturday, 2 July 1932

.... As to matters concerning India, here are two addresses which may help you: Mme. Louise Guieysse (at the head of the society of the "Friends of Gandhi"): 166 Bd. Montparnasse, Paris, and the Pro-India League—(headed by M. Roger Lievens, a writer)—77 Rue de Pont-d’lle, Liége, Belgium. I think Mme. Guieysse will be able to tell you something about the Khaddar.

439. Romain Rolland to Charles Baudouin (Switzerland)

Villeneuve, 28 September 1932

.... I’m glad you’re going to speak at the pro-Indian demonstration on 6 October; I’m sure what you say will go to the heart of the matter. It’s no place to speak about a political problem: the British public (even the Quakers) is all too inclined to believe that this policy is a domestic, interior matter and that the foreigner has no business with it. What does touch them is when they’re shown that the problem of Gandhi and Satyagraha concerns the fate of every thinking man, the whole destiny of humanity, and immediately, not just in the distant future. No one could talk better about this than you could.
440. Romain Rolland to Hedwige Petzold (Austria)

Villeneuve, 30 September 1932

... Thank you for sharing in our joy at Gandhi’s victory — particularly at the fact that his life is saved, for it came very close to being sacrificed. The people here (in Switzerland and France) have very little notion of the importance of this life. For the pro-Indian meeting being organized in Geneva for 6 October, they couldn’t get any famous French writer interested, apart from the excellent Charles Baudouin. . . .

441. Romain Rolland to Reginald Reynolds
(Great Britain)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
9 October 1932

... Thank you for taking the trouble to do a French translation of your brochure, which we needed so much to give us an exact idea of the precedents explaining Gandhi’s great fast.

I’m sending you a copy of the text\(^1\) by me which was read at the Indian day in Geneva, on 6 October. . . .

\(^1\) See item no. 461.
442. Romain Rolland to Professor P. Kiruchine

27 December 1932

This is my reply to Prof. P. Kiruchinc (or Kirjusin), who writes to me (18 December) about Gandhi (he knows and has studied my books, and knows I am an “admirer of Gandhi, the organizer of a new religion and a great deceiver of the masses of the Indian people”, and he asks me about my present relationship with him):

You know the way I think about Gandhi; I have had no occasion to modify it after meeting him in the flesh during his passage through Switzerland in December 1931, when he stopped five days with me. Whatever judgment his enemies may pass on his ideas, his person and his character must inspire respect. His honesty and sincerity are above all suspicion. He may deceive himself, but he never knowingly deceives others. Also, in any judgment passed on him, this one essential reality must be borne in mind: he is in constant evolution. There’s nothing fixed about him, nothing settled once and for all. He readily admits the inadequacy of his knowledge in some fields, and is always ready to correct and to fill the gaps, but less by means of books than through direct experience of the facts. This has always been his method of self-instruction and action; direct social experimentation, repeated and verified, step by step, and broadening his circle at each step. There’s no doubt that his thoughts have been modified in the course of these experiments. By way of a symbolic example, let me quote you a thing he admits himself, his transformation four or five years ago of an ideological formula dear to him: “God is Truth”, into: “Truth is God”, which is his present motto. This
reversal of the same formula may seem too abstract and (in appearance) absolute, but it none the less marks an important change of direction, and is an open door to accepting all truth controlled by experiment. Besides, if you’d read my preface to his Autobiography, you’d have seen (pages XII and XIII of Rieder’s French edition) in the quotations from Gandhi’s works that he always gives a relativistic and transitory character to his “experiments”: “Far be it from me to claim any degree of perfection for my experiments. I claim for them nothing more than does a scientist, who, though he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them. . . .”

This is certainly how he appeared to me in my conversations with him: modest and strong, attentively testing a great hypothesis of social action and going forward from one experiment to the next on the basis of observed facts, but always ready to welcome other experiments and to modify his action accordingly after checking them. If his life (of which he has not taken sufficient care) lasts for ten more years, I believe we shall see him taking great steps forward in the social order, and after the fight against the capitalist imperialism of the British Empire, we shall see him leading the fight of the Indian masses against the capitalist imperialism of India. If anyone finds this evolution unexpected, then they haven’t taken the trouble to get to know him. Though his present battle-tactics avoid breaking the united front of all India against England, he has already given sufficiently clear expression, in clear and threatening terms (even in London, at the Round Table), to his future attitude towards Indian capitalism.

If I have time, I shall add to my book on Gandhi which was written in 1922 and is no longer up to date. In ten years, Gandhi’s experience has much broadened, and I consider (as he does himself) that he is still only half-way
to his goal. He is, in his own words, “a humble (and tenacious) seeker after truth”, who never strays off the scent.

443. Romain Rolland to Emile Bauchet (France)

Tuesday, 21 March 1933

.... I don’t agree with you in your interpretation of Gandhism—a subject which I think I know.

Gandhism is essentially religious, like early Christianity; and as I see it, conscientious objection cannot achieve complete effectiveness unless it is religious in the broadest sense of the word, unless it believes in the absolute value of the soul and the conscience.

The true Gandhist does not say that the State has no right to seize the goods and person of its citizens in the name of public utility or the law of the land. The true Gandhist says that the non-violent man must withhold his person and property from any use, direct or indirect, which the State wishes to make of them for purposes of warfare. So it’s more accurate to say that he must face up to imprisonment and confiscation, and his example must be followed by those who think like him—until the State, which is, or must be, the representative of the community of citizens, is shaken by their refusal and gives way to them, enabling them to set up other laws more in accordance with their faith in non-violence. But the road which leads to this point is necessarily one of suffering; prison, confiscation, and the rest.

This is why I say that no one can follow this road without some sort of religious conviction assuring them that the true values are spiritual and that nothing must be allowed to infringe them.

I am very much afraid that most of today’s French conscientious objectors are not aware of this and are clinging
to the most practical—or rather "pseudo-practical"—notion of it, encouraged by the illusory hopes which Einstein fosters. I very much wish that this illusion could be dispelled, not at all so as to undermine the faith of the strong, but so as to separate the strong from the weak, and to avoid deceiving the latter, whose illusions, once shattered by harsh facts, could well turn into despair and anger against those who misled them.

The illusion would be to believe that violence and war will be crippled by the refusal of the non-violent, that they will be like a fire which goes out for lack of fuel. In fact they won't be burned out until after a period of terrible conflagrations in which the first generation of the non-violent will suffer cruelly. They will not be extinguished unless this sacrificed generation has the courage to undergo these ordeals without flinching. I want it to see clearly what is in store for it.

It must not think that a foreign invasion by hordes made fanatical by modern Fascist movements—Mussolini or Hitler—will have the least respect for their passivity. The nameless brutalities which they perpetrate on their non-resisting compatriots are a foretaste of what savage things they will do on the territory they invade. Will the non-violent have the religious heroism of the first Christians, who submitted to everything in order to affirm their faith? This is what they must have, or will to have. Without it, their moral defeat would add even more to the insolent triumph of unrestrained violence.

Don't accuse me of sowing alarm and despondency among the young army of the non-violent! I want them to be conscious of what sort of road they are taking, and determined to face up to everything but without any silly wishy-washy illusions. It's better to have just a handful of clear-sighted and heroic objectors than a host of weak self-deceivers who will be swept away by the first storm gusts!
We have entered into an era of savage energy, and we must face it with well-tried legions. Let the non-violent see how tough they are, and admit no one into their ranks who is not prepared for non-violent conflict even unto death! Gandhi, our master, has said that he prefers sincere and courageous practitioners of violence to the non-violent who are cowardly or unaware of the implications. Be clear about what you want and what you can achieve! Sort out the sheep from the goats! . . .

444. Romain Rolland to Reginald Reynolds
(Great Britain)

Spiez (Thun) Park Hotel
Wednesday, 12 July 1933

. . . . I left Villeneuve ten days ago. I am unwell, and have been ordered to rest for three months, but your appeal, which reached me yesterday evening, cannot go unanswered, and I am sending you, in haste, the following pages. I hope they will reach you in time for your meeting on the 15th.

Naturally as I’m away from home I can’t put my hands on the quotations from Young India to which I allude in the attached letter. No doubt you’ll be able to find the exact text. . . .

Text Attached to This Letter

. . . . It seems to me that it is high time to leave the field of sterile ideology. In the world of action, the choice is not, alas, between absolute non-violence and absolute violence, but between a greater or lesser degree of violence exercised on men by the facts of the situation.

Even Indian Satyagraha is not exempt from a latent violence, whose effects are no less redoubtable than those
of armed combat. For the great _Refusal_ of a whole people has the effect of a pneumatic machine; it pumps away the air which gives life to the adversary.

I may add that those who, like yourself, are closely acquainted with Gandhi have been able to follow (in the discussions in _Young India_ shortly before the salt campaign) the evolution of the Mahatma’s active thought. Ten years or so ago, he suspended his whole movement because there had been some acts of violence at Chauri Chaura. But when, on the point of unleashing a new movement, it was pointed out to him that there may be more Chauri Chauras, he overruled the objection, saying he hoped that now the could avoid all violence with better organized troops—but if nevertheless such acts of violence did take place, they would still not stop his activities, for he knew that they would be a lesser evil, a lesser violence than the violence which would break out if he and his followers did not act; for by not acting they would leave the field free for the unrestrained savage forces of violence.

We must face up like men to the necessities of action and the consequences of the decisions we take. If we want to fight effectively against war, it is simply not enough for a conscientious élite to refuse war as individuals. From the very first steps we take into action, we inevitably come up against the constraint which _must_ be exercised on the munitions industries and their lines of communication. Above all else we must disarm war, break its limbs.

This cannot be done without mass strikes by the factory, dock and transport workers. Now in time of war these will immediately be mobilized, and any refusal on their part will thus constitute an insurrection, a military revolt, which will be open to the most pitiless forms of repression. Do you really believe that these workers will let themselves be crushed without resistance? Even admitting that the religious ideal would be that they should allow themselves to
be massacred without lifting a hand in self-defence (except by making the sign of the cross), like the Theban Legion of antiquity, do you feel equal to the task of inspiring this heroic self-sacrificial faith among them? Preach it to them, if you can, and share their fate! But if you cannot spread it further than a few minorities of believers, can you demand that thousands of others who do not have this faith to support them should refrain from countering violence by violence and will you dare to disavow them? In that case, it would be more honourable never to unleash these strikes and movements of collective refusal, for once they are unleashed you must take the consequences, and whether you like it or not, you must bear the responsibility just as Gandhi has always done.

It's one thing or the other; either say that the Kingdom of God is not of this world and withdraw from action, be resigned and stay in your dream, or else, if you are determined to carry the Kingdom of God into this world, accept the necessities of action! War today is the most destructive hydra that threatens the very existence of our common humanity. The worldwide battle against war is the most urgent social necessity, and no honest man who is sound in mind and limb can withdraw from it. But this battle cannot be fought effectively without the co-operation of elements which have evolved in different ways—non-violent and violent. We must try to organize them; let the best, the most highly evolved, seek to guide the others! But we must all be manly enough openly to accept our responsibilities in this common struggle against the common enemy of all human civilization! It is up to us to make an alliance with all sincere and courageous groups who are ready to sacrifice themselves fighting for the salvation of humanity.
445. Romain Rolland to Leon Herbos (Belgium)

22 July 1933

... No, I did not receive the reply you mention, in the war. But thank you for your letter today which I find most touching. Keep it up! Even though I am sick, in my heart I never tire of the daily battle. Gandhi, who passed through the Villeneuve countryside two years ago, repeated to me his article of faith: “Truth is God” Our life is thus a march towards Truth. It’s a rough climb; one needs to be a born mountaineer! ... 

446. Romain Rolland to Rev. John Haynes Holmes (U.S.A.)

Villeneuve (Vaud)
1 November 1933

... In the battle against imperialist warfare, let every man thus be sincere, and sincerely aware of what he can achieve and what he wants to achieve! And may the little cohort of “objectors” and the “non-violent” not condemn or repulse the alliance with the oppressed masses who, though they do not have the same faith, have the same common enemy! Gandhi himself has temporarily placed his Satyagraha army at the service of the Indian National Congress, the majority of whose members do not believe in non-violence, or see it merely as an experimental weapon in the great common struggle for Indian independence!

Satyagraha (non-violent non-acceptance) must, at the present moment, be considered from two different points of view:
On the one hand it is, for a small number, an absolute faith soaring above all conflicts and all their contingencies, victories and failures; it is a Civitas Dei.

On the other hand it is, on the level of practical and present action, a great experiment which has hardly started and whose outcome is distant. . . .

447. Romain Rolland to Eugene Lagot* (France)

4 November 1933

. . . . You can see for yourself the obstacles and the indifference which conscientious objection in France is up against, and how slow it is to develop. There's nothing surprising about this; it has only just been born on our soil. In England it is more than 200 years old. In India it took 30 years for Gandhi to organize his army of Satyagraha; and even in that privileged land, where Ahimsa (non-violence) has been an act of faith for centuries, the number of non-violent resisters imprisoned in the course of the latest campaigns has never totalled more than 100,000 out of many hundreds of thousands of Indians who support Congress in the fight for their country's independence. (Gandhi himself gives the figures in his last Poona declaration, dated 14 September 1933.)

. . . . For the moment, your League's main efforts should be ceaselessly to demand legal recognition of conscientious objection in France, which it has, under certain conditions, in some other countries. Such efforts I entirely support. But my personal role is to try to be a link between the two Revolutions: Gandhi's and Lenin's. May the two of them work together to overthrow the old world and found a new order! . . .

* Secretary of the French League of Conscientious Objectors (France)
448. Romain Rolland to Marcel Caster (France)

Villeneuve, 21 March 1934

. . . . I am recording the inevitable reply that Asia will make to the aggressor, and I am taking my stance in the camp of the oppressed.

Indeed I know that they will become oppressors in their turn. The "class war" has done much destruction, and will do much more. But what other means is there (in face of the absurd short-sightedness of those who believe they have force on their side and are making bad use of it)—what other means is there of breaking the injustice which not only crushes one part of the human race, but dishonours the other half, those who profit by it or let well alone because it "doesn’t concern them"! Yes, there is Gandhi’s great "experiment" in India. You know how passionately I am following it; I was the first to make it known in Europe. But this "experiment", still in progress, has been overtaken by the furious course of events. What is certain is that outside India, the world has done nothing to help it succeed—or worse still, even to allow it to be tried! . . .

449. Romain Rolland to Lucien Roth (France)

5 April 1934

. . . . I have recently had visits from Albert Schweitzer, back from Africa for a few months, and Pierre Cérésole (founder and director of the International Civil Service), who is leaving for India to put himself and his team at
Gandhi's disposal in his task of clearing up the ravages caused by the earthquake. These two worthy giants, who remind me of a third, Nansen, seemed to be filled with a profound pessimism about Europe; they consider her implacably destined to fall into the depths of her delirium, from which no force will be able to save her, and they are going to sacrifice their lives to another cause—while waiting for destiny to work itself out and for Europe to rise again. . . . I don't believe Nansen would have judged things that way. Even though he had no hope, he fell on the European battlefield. I am glad to have known all three of them, and when I think that I also knew Gandhi, Tagore and Tolstoy, and narrowly missed Lenin (whom I must have passed several times in Geneva, and even before that in Paris), I say to myself that people must be very blind to complain of the poverty of our time! From a distance, when they all appear grouped together on the same level, people will say that there was no age richer in heroes.

. . . . (Edmond Privat has recently brought out a most interesting book, published by Attinger of Neuchatel, about his journey to India with Gandhi. You would enjoy reading it; it's written with simplicity, frankness and sympathy.) . . .

450. Romain Rolland to G. Viatkine (U.S.S.R.)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Switzerland

23 May 1934

. . . . I shall reply to your questions as briefly as I can:
1. Do not confuse Gandhi with Istrati. On no account should these two men be classed on the same level. Istrati is nothing more than a writer of great talent, with an ardent and unruly heart, no judgment, totally lacking in objectivity, a temperament always carried away by his loves, his hatreds and his whims, the prey of events and the people
he meets. I came to know him after he tried to commit suicide out of despair, I was struck by his artistic genius of which he was unaware, I encouraged him to write and I got him known. He expressed floods of affection for me, then he became irritated with me when I severely condemned his writings against the U.S.S.R.; he attacked me in the press and we are no longer on good terms.¹

Gandhi is completely different. Gandhi is one of the highest moral characters, one of the purest and most disinterested I know in the whole world—and I know him well; I have followed his life and activities closely over forty years. His great character has never proved unworthy of itself; I can trust him as well as I can trust myself. As to his social role, to appreciate it exactly you need to know the real state of India over the last forty years. India was in the lowest degree of serfdom and discouragement, and it was Gandhi who, by his heroic example (he has often been imprisoned, beaten and threatened with death), gave her a sense of pride and dignity, and revived in her the powerful breath of independence. This was no mean task; imagine three hundred million human beings reawakened by the tireless propaganda of a frail little man armed only with self-abnegation, reason and absolute sincerity. His own social education is quite weak; it is based only on his personal experience, which is admittedly rich and varied. Gandhi is a man who reads very little, but he is constantly in contact with the people and he never stops testing out in action what he believes to be true; if his tests prove him wrong, he never hesitates to admit it and he looks for another road to social justice and truth. It is because I know that this is what he is like that I trust him; he is a man always on the move and he never stops. If, without

¹ Shortly before his death, Istrati asked for Romain Rolland's forgiveness. (M. R. R.'s note)
violence, by reason and experiment, he can be shown where the truth lies, he will set out towards it, whatever it may cost him, but of course not until after convincing himself of it by mature examination. Now since his deepest sympathies lie with the labouring people, with the millions of disinherit-
ted and oppressed, I am more or less certain that if he lives ten more years, he will put himself at the head of the whole movement supporting their claims in India against native capitalism and the bourgeoisie. I still enjoy the most affectionate of friendly relations with him, and I am trying to enlighten him. Even when he is wrong, it is in good faith and out of disinterested conviction. No man has sacrificed himself more constantly and completely, and his sincerity is absolute. Even if circumstances forced me into personal conflict with him, I should still venerate his cha-
acter. . . .

451. Romain Rolland to Fou Nou-En (China)

Villeneuve (Vaud), Switzerland
Villa Olga
30 June 1934

. . . . We live in an age which has seen the tumultuous rekindling of the flame of heroism, and with it has been revived the cult of the heroes. But this flame sometimes breaks out into savage fires, and it is important to find a precise definition of the “hero”.

In our times of trials and conflicts for all nations, it is not enough to be great for one’s own pride and one’s own glory; one must be great for the service of the community. The greatest leader is the greatest servant of his people, the servant of humanity.

This is what Sun Yat-Sen, Lenin and Gandhi were, and are; also, among those whose genius worked, not through
action, but through thought and art, Beethoven and Tolstoy.

It is this lofty sense of social mission, this profound sense of humanity, that must be reawakened—in art as well as in action.

. . . . It remains to consider which conditions, on the level of political action, are the most favourable for the success of such a plan. They are to be found, most certainly, in India, where millions of men over the centuries have been imbued with the doctrine of Ahimsa (non-violence), and where they have found in Gandhi a leader unique in his organizing genius, his lucid mind harmonizing practicality and faith, and his ascendency over the masses in his country. The great experiment he has undertaken will thus be decisive for the whole world. It is the most powerful barrier that a spiritual hero and his people can erect to protect themselves against the era of violence which is building up. If the barrier breaks, it is to be feared that violence will flood over the whole world for a time, and in such circumstances even the wisest men of action can do no more than try to direct it—without being able to stop it. . . .

452. Romain Rolland to Ch. Ulrich, World Committee against War (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud), 21 November 1935

. . . . I hope you have received my Appeal for the conference on the 23rd.

I have written to Rabindranath Tagore and to Ramananda Chatterjee, passing on your appeal.

But as for Saumyendranath Tagore, whom I know, I see him as a sincere and ardent young man, but much too prone to emotional and passionate impulses for one
ever to be sure of what he'll do next. I also look upon his book against Gandhi as a wrong action and a work which is for most of its length inexact or based on facts which have been cunningly twisted (in particular there's a certain confusion of dates, which in his passion he has mixed together without admitting that they belong to different periods of a continuing evolution). Saumyendranath is certainly not qualified to ask for the collaboration of Gandhi and his friends, among whom I still include myself, though I am separated from him (Gandhi) on some essential points of social thought and action.

453. Romain Rolland to Lucien Roth (France)

31 December 1936

. . . . Gandhi is well. Despite a violent attack of malaria which he has vigorously overcome, the most recent photographs I've seen of him make him look all brisk and rejuvenated. You say how "sad and bitter" he must feel; but such feelings are totally excluded from Gandhi’s mind. He is a believer, confident and patient, and nothing can shake him. Jawaharlal Nehru, whom I know well, his great successor at the head of the Indian movement, is quite a different character. No less noble in heart and no less pure, but free in faith and much more advanced in mind (a declared Socialist, on the verge of Communism), this great Indian, whom England has furiously attacked and will go on attacking (though at heart respecting him) has at the same time a clear vision of the future and a profound melancholy. . . .
454. Romain Rolland to Victor Jourdain (France)

Villeneuve (Vaud) Villa Olga
1 March 1939

... Politics are a terrible business, with very little connecting it with ethics. Gandhi’s heroic efforts have been directed precisely at marrying the two. I fear that at the present moment this may prove a superhuman task. ...
PART THREE

Prefaces and Articles
455. Introduction to *Young India*

The articles in this volume are a selection from the immense political production of Mahatma Gandhi, taken from the period between 1919 and 1922.

The reader of this work must not look for art or beauty of expression. Gandhi knows its worth, but here he is not concerned with art, at least not in the narrower sense of the word. His concern is with action, and with action of the most powerful and novel kind. If it is an art to steer action firmly, like a ship in a storm, towards the most difficult and the most glorious of goals, in this sense we may say that these writings are art, and of the highest art.

It is important first to understand the circumstances in which they appeared.

All by himself, laden with the crushing responsibility of a people of three hundred million souls differing in race, religion and language, most of them uneducated, and nearly all of them ultra-emotional, reacting violently at the slightest provocation; a people which he must unify, educate and direct,—having set in motion among these masses an unprecedented movement running contrary to the whole of the world’s established political wisdom, in which even the most slightly miscalculated stimulus can lead to terrible catastrophes,—the frail Mahatma with the will of steel must hold everything in his hands, must observe, watch and command. These are no circumstances in which to polish a work of literature, and Gandhi would certainly not have

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dreamed of collecting these articles into an anthology. His Hindu publishers brought out this volume during his imprisonment. Let us not see it as a book, but as an epic of heroic action, illuminated by the flashing sword of the last of the knights.²

He writes, speaks and acts, without rest or repose. This is the tale told by those who have heard him.

The Mahatma speaks to an audience of thousands. He does not raise his voice, nor does he gesticulate, nor does he use any of the techniques of oratory. There are no calculated effects. He begins without exordium and he finishes without peroration. When he has said what he has to say, be it much or little, he stops and goes away. The crowd roars its acclamations, and no one can make himself heard for a long time in the din. Gandhi, frowning—for he hates applause and anything noisy—goes off to sit in a corner, apart from the crowds wildly acclaiming him; he does not hear them, and already he is writing the article which will appear in the next number of his journal, *Young India*.

Those of us who read his article far across the ocean, let us listen intently! Underneath the cold words, we shall hear in the distance the roars of the Indian people.

* * *

Gandhi’s thought seems so clear and explicit, so hostile to any veils, reticence, half-statements, anything even remotely resembling compromise or dissimulation, that one would have thought it sufficient merely to bring the public into direct contact with it. As he says himself:

“I have always evolved the boldest of my plans in broad daylight. . . . I hate secrecy like a crime. . . . I feel thankful

² I make no apologies for applying the word *sword* to the Indian Christ; we shall see that he claims the word himself for his crusade of abnegation.
to God that for years past I have come to regard secrecy as a sin, especially in politics. ... We should avoid even thinking thoughts we would hide from the world!..."³

I have all the more reason to retire to the background, as I have already commented at length on the Mahatma’s mission and the characteristics of his genius in a small volume which is now widely available and has been translated into every European language and even into three Indian languages. I say this without vanity, for the whole secret of the universal diffusion of this book lies in the radiance of the “Great Soul”⁴ behind whom I made myself inconspicuous. This is what I should be doing today as well.

But since this book appeared, I have had occasion to revise the ideas expressed in it, thanks to numerous conversations and regular correspondence with Indians of all parliés, European witnesses of his activities in India, and even the Mahatma himself, now out of prison. Re-reading the articles in this translation, I saw some of his thoughts in a new light; I saw their complexity, and in some cases the various superimposed levels; their tragic character emerged more sharply. I should like to share my new discoveries with the reader. Nevertheless what I write here in this introduction is not a substitute for my more complete study. The reader who wants to know about the Mahatma’s life should refer to the volume Mahatma Gandhi.

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These articles begin, on the Gujarati New Year Day, October 1919, by an Appeal to the most heroic moral energies of a whole people. After a lifetime of harsh practical experimentation and impassioned meditation (he is now fifty), Gandhi determined to give his Gospel to India, his

³ Article dated 22 December 1920: The Sin of Secrecy
⁴ This, of course, is the meaning of the name: Mahatma.
message of religious action which opens before his people
the bloody and glorious way of Satyagraha. For those who
take the trouble to understand the precise meaning of what
the Mahatma demands, this means nothing less than calling
into being a whole people of Christs, sacrificing themselves
for their salvation and for all humanity.

Are we, then, witnessing the appearance of a prophet,
bearing a new religious creed?

We need to look more closely than this. It is well
known how averse Gandhi is to all supernatural titles,
which “should be ruled out of modern life. He is neither a
prophet nor a saint; no superman, and with no desire to
become one. He may, indeed he does, have his personal reli-
gious creed, but as a “humble servant of India, and laying claim
to nothing more”, he is not imposing any revealed truths on
his nation. He is looking for, and experimenting with, the
things which, in the field of direct observation, might save
her.

This word experiment, which constantly recurs in this
book,\(^5\) must be underlined. Neither his partisans nor his
adversaries have grasped it, for on both sides he is dealing
with passionate men. I have not dwelt on it enough myself.

Gandhi, whose intellectual horizons stretch far be-
yond his own land (though India is his first love), who by his
European education and his twenty-three years out of India
has acquired a comprehensive vision of the world and its
present state, has, like many of us, conceived serious doubts
about the future of humanity. Mankind seems to him to
be going through a perilous crisis, in which there is no

\(^5\)“... Like a scientist, I am making experiments about some of the
eternal verities of life. ...” (12 May 1920)—”... Since 1894 I have been
experimenting with myself and my friends. ...” (ibid.) “The area of India in which
the experiment (Civil Disobedience) is going on. ...” (10 November 1921).
“Is it not a futile experiment I am conducting? ...” (2 March 1922) etc.
guarantee that the most precious human values will survive. This thought allows him no peace, and though he addresses himself to India, he is thinking of all mankind, which India must save. It is his very love for her, his Indian pride, which assigns this fearful duty to his home-land.

Now there is only one means of salvation that he can see, and that is Non-violence. Admittedly this is not the only one he has ever considered. No doubt on his own account he will use no other, but for present-day humanity, still so backward, he does not condemn violence in itself; one can even say that in the past he agreed to co-operate with it in some measure, as he recruited troops for England; in any case he was willing for violence to be tried, and all he asks of those who have recourse to it today is that they should do it honourably and without hypocrisy. He is nevertheless convinced, by his long experience, that this course is ruinous and will lead mankind to disaster. Violence is a road which inevitably opens out on to the abyss. To those who would avoid it, the only route left open to them is Non-violence.

Let there be no misunderstanding; Gandhi is not saying that it will save humanity now. He does not know whether today's humanity will be saved. If it is, however, it can only be by Non-violence.

We are dealing with an experiment, the last one. It would be a desperate one if, for an Indian hermit who can always take refuge in an Infinity more real than this world of conflicts, there were not open the possibility of returning

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6 “Non-co-operation may have come in advance of its time. India and the world must then wait. . . .” But this does not detract from its value. (1 June 1921)
into the “Potter’s divine hands”.

It is worth returning to these features of his thought; the Mahatma’s texts themselves show their tragic intensity.

He announces at the outset of his campaign (12 May 1920) that he is a man “who claims only to be a humble searcher after Truth, who knows his limitations, makes mistakes, never hesitates to confess them when he makes them and frankly confesses that he, like a scientist, is making experiments about some of the ‘eternal verities’ of life, but cannot even claim to be a scientist because he can show no tangible proof of scientific accuracy in his methods, or tangible results of his experiments”.

We are thus not dealing with a Revelation. We are dealing with a social hypothesis, a law glimpsed but not yet proven, a “new energy”, which he believes he has discovered or rather rediscovered after the ancient Rishis, and which he compares to electricity. It is the Law of Love, the force of Satyagraha.

7 “... My intense longing is to lose myself in the Eternal and to become merely a lump of clay in the Potter’s divine hands so that my service may become more certain because uninterrupted by the baser self in me. ...” (17 November 1921)

8 See also: “I only see as through a glass darkly and therefore have to carry conviction by slow and laborious processes and then too not always with success. ...” (17 November 1921)

9 See the extraordinary article dated 23 June 1919: “It may be long before the Law of Love will be recognized in international affairs. ... Till a new energy is harnessed and put on wheels, the captains of the older energies will treat the innovation as theoretical, impractical, idealistic and so on. ... The electrical engineer was no doubt called a faddist and a madman in steam-engine circles, till work was actually done over the wires. It may take long to lay the wires for international love; but ... if only we watched the latest international developments in Europe and Eastern Asia with an eye to essentials, we could see how the world is moving steadily to realize that between nation and nation, as between man and man, force has failed to solve problems, but the economic sanction of Non-co-operation is far more mighty and conclusive than armies and navies.”
On what is it based? On the numerous observations collected by Gandhi over twenty-five years, on the astonishing experiment of South Africa, in which an oppressed people managed to wrench the rights which were their due away from masters determined to refuse them and in possession of all the material force; army, law-courts and public opinion whipped up by the press. This experiment, timidly begun with a handful of sacrifices, suddenly achieved a formidable impetus: forty thousand men and women offering themselves to be sent to prison. And the victory was won without any blood being spilt, "after strenuous discipline in self-suffering".  

What, then, is this new weapon which shatters tanks and cannon? It is "the sword of self-sacrifice." (15 December 1921).

Note well this word sword. Gandhi insists on it himself, and returns to it several times. He sets it against the "sword of steel", blade against blade. Who dares speak of passivity, of bleating acceptance? Gandhi is profoundly certain that England will not cede to India's demands "until forced to by the sword". But his invincible sword is a people offering themselves to the slaughter.

What nonsense ever to have confused this paroxysm of action with the sheeplike race of passive pacifists! There is not a grain of passivity in Gandhi's nature; everything is "direct action"... "Nothing has ever been done on this earth without direct action." Not only does this seem to him necessary for the victory of a cause or of an idea; it is even a benefit to the man who resorts to it, a spiritual hygiene; it

10 20 April 1921
gives him a sense of balance, a sense of his strength; it preserves him from bitter and sterile vindictiveness.\textsuperscript{11}

This is certainly a heroic remedy, but it is not against nature. As Gandhi states it, the starting point is an observation worthy of a mystic sage on the law of suffering in nature: \textit{“Life comes out of Death. The condition of wheat growing is that the seed-grain should perish. . . . The law of suffering is the one indispensable condition of our being. . . .”} All we can do is to take it all on ourselves and spare it to our enemies. \textit{“Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone. . . . The purer the suffering, the greater is the progress. . . .”} We must \textit{“learn to take up suffering voluntarily and to find joy in it. . . . Without such suffering, it is not possible to attain freedom.”}\textsuperscript{12}

This shows that the Mahatma is no weakener of energy! On the contrary, he submits it to the harshest discipline ever imposed on a people. But he inspires in his people an ardour which makes them accept it with lightness of heart; he exalts them. He stretches human energy to the extreme limit, at which the bowstring seems ready to break. But the arrow leaping from the bow thus bent will fly far.

It is understandable that this Bowman of Non-violence, this sword-bearer of self-sacrifice, has no scorn for honourable advocates of violence—though he condemns their error. I quoted in my little book the striking passages in which \textit{“where there is a choice between cowardice and violence,}

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{“By teaching direct action to the weak party . . . I make him feel strong and capable of defying the physical might. He feels braced for the struggle, he regains confidence in himself, and knowing that the remedy lies with himself, he ceases to harbour the spirit of revenge. . . .”} See the Letter to the Viceroy: Non-co-operation, he says, is \textit{“a form of direct action”, . . . the only derivative from violence.}

\textsuperscript{12} 16 June 1920
he would advise violence!” He goes even further; he would “advocate training in arms for those who believe in the method of violence”. For violence is another experiment, “an attitude the world has been used to for ages past”; and if it is adopted, at least it should be well organized and carried through: thus “it would be a manly, honest and sober attitude.”

Yes indeed, here we see the Rishi of Non-violence applying the word sober to violence! It means that, if he rejects violence, it is not because his heart falters before the means it uses, but because his judgment clearly tells him that violence docs not and cannot achieve its aims—none of the overwhelming results obtained from “Non-violence in its dynamic condition” which means “the putting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire . . . and lay the foundation for that empire’s fall or its regeneration.”

May we add that as he sounds his trumpet before the walls of Jericho, Gandhi is merely resuming the experiment of the Rishis, those “greater geniuses than Newton, greater warriors than Wellington” who “having themselves known the use of arms, realized their uselessness, and discovered and taught the world the law of Non-violence.”

* * *

Non-violence, then, is a battle, and as in all battles—however great the general—the issue remains in doubt. The experiment which Gandhi is to attempt is terrible, terrifyingly dangerous, and he knows it; he fears the fury of the Indian populace which he is unleashing more than he fears the tyranny of the English adversary. But he must dare. “The essence of the experimenter is to dare.” Gandhi has learned “energy” from the West, and he wants to inject it into India.

13 2 March 1922
14 25 February 1920
—“No general worth the name gives up a battle because he has suffered reverses or made mistakes.” He recollects himself, meditates, makes his preparations and dares.—Gandhi dares, and his daring goes a very long way. In August 1920 he refused to wait for the vote of Congress, which represented the nation, before initiating his experimental movement of Non-co-operation:—"When one has an unshakable faith in a particular policy, it would be folly to wait for the Congress pronouncement (in other words the nation). On the contrary, one must act and demonstrate its efficacity, so as to command acceptance by the nation..." "The best way of serving the nation" is sometimes to act against its opinions.

But suppose he is wrong? Very well, be it on his own head! He will be crushed. If he acts outside Congress, obviously it is not in the name of Congress; it is at his own risk and his own peril. He will be able to bear the whole responsibility for his defeat.

“I should no more feel worthy to lead a cause which I might feel myself diffident of handling.... But the doctrine of labouring without attachment is as much a relentless pursuit of truth as a retracing after discovery of error, and a renunciation of leadership without a pang after discovery of unworthiness.”

It is not with a light heart that he faces such a possibility.

“Suppose,” he writes, “that despite all my endeavours none of my hopes are realized, should I not feel my unworthiness for leading the struggle? Should I not kneel down in all humility before my Maker and ask him to take away this useless body and make me a fitter instrument of service?...”

His secret agonies and heartbreaks can well be imagined. The public confession following the crimes of Chauri Chaura reveals one of these painful moments. Yet he picks

15 17 November 1921
16 Ibid
himself up again and he never gives in, for he well knows that he cannot. The ship which is about to founder cannot do without him; he is the pilot, and he must stay at his post and continue to dare. His awesome experiment is not valid for India alone; it is for every race of mankind. He quotes a very fine saying taken from an unknown Rishi of antiquity:

"Yatha pinde tatha brahmande"

"As it is with a lump of clay, so it is with the whole-universe."

He is experimenting with the lump of clay, and certainly he has no illusions about the limits of his power! But he docs what he has to do! . . .

And he holds out his hand to the world, so that all can help each other: to the English, to the Christians, even to his enemies. Enemies? But he has no enemies. "To every Englishman in India," he writes "Dear friend." He addresses his appeal to the Europeans, and he corresponds affectionately with Christians. He is not fighting against them; he is working for them, for Christianity itself, which Europe betrays.

I have tried to make clear to the reader the nature of the battle which has been joined and precisely what is at stake. This will make him better able, as he studies the book, to appreciate the genius lavished by this "practical idealist", as he likes to call himself, on the realization of his grand design. He has the gift, very rare among passionate believers of being able to read in the thoughts of other men. He has the "polypsychological" faculty of being able to speak to everyone in his own language and, helped by a just sense of the difference between people's natures, to appeal to their best forces only within the personal

17 27 October 1920
18 15 August, 23 September 1921
circle of understanding and action allotted to each individual. This explains why, embracing as he does the whole of humanity in his own heart, he speaks the language of patriotism to the Sikhs, and as for those who wish to take up arms, he teaches them to use those arms for their country.¹⁹ As he writes to Tagore, his task is “altering the meanings of old terms, nationalism and patriotism, and extending their scope”.

Thus he does not even try to realize the complete or “perfect” Non-violence, which is his personal faith, but Non-violence in the “limited form which alone is possible at present”, in other words the “political non-violence of the non-co-operator”, a reasoned method of peaceful and progressive revolution leading to Swaraj, Indian Home Rule.²⁰

¹⁹ See the curious article: “My Inconsistency”, 23 February 1921, in which he explains his recruitment campaign in 1914. His faith in Ahimsa (Non-violence), he says is absolute. But most men do not believe in Ahimsa; they believe in violence; and yet they refuse to do their duty in the world of violence, their national and patriotic duty.— “I explained it to them,” writes Gandhi. “I also explained the doctrine of Ahimsa to them and let them make their choice, which they did. I do not repent. For under Swaraj too (in other words in a liberated India) I would not hesitate to advise those who would bear arms to do so and fight for their country.”

Thus when he cannot communicate his faith to others, he helps them to clarify their own faith, which will purify (to some degree) their unrestrained instincts.

²⁰ Article on Non-violence.

See also his remarks about his famous book Hind Swaraj (Indian Home Rule): “I would warn the reader against thinking that I am today aiming at the Swaraj described therein. I know that India is not ripe for it.... I am individually working for the self rule pictured therein. But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India”.

Always this vision on several levels, this acute sense of differing duties unevenly shared out in the world. No doubt this harmonizes with his Hindu conception of different castes and dharmanas.
Each of his articles is like a set of battle orders whose meaning he is explaining, to his lieutenants, to the main body of his army, or even to his enemies, for he thinks it is not without value to appeal to the common sense and honourability of those against whom he is fighting.\textsuperscript{21}

Nothing could be more admirable than the measured control with which in his controversies he allies moderation of manners and perfect calm and courtesy of expression with absolute frankness and implacable assurance.\textsuperscript{22}

This gentle and polite man wields a dictatorial authority over his armies. Never has a popular leader idolized by the crowd spoken of the crowd with more scorn. Some of his remarks would not have been disavowed by Shakespeare's Coriolanus:

"I have become literally sick of the adoration of the unthinking multitude. I would feel certain of my ground if I was spat upon by them... It is better to be dubbed autocratic than even to appear to be influenced by the multitude for the sake of its approbation... I believe that mere protestation of one's opinion is not only not enough but in matters of vital importance leaders must act contrary to the mass of opinion if it does not commend itself to their reason."\textsuperscript{24}

But this heroic scorn covers more genuine love for the people than the self-interested flatteries of the demagogue. Gandhi believes that a lofty will-power can transform a people by fearlessly demanding the harshest sacrifices of

\textsuperscript{21} "To every Englishman in India":—"I almost feel tempted to invite you to join me in destroying a system that has dragged both you and us so down..." (13 July 1921).

\textsuperscript{22} See above all Ethics of Destruction (1 September 1921).

\textsuperscript{23} 2 March 1922

\textsuperscript{24} 14 July 1920
it; and he imposes a vigorous moral discipline—that discipline whose relaxation is the mortal weakness of the revolutionary armies of today, and whose strength was the strength of those of the past. Cromwell’s troops heard orders of the day similar to those of the Mahatma, enjoining “the need for humility”, for physical and moral cleanliness, respect for women, forbidding drink, scourging the “sin of secrecy” which is lying, or rather half-truths. The inspired Protector of the Republic of England understood, no less than Gandhi, the mystic forces in mankind; he appealed to them, and it was in part to them that he owed his victories.

I may be reproached for dwelling in this introduction on the combative character of Gandhi’s articles.

I wanted to destroy a misunderstanding which would confine Gandhi within a nerveless pacifism. If Christ was the Prince of Peace, Gandhi is no less worthy of this noble title. But the peace which both of them bring to men is not the peace of passive acceptance, but the peace of active love and self-sacrifice. I have dared to show that there is less distance between the non-violence of the Mahatma and the violence of the revolutionaries than there is between heroic non-acceptance and the servile ataraxia of the eternal acceptors, who form the reinforcement of all tyrannies and the cement of all reactions.

A few weeks ago, after long debates about the Amnesty in the French Parliament, the public authorities, faced with little resistance from an opposition mediocre both in number and in quality, refused to include Conscientious Objectors in the proffered pardon—establishing as terms of their amnesty that it should apply only to those who fought.

Our politicians are wearing blinkers. They do not suspect that there is more than one battle going on in the
modern world; and the most heroic is no longer the one being fought at the front by the national armies. It suits them to remain in ignorance. Let them look around them—and in front of them, to what is being prepared for the future: revolutionary struggles, class struggles, racial struggles! And the loftiest of all is the spiritual struggle, the war fought by the Soul!

In this work we would show them this other battle, which will spread gradually from India over the whole world. Let them crush it if they wish! Let them dishonour it if they can! This was what Rome wanted to do with the first Christians, and the time came when Rome was forced to come to terms with them: "In hoc signo vinces. . . ." Admittedly later on Rome corrupted them.

But we have not yet reached that stage. As a professional historian, used to observing the ever-recurring ebb and flow of the great spiritual tides, I descry a new tide rising in the depths of the East. It will not turn until it has flooded over the coasts of Europe.

July 1924

456. Romain Rolland’s Preface to the French Edition of Lajpat Rai’s Unhappy India

The great voice which makes itself heard here in reply to Miss Mayo’s outrageous libel, rises, alas, from the tomb. Lajpat Rai fell a year ago, a victim to the brutalities of the British Police in Lahore. His death crowned a life devoted entirely to the service of India. While still in his teens he gave up everything for her sake. For thirty years he fought and suffered for her. For her he suffered long years of prison and exile, by which however his intrepidity was never shaken. He well knew that pain and death are the portion
of heroic souls. His own was formed in the school of Mazzini and he gave to India the example of this life of austere abnegation. In order to stir the apathy of the nation and to renew her exhausted blood he fed her with the marrow of lions such as Krishna in the battle-field, Dayananda, Mazzini and Garibaldi. He worked unceasingly for her political and social uplift, for her education and organization, for her physical and moral hygiene.

I admired the courage and the joy which radiated from that frank countenance, not handsome but attractive because of the generous flame of his energy, his absolute sincerity, and his chivalrous loyalty. With him thought was action; in his eyes, sombre, deep and luminous, one read determination like a storm-cloud always ready to burst forth. But there also one saw the light of irony, a sparkling gaiety, a keen understanding both of human comedy and tragedy, of the machinery of states and the game of politics.

He was a great leader. He marched at the head of his people, uniting in his powerful nature the experience of an old general with the ardour of a young soldier.

Such is he whose loyal testimony here resists the abusive attack, —a tissue of malice and feigned pity, of correct information incorrectly generalised, and of false and idle gossip accepted without criticism, in which Miss Mayo, who previously demonstrated to the world the benefits conferred upon the Philippines in depriving them of their liberty, aids British Imperialism in withholding from India her liberty. Like a certain personage mentioned in the Bible, she is publicly grieved at the sins of others, but takes care not to see the "beam" in the eye of her own race and her own country.

"Unhappy India" cried Lajpat Rai, defending his martyred land, but I say "Happy India" who, in this age of
Europe of poor character and mediocre virtue, has created such pure devotions, and whose sacred womb has given birth to a host of heroes, —Dayananda, Vivekananda, M. K. Gandhi, and this lion of the Punjab, Lajpat Rai!

Romain Rolland

Villeneuve, November 17, 1929

457. Romain Rolland’s Preface to Gandhi’s Autobiography

This great book you are reading is not an autobiography in the usual sense, inspired by narcissism or moral exhibitionism, as practised by the greatest writers of the West, Jean-Jacques and Tolstoy—to say nothing of the aesthetes of today.

Gandhi strenuously denies this in his illuminating introduction to his book, dated 26 November 1925, which I regret that C. F. Andrews has omitted from this abridged edition.¹

This book is about action, and written to achieve action; it should be the breviary of every man of action of our day. By this I do not mean that they ought to follow its directions. This Gandhi himself would not wish; he has never claimed to be an authority, only to be an example for others to interpret freely and in the light of their own reason. But everyone will find in this work an incalculable wealth of factual instruction on how to achieve action, both on oneself and on others, on the men and the nations of our day.

With the exactness he brings to bear on every task, Gandhi entitles this work: *A Story of My Experiments with Truth*. The word *experiment* must be underlined, and one could as well say *on* as *with* Truth, for Truth is seen here as a cosmic element on which experiments can be carried out, just as Albert Einstein is carrying out experiments on light in the Michelson Laboratories in California.

The whole book, Gandhi's whole life is a logical chain of experiments based on facts; and this chain which, ever since his earliest childish awareness, has never ceased to grow—patiently but unceasingly, from one link to the next, broadening the thread to embrace three hundred million Indians, and soon the whole world is not yet complete. He says so frankly:

"*My conclusions from my current experiments can hardly as yet be regarded as decisive. . . . I set a high value on these experiments. . . ."*2 *My conclusions appear to me to be absolutely correct. . . But far be it from me to claim any degree of perfection for these experiments. I claim for them nothing more than does a scientist who, though. he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them. . . ."*3

It is up to us all to conduct our own experiments in the light of those done by Gandhi, in our own ways and following the laws of our own minds!

*Gandhi is thus no more than a humble seeker after truth.*4 But how intrepid are his researches! . . . And as to his *humility*, we shall see! . . . Humble before Truth, yes; but where is this Truth to be found?

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2 Closing pages of the book
3 Introduction of 1925
4 Quoted by Andrews in his *Conclusion*
Gandhi does not ask, with Pilate: "What is Truth?" ... Truth is. Truth is the starting point. But the starting point is always, so to speak, the weak point (one might equally well say the strong point!) in every passionate logician who uses deductive reason, either in thought or in action—whether their name be Spinoza or Gandhi. For it is at the starting point that we find the essential passion springing from the heart of their being, the very reason for their existence. If this reason were lacking, the man of passion would be nothing: he would wither away and die.

Truth is Gandhi's reason for existence. It is thus his own Truth, and the whole of his life's experimenting is aimed at checking its exactness and effectiveness, first on himself, then on others.

"I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. . . . All that I do by way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end. But as I have all along believed that what is possible for one is possible for all, my experiments have not been conducted in the closet but in the open."

His Truth—the Truth—is written into the roots of his nature; let us then look at these roots in the pure state, starting from his childhood.

His nature was passed down to him by his race, pure and firm as steel; a race devoted essentially to action, upright and sound. His elderly father was a statesman, of purely practical education, able to direct the activities of hundreds of men; his mother a woman of firm common sense and inflexible will-power, devoting herself to complete self-mastery in her religious practices.  

5 By means of rigorous disciplines such as fasting, which was to become one of Gandhi's favourite methods.
Moral purity, practicality and an iron will; these are the three essential features.

Moral purity very soon asserted itself in the child, revealing itself in his tastes in reading and entertainments (which bored him apart from their moral attractions) and in the almost ecstatic emotion evoked in him by simple moral sententia\(^6\) which would leave thousands of other children totally indifferent or sceptical. Later, when he became a man, this moral element was always the one of the two major aspects which impressed him the most in the Scriptures: both the \textit{Gita} and the Gospels. The rest of the Kingdom of God attracted him little.\(^7\) He has admitted that the true religious sentiment, as it is generally understood, was slow to be awakened in him, and that as a child he had no \textit{living faith in God}. He has never delved deep into religious metaphysics, and even less into the psycho-physiological mystical techniques of his country; late in life he began some experiments with \textit{yoga}, but he soon tired of them, postponed them until a later date and has never resumed them; he has neither the time nor the inclination for them. . . . It seems that though he instinctively knows some forms of \textit{yoga},\(^8\) it should be seen as a kind of moral \textit{yoga}, combining simultaneous elements of \textit{karma}, \textit{bhakti} and \textit{Jnanayoga}, action, love and reason; a kind of mean between the three.

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\(^6\) Such as \textit{Return good for evil}

\(^7\) \textit{There are innumerable definitions (and manifestations) of God. . . . \textit{They overwhelm and stun me. . . . But I worship God as Truth only. . . . (Introduction).}}

\(^8\) He speaks in his \textit{Introduction of faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth} which have appeared to him \textit{often on his way}. But they are never more than intermittent glimpses.
But his essential feature, from the very beginning, was that he was a child "incapable of lying"; mediocre or indifferent, maybe, in everything else, and particularly in intellectual curiosity, but flawless on this precise point of morality; a child of absolute sincerity, who found it almost physically impossible to lie and who suffered intolerably, not when his truthfulness risked weakening, but simply when it was called in question. (There is some unconscious pride in this; he is not as humble as he believes—and I admire him for it! . . .)

Such an admirable moral purity could well spread from sincerity to other areas of morality, and that is what happened. He very soon became aware that the whole moral field was his, or should become his, and that he had no right to neglect any of it. (Some corners of the field did not prove easy to plough!) But this imperative, "do not lie", is the grappling root, like that of the ivy; wherever he climbs, these are the hooks by which he climbs.

Apart from this, he was equipped with a healthy and very well balanced reasoning faculty, troubled by no excess of the imagination, no suspect mists of sentimentality of heart or mind. This is what he says about geometry, which he has enjoyed ever since childhood, without suspecting that children of a more dreamy or poetic nature would not subscribe to so peremptory a statement: A subject which only required the simple use of one's reasoning powers could not be difficult.

Furthermore, everything in his nature was directed from the outset towards action. His truth and reason would, in his view, have been still-born, if they had remained enclosed in the interior of his thought. In order to exist, they had to be realized outside himself; and this realization necessarily led, step by step, to collective action in its broadest form. But let there be no mistake! At the starting point there was no effusion of Amour Caritatis, that frenzy of sublimated love for all men; for all beings, which burned in the
former libertine Francis of Assisi. Instead there was an inner law of truth seeking *individual realization*; he himself must be adequate to his profound and initially obscure ideal of Truth; he himself, by the hammer and chisel of his actions, must carve from the virgin stone the statue written into his own individual being! He says as much, with his usual grandiose sincerity:

"My national (human) service is part of the training I undergo for freeing my soul from the bondage of the flesh. . . . Thus considered, my service may be regarded as purely selfish."\(^9\)

And this is spoken by a man who has sacrificed his whole well-being, his passions, his interests, his whole self, to others! And he is still not satisfied. . . .

"I must reduce myself to zero. . . ."\(^10\)

His complete self-realization tends towards this ultimate zero which is the Universal Being—the Absolute, Moksha. . . .\(^11\)

The whole way of his life leads, with unreserved sincerity, towards this perfect identification of the self with the All; this is the natural movement of the Indian mind. But whereas most Indians, above all the great mystics, reach it in one great leap or strive to do so by the passion of ecstasy, Gandhi travels progressively towards it, by the tenacious and passionate logic of active reason.\(^12\)

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9 1924. Quoted by Andrews in his *Conclusion*
10 Closing lines of the volume
11 To attain Moksha . . . the Absolute . . . to see God face to face, for God, by his own definition, is the same as Truth. *Introduction*
12 His whole deductive process is explained by him at the end of the book:
1. There is no other God but truth.
2. To reach Truth, a man must be able to love the meanest fragment of universal creation as he loves himself.
And he does not claim that he has achieved it; he is on the way. . . . This is a confession of astonishing sincerity from a great Indian man of religion who has arrived, as he has, almost at the end of his heroic career—a sixty-year lifetime full of spiritual combats, as immense as a Ramayana:

“I have not yet found God (Truth). But I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest. As long as I have not realized this absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That must be my beacon and my buckler. . . . If anything that I write in these pages may strike the reader as being touched with pride, then he must take it that there is something wrong with my quest and that my glimpses are no more than mirages. . . . The seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust. . . . Only then, and not till then, will he have a glimpse of the truth. . . .

This proud humility of the real seeker after truth, the genuine man of science, brings him closer than any Indian to the majority of European minds. He uses the same mental instrument as our men of free reason, an intelligence which observes, deduces and applies the results of its reasoned experimentation to the facts it experiences.

3. A man cannot exercise this love if he keeps out of the least field of life. Therefore he must participate in action and he cannot loftily brush aside politics with a Noli me tangere! . . . To raise the drawbridge between politics and religion, to say that religion has nothing to do with politics, is not to know what religion means.

4. It is impossible to achieve identification with everything that lives without self-purification. Perfect purity is a sine qua non.

5. A man cannot reach perfect purity if he does not renounce all passion; he must rise above love and hatred. There must be no preferences in his affections. He who would be friends with God (with Truth) must make the whole world his friend. And as for himself, he must tend towards zero . . . Ahimsa is the ultimate zero of humility.

13 Introduction
Let us follow the chain of his experiments. They are for everyone; the most simple mind should understand them.

"The conviction has been growing upon me that whatever is possible for me is possible even for a child. . . ."  

His first experiments were on himself, on his youthful body and mind. He had a natural taste for self-discipline, both physical and moral, and on the physical level he had something to take after; he tells us that the Vaishnava rules of his race are inexorable on the subject of physical cleanliness. This need for cleanliness extended to the soul as well; every dirty and shameful thing had to be washed from it, and the young Gandhi had no lack of such things. It tells us a great deal when we learn that this hero (a boy of thirteen, already married) was tormented by fear; fear of everything, darkness, ghosts, robbers, snakes. . . . And his bowels were also gnawed by the she-wolf of sensuality, of which he still speaks with terror today, in veiled terms. . . . These were his two enemies, and we know with what implacable energy he tamed them (and he is not at all sure that one of them is still not growling in the shadows). But no one can tell the violence of the conflicts which have never ceased within him. So calm, so detached, so pure a man!

. . . What a victory, and what an example for the vanquished! . . .

Thus ever since his twentieth year he has put renunciation, self-defeat, at the forefront of the life he has built for himself. He does not say that this task appeared to him as a duty—no indeed! It was a pleasure. . . . "It appealed to me."  

14 Introduction
15 The idea of Renunciation as the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.
This pleasure in renunciation takes the form of humbling the body by the most rigorous means available, and in the first instance by fasts, which Gandhi has always practised—experimented with—with a strange delight.\textsuperscript{16}

But the king of all fasts is \textit{Brahmacharya}, the law of absolute chastity. This man who, by a precocious marriage, knew at too young an age the obsession with the carnal act (one still senses that he is burned by the memory of the poison which flowed through his veins) became aware rather belatedly of the heroic remedy which alone could liberate his soul. In 1906, during the Zulu revolt in the Natal, he meditated on the absolute need for chastity if he was to accomplish his task—his double task of self-realization and the service of humanity. This even demanded tearing himself away from family bonds, but in his exaltation he took the vow of \textit{Brahmacharya} for the rest of his life.

\textsuperscript{16} Nowhere is the word \textit{experiment} more appropriate than in this case. Gandhi never tires of experimenting to find out how much privation the body can bear and remain healthy. He is ceaselessly cutting down and down on his food. Sickness warns him when he has gone too far, and he has to retrace his steps; but he does not consider himself defeated, and soon afterwards he is observed to start his attempts again, trying to deceive the resistance of his organism by some roundabout way or by surprise tactics. He naively says: "These experiments in dietetics are dear to me as a part of my researches in Ahimsa. They give me recreation and joy" But let it not be thought that his mind is taken in by the game! He admits that medically there may be two opinions on the value of his diets (which, as well as suppressing meat, also reject salt and pulses) but morally I have no doubt, he adds, that all self-denial is good for the soul.

Fasting is thus essentially a spiritual discipline.

A year-long vow which he took was "one of the sweetest recollections of my life" . . . .
“I must confess,” he adds, “that I had not then fully realized the magnitude and immensity of the task I had undertaken. Today I have still not beaten its ever-present difficulties.”

It is not only the body which is concerned; the mind must be shut off from all impure thoughts. . . .

“And” he says, “although neither will nor effort is lacking, I have yet to achieve complete mastery over thought. . . .”

But he has not the slightest doubt about the excellence of the law:

“Life without Brahmacharya appears to me to be insipid and animal-like. . . . Man is man because he is capable of self-restraint.”

This is the great motto of every virile age and every hero, either European or Asiatic, either free-thinkers or believers:

“If you want to be great, limit yourself! Renounce, in order the better to be the master!”

But with Gandhi, as with the ascetics, Christian or Indian, renunciation does not imply retreat (although it tempts him: what man has not felt its charms? ). Retreat from the world constitutes a flight, hence a defeat, and Gandhi rejects it. He is not of the stuff of which the vanquished are made. Renunciation must be within the world or not at all.

Gandhi thus resolutely entered into the way of affairs; and it is noteworthy that the only living man whose religious influence he admits—for, exceptionally in an Indian seeking God, he never had a guru or spiritual master—is a man living in his province who, like himself, is absorbed in spiritual pursuits in the midst of business.17

Among strong believers, God has never got in the way of practical action. We have striking examples of this in the West, and Henri Bremond has described some extra-

17 The Gujarati poet Raychand, whom Gandhi knew when he returned to India from England.
ordinary cases in his *Literary History of Religious Sentiment in France.* But these examples have more value in the East. This superposition of two powers, intense religious concentration and realistic will to action, predestined this frail little man, setting off for South Africa in 1893 at the age of twenty-four as advisory lawyer to a company, to become a master of the peoples of India.

For the present, he had little notion of what was awaiting him; but the surprising things which he did find awaiting him at once made his unknown energies rise within him. He was scarcely off the boat before he was insulted; then again; three, four, five times within a few days, in odious, brutal and revolting fashion. And this timid, stammering little Indian unhesitatingly went forward, at the risk of his life. The sense of outraged rights conquered his fear for ever. If necessary, he would march to the scaffold.

But his admirable sense of equity kept him from rushing into violent revolt. From his very first steps he achieved over his oppressors the highest of all victories: the victory of an unruffled spirit of justice, serene and pure, which refused to take vengeance.

It would be nothing to achieve this merely within himself if he did not also achieve it in those around him, whose leadership he at once assumed; for in them he found an extension giving a sense to his whole life. He is not one of those crabbed individualists for ever talking of themselves alone and asking, like Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Gandhi's soul, like Lenin, and every great soul without exception (and they are not legion!), is the soul of all men; his I is also thou. . . . "If you sin against justice and I know about it, say nothing and leave you free to do it,

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18 Cf. Vol. IV, Ch. V: The Intense Life of the Mystics,—that lady of Tours in the age of Louis XIII who was a French St. Theresa, Mme. Martin, Mary of the Incarnation.
then it is I who am unjust!"

Thus as soon as he was settled in Africa, not content with demanding the rights of his people, he undertook their moral education, gave them spiritual uplift and directed them, as Moses directed his exiled people in Egypt. It was when he spoke to them in public that the religious spirit in Gandhi became a living force. Mark this well, for he says so himself; for the Spirit within him to become a living force, he had to speak to the people, he had to act. Solitary meditation had proved inadequate. For a man like Gandhi, solitude which does not lead to action is sterile.

This does not mean that Gandhi does not meditate; none has done so more intensely than he. But for his meditation to "rise", like good bread, it needs the fermentation of action. Even in those days in South Africa he was still completing his religious education by way of books. But under the new light which had touched him, he read in them his own true religion, which is the religion of service: as I felt that God could be realized only through service.

This means the service of his people; his whole people. For although by birth, and perhaps by temperament, he is a "petit-bourgeois", as the Muscovites scornfully

19 It was characteristic of him that the first time he spoke in public it was about truthfulness in business to an audience of tradesmen.

20 There is no doubt about that! In 1913 at the age of thirty-four, when he unleashed the great strike among the Indian workers in Natal, he admitted that he was not yet very familiar with that class. Even more striking; when in 1915 he founded his Ashram in India and decided to introduce the hand-weaving trade, he frankly admitted that his whole circle was drawn from either the liberal professions or trading circles; none of them were artisans. I need hardly add that this is no longer the case today and that he is now the man most closely in contact with the Indian millions, the most popular, indeed the only popular hero among the poor working classes of all India. But he comes from the other side.
please to refer to him, he does not make the slightest distinction between classes, and he never has done. Even in his earliest youth, when his mind was still not fully formed, he proved strangely indifferent to caste and the sanctions it brought to bear against him.21

He says to himself, and it is a remarkable feature of his nature:—he has never known any distinction in his heart between beings, be they relations, friends, countrymen or foreigners. This he says, is in my very nature.21

When he founded his Ashram at Ahmedabad, in 1915, the first condition he imposed was a total denial of Untouchability. This was not simply a theoretical declaration, for he at once opened the doors of his Ashram to a family of untouchables. Public opinion was up in arms; he was threatened with social boycott, and he met with upsetting resistance within his own household. But he did not give in or compromise; he was ready to move out and settle in the heart of the untouchable quarter, to earn his living by manual labour, as they did. Only unexpected help from a rich friend avoided this public scandal, but it is quite clear that on this fundamental question of the equality of classes and those outside class, Gandhi has never hesitated. When it is said of him that he is the servant of his people, it literally means the whole of his people.

21 When his caste objected to his departure for England in 1887, at the age of eighteen, he calmly overruled them and allowed himself to be declared an outlaw, saying: The caste should not interfere in the matter. On his return he accepted excommunication without arguing and without being upset.

22 On the other hand he openly admits that the other great laws he imposed upon himself, renunciation of sensual urges (Brahmacharya) and of violence (Ahimsa), demanded an incessant struggle with himself. These are not instincts as natural to him as the sense of equality between all living beings.
Thus he serves India, because the circumstances of his life have placed him there, at this particular battle-position. But he has not the least doubt that his services must extend to the whole of humanity! His reading of Tolstoy in Africa brought home to him the infinite possibilities of universal love.

* * *

How has he “served” India?

In South Africa, he found a people not only disarmed and enslaved, but used to it and accepting insults, a people apparently subdued and degraded. His first act was to make them aware of their dignity, their duties and their legitimate rights. He did not need many experiments before, from this sheet of stagnant water, he was able to bring forth the dormant energies, the sense of honour and the courage natural to them, for they were not so much feeble as resigned. The Durban affair in 1896-1897 revealed to the astonished Europeans, and to the Indians themselves, that they had a moral backbone capable of resistance. At the first blow, the Indian community won the enemy’s respect.

There was, of course, no question of liberating India from the Empire. Gandhi was sincerely convinced, at the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899, that the existence of the British Empire was wholly for the benefit of the world. Even if, before the tribunal of his conscience, the rebel Boers and Zulus had a just cause (and Gandhi has written that they did!), he believed himself bound by the duties of his British loyalty, whose naïveté he was later to confess.

This loyalty had not yet been undermined by all the unfortunate experiences he was later to undergo when early in August 1914 he found himself in London, confronted with the European war. He still had faith in the British system, if not in individual officials, and he did not

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23 The Kingdom of God is within You: The Gospels in Brief; What to Do?
hesitate to offer England the co-operation of India in the ambulance service.

He was very slow to change. He is a patient man, tenacious in his ideas; when he believes they are right, he needs repeated and decisive experiments before he will give them up.

As late as 1918, at the Delhi Conference, despite the objections of the honest C. F. Andrews, who revealed to him the infamous secret treaties concluded between the Allies, he persisted in serving the Empire and went off to raise recruits in India. But it is evident that from then on he was seriously ill at ease. Even in his arguments in favour of recruitment there is a murmur of revolt. His conscience was working within him. He fell seriously ill, came close to death, and for the first (and no doubt the only) time in his life he lost all interest in life; he had no taste for a continued existence. The news of the defeat of Germany and the end of the war, which meant that he had no more to worry himself about recruitment, brought him very great comfort. Almost immediately afterwards, the Rowlatt Bills of 1919 gave the convalescent a chance to enter openly into the way of Indian Swaraj—the conquest of independence.

But all this long time was not wasted. As was his wont, Gandhi used it to prepare, slowly, patiently and penetratingly, the discipline necessary for the collective soul of India within the Empire.

In the first place, he extended his law of renunciation to those who surrounded him. By daily contact with the

24 A clever lot, these English! This volume reveals how the Viceroy was able to appeal to Gandhi's conscience by playing at being innocent himself of any part in the secret treaties.

25 Among the many misdeeds of British rule in India, history will look upon the Act depriving a whole nation of arms as the blackest. . . . If we want to learn the use of arms, here is a golden opportunity!
public as an orator, a journalist and a director of conscience and action, he acquired the regular habit of thinking aloud in company. He never thinks alone; he thinks communally, as part of the people; and his genius is to make the whole community think through himself, for he clarifies, summarizes and guides the confused and surging thoughts of his companions.\(^{26}\)

By this means they naturally come to unite as in one single body, of which Gandhi disposes as he would his own. As a general rule, in every debate he seeks the conciliation of the opposing parties,\(^{27}\) forgiveness of injuries\(^{28}\) and non-violence, but from an unshakably firm standpoint. Then, when all attempts at conciliation have been exhausted and the moment comes to act, in other words to sacrifice himself and his followers, he does not hesitate a moment. He had four young Hindu clerks whom he looked upon as his sons, then a danger arose, the black plague of 1904.

... I decided to sacrifice all the four. ... — In Phoenix he founded a Tolstoyan colony of relations, friends and disciples particularly close to his heart. The hour struck for an Indian movement of sacrifice to protest against an unjust judgment by the Cape Court (1913) ... I decided to sacrifice them all. ... And this is no idle word; some of them died in the prisons into which they were thrown, women and children as well as men.

\(^{26}\) This is one of the striking things about his journals, such as Young India, which read like dialogues between the chorus leader and the crowd, who finally take up the chorus as a refrain.

\(^{27}\) He is a most unusual lawyer, for he avoids trials. ... I realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties driven asunder. ... A large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases.

\(^{28}\) He personally refuses to go to law against those who attack him, even when the authorities require it. ... This is a religious question with me.
On the other hand, when the community does something wrong and must be punished, it is he himself whom he punishes; he expiates publicly for everyone.\(^29\)

Obviously all these techniques of collective action are based on a principle of religious renunciation which is open to much discussion:

"God hungers after devotion in man"

Also:

"The devoted sacrifice of a single pure soul could never go in vain."

But remember that he has experimented hundreds of times with these principles or postulates, and at the end of the day we are forced to recognize that he has achieved immense results with them.

Besides, this great leader of men has not been embarrassed by his Puritanism in many dangerous cases demanding urgent action, in which less scrupulous men than he might well have recoiled in timidity. When he initiated the strike of the Newcastle miners, in Africa, there were ex-convicts among his troops, men who had been to jail for criminal offences such as murder, theft or adultery. This did not worry him.

\(^{29}\) Usually by privations, harsh public fasts. He tried out this surprising remedy, which Europeans would scoff at, in his experiments with the education of children, which served him as a preparatory school for his social experiments. When the pupils do something wrong, the master fasts and suffers. Gandhi asserts that the results obtained from this go beyond all expectations, but he adds that such means imply purity of heart and spiritual fitness. Where there is no true love between teacher and pupil, these means are out of place and may even be harmful. The whole secret of his action lies in this alchemy of love, as it has been called, by which he enchant all who approach him, even his least sensitive adversaries: English officers or gaolers.
"I did not consider myself fit to sit in judgment over the morality of the strikers. It would have been silly of me to attempt at distinguishing between the sheep and the goats. My business was only to conduct the strike which could not be mixed up with any other reforming activity. I was indeed bound to see that the rules of morality were observed in the camp, but it was not for me to enquire into the antecedents of every striker."

These are not the words of a lily-livered "idealist", but of a rugged man of action; Lenin would not have contradicted them. Gandhi—at least at the starting point of his mass action—does not answer for the souls of his masses; he answers for their actions, which he directs with strict discipline, and it is by virtue of this discipline that he forges the souls of the masses in the thick of the action. For the moment, he is beginning by gradually building up one sacred battalion, which he can trust, which he puts to the trial and does not spare. He is supported by his mystic hope that the self-sacrifice of one being alone can be enough to win the common battle—and indeed, has he not himself won it?

His "military school of Non-violence" (if I may so describe it) demands a long, loyal and difficult training. He does not attract supporters by deceiving them into hoping for an easy success. He begins by presenting to his followers the exact picture of the ordeals ahead of them, into which he himself will throw them. This done, he is prepared to go forward to the end, marching at their head, and those who follow him become aware of their own unknown energies, and at the same time of the restraints which their will must impose on them.\[30\] He is always on the

\[30\] Gandhi makes this clear: "The first duty of Satyagraha is to deliver those who practise it from fear. The second, more difficult duty is to prevent their reacting energies from driving them to the opposite extreme, which is abuse of force and violence."
watch to see that these mass movements keep their essential character, which is moral rather than political; and even his political action benefits from this, for it is thereby transfigured, its face is no longer that of a party or a nation, but of reason and universal justice. This produces an overwhelming effect on their Anglo-Saxon adversaries who, great sportsmen as they are, are forced to respect the chivalry of these Indians whom only recently they scorned. As early as 1913-1914 they admitted their powerlessness in face of these non-violent tactics. They wish that their partners (for they are already no longer enemies) would have recourse to brute force, as is the accepted fashion between European armies; that way they would find affairs much easier to settle.\(^3\)

\(^3\) Compare this with the confusion of Prince Gortchakov in Warsaw, in April 1861, when faced with the heroic Non-resistance of the Polish people, galvanized by the sublime teachings of their great bard Krasinski:

“... Must we then be murderers with the murderers, criminals with the criminals? Must we lie, kill, hate? The world cries to us: “At this price, power and liberty are yours! Otherwise you have nothing!...” No, my soul, not with these weapons! In your fight against the hell of this world, become that force of calm and love against which the whole of hell will ever be powerless!...” (Psalms of the Future).

The hero of Sebastopol, disconcerted and dishonoured by the generous passivity of that crowd kneeling before the machine guns and singing their hymn of liberty, cried to them, “Why don’t you fight? Do you want arms? I will give you arms.” They replied “No. Kill!” He did not survive the shame of it; he had himself taken to the Crimea, a dying man. (See Edmond Privat: Europe and the Polish Odyssey in the Nineteenth Century, 1918, Fischbacher.)

Alas! what has victorious Poland done with the sacred example of her dead and the teachings of Krasinski? (R. R.’s note.)
Our general of Satyagraha won his first victory on African soil in 1914 (the treaty with Smuts); his second on Indian soil, at Champaran (Bihar) in 1918. This received little public attention, yet its importance was immense, for it was, as Gandhi says, *India's first direct object lesson in Civil Disobedience*, and it encouraged him to pursue his experiments in a broader field. On the occasion of the Rowlatt Bills in 1919, he decreed a *Hartal* (a strike taking the form of religious mourning, in which all business is halted over twenty-four hours for self-purification, fasting and prayers). But despite the care he took, he was going too fast; India was not ripe for these great manoeuvres of *Satyagraha* and the hartal rapidly degenerated into violence. Gandhi at once halted the experiment and, without hesitation, suspended *Satyagraha*, without a thought for the anger of his troops, even for threats of assassination; he was the leader and he had spoken. Then, following his own lofty moral ideas, he, as leader, publicly punished himself by a three-day fast for the errors of his people, which were his own—for this people is his very body; he and they are one.

Since the people was not yet ripe, not yet able to discern the exact sense of *Civil Disobedience*, Gandhi sent them back to school; he formed teams of well-trained and pure-hearted volunteers who were to become the monitors of the people and the foremen of the great team.

There was nothing secret about all this; everything took place in the full light of day. The leader, the sacred battalion and the main body of the army were working together and openly experimenting in a field which was still new to them—and indeed for the whole of humanity, for when has mankind ever before seen such tactics of non-violent warfare waged with such scientific rigour by a huge people against a no less huge Empire? They advance gropingly but sure-footedly on unknown territory, and every step forward is a new discovery.
At the Hindu-Muslim conference in Delhi in October 1919, Gandhi suddenly discovered, and in something like a flash of illumination proposed Non-co-operation—"an expression that he was using for the first time", and whose full potentialities he was as yet far from being able to gauge.

In the same years, the Khadi movement (for the resurrection of the domestic industries of handicraft and spinning which he saw as a remedy to Indian poverty and a weapon against British industries) was, as Gandhi admits, the boldest of his experiments, based on no examples; unceasingly exposed to the scornful irony of the "civilized" world, in practice it has triumphantly proved its effectiveness.

Finally there was another illumination, this time collective (and in cases such as these one can be sure that it is a necessary explosion, prepared for by a slow and powerful evolution), by which the Assembly of All India at Nagpur in December 1920 suddenly adopted the experiment of non-violent Satyagraha by the unanimous decision of 14,000 delegates from all over India. Gandhi himself was proposing no more than its application to two particular cases; it was other Congressmen, hoisting him on to a pedestal, who induced him to apply the great tactics of which he was the master to the great goal, aimed at and postponed for twenty or thirty years, of Swaraj, the Independence of all India.

Thus was made strikingly manifest, openly and communally, the style of thought of a whole people with its spiritual leader, by the voice of that leader. His was the voice of them all, and his voice was action; communal and organized action.

Nowhere in the course of his life have we seen any signs of a theoretician, starting from and imposing his own intellectual dogma. We are faced with an ordered series
of public actions, in which the reasoned instinct of the social body, under firm leadership, gropes, tries out and settles on a route, with great prudence, but once the route has been clearly decided, goes on to the very end without wavering. The "end"—we said what it was in the first lines of this Essay—has not yet been reached today. A man like Gandhi aims too high, and is by nature too sincere and too attached to experimental truth ever to say that he has achieved his end. He is on the march—as is the whole of humanity, and as it will be until it drops. But we can see what incredible distances this march has led him and his people over the last thirty years. The little coolie lawyer who, thirty years ago, was outraged, insulted and trampled on in South Africa, today is the plenipotentiary for three hundred million men. He has just signed, as an equal, with the Viceroy of the proudest Empire in Europe, in the whole world, an agreement which may change the face of the world and as a result of which this great Empire, greater than Niniveh or Babylon, will be shaken to the core.\(^{32}\)

Let our augurs of European politics, and those who jealously guard the portals of Indology, remember that nine years ago, when for the first time in Europe we spoke of these destinies and revealed the Great Soul of Asia, whose existence they were hiding, and his message of non-violent Revolution, they shrugged their shoulders in anger and scorn. The die is cast and they have lost. Let the rest of us advance!

\(^{32}\) As we revise the proofs of this preface (early April 1931), the Pan-Indian Congress in Karachi, claiming India's total independence, has ratified the armistice between the Viceroy and Gandhi and named the latter as President of the Indian delegation at the new Round Table Conference.
In this epic confrontation between a Western Empire and a frail old man of India, of which the world today is the astonished spectator, our Western public with its cock-fighting mentality sees only the duel between Asia and Europe. I see it as the *Sposalizio* of the two halves of humanity which are about to marry; the two great spiritual rivers at last are combining and intermingling.

In Gandhi they have already intermingled. Within him there is not only Asia; there is the best, the loftiest of Europe, which made him what he is.

Who would have believed, if he had not told us so himself, that it was through the West that he became aware of the greatness of his nation and his race? At the age of eighteen, two English Theosophists revealed to him through Edwin Arnold’s translation, the *Gita*, which to him is the supreme book of truth. Mme. Blavatsky made him want to study Hinduism, of which he had previously been ashamed. An old English conservative, Frederick Pincut, opened to him the book, hitherto closed to his inquisitive mind, of Indian history and its insurrection over the last century. Carlyle threw light on Islam and the heroic world of Mahomet. Some years later, in Africa, Tolstoy became the unforgettable model of independent thinking, profound morality and truthfulness. It was through him that he was first able to command, as from a high mountain, the panorama of universal love. Arnold’s *The Light of Asia* revealed to him the sublime smile of the Buddha. He read the Upanishads in the Theosophical Society’s translation. Finally, a book by Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, lent to him by an English friend, Henry Polak, had a galvanizing effect on his still groping mind. In it he discovered some of his deepest convictions. Through Ruskin, it was the Europe of the precursors of the

33 *I determined to change my life in the light of this book.*
social revolution which gave him the decisive shock at the decisive moment; it was this that set in motion his activities and revealed to him the great new Law of Labour, which must, and will, rule the world.\(^34\)

Note well that it was not, as has sometimes been claimed, through Christianity that the West worked most strongly on Gandhi's soul. Certainly he has been touched by the moral side of the *New Testament* chiefly the Sermon on the Mount, for he found in it his own ideal of abnegation.\(^35\) But he found nothing new in it, and he even prefers Buddha to Christ, for he finds Buddha *superior in love for all living beings*. . . . *Philosophically there was nothing extraordinary in Christian principles. From the point of view of sacrifice, it seemed to me that the Hindus greatly surpassed the Christians. It was impossible for me to regard Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions. But, he impartially adds, neither was I then convinced of Hinduism being such.*

No, it was clearly the lay thought of modern Europe—Ruskin, Tolstoy, Carlyle, Arnold, etc.,—which moulded his thought and which in his turn he reshaped, renewed and recreated in the burning furnace of his reasoned action.\(^36\)

In this action he has constantly been aided by the most generous Europeans; he has been enveloped and uplifted by their devotion. It makes us proud for Europe's sake to read,

\(^34\) *1st., the good of the individual is contained in the good of all; 2nd., work in one profession has an equal value to work in another profession; 3rd., a life of manual labour is the only life worth living. The first of these I knew, the second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me.*

\(^35\) *On the other hand he went to sleep over the Old Testament.*

\(^36\) *Before Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is within You*, all the Christian books which had been lent to me seemed to pale into insignificance. Ruskin's *Unto this Last* is the one book that has brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life.*
all through his grateful account, how the iniquities from which he and his Indian brothers have suffered have caused much more suffering to generous Europeans whose consciences have been revolted, humiliated and insulted; without their ardent and faithful support he would probably not have won his victory.

It is one of these men—not the least among them—who presents this book to the European public: C. F. Andrews, his trusty lieutenant since the first Satyagraha campaigns in the Natal, where in 1914 he was the mediator and witness of the Gandhi-Smuts agreement. Not content with supporting him in Africa and India, he has been the boldest of Gandhi’s missi dominici round the world. He spent ten difficult years travelling, studying the situation and bringing help to Indians spread all over the immense British Empire: in Ceylon, the Fiji Islands, Australia, Malaya, New Zealand, Hong Kong and again in Southern and Eastern Africa. In order the better to know the living conditions of these exiles, he shared their lives and was a

37 After studying in Cambridge, C. F. Andrews first became an Anglican minister and a missionary in India. He broke away from the Anglican church, and was a teacher in Indian ‘governmental schools’ in Delhi for ten years. At the time of the illegal deportation of the great Indian patriot Lajpat Rai, in 1907, he found out that a teacher was not free to express his political opinions; he resigned and was harassed by the police. He then went to Tagore in Santiniketan. When in 1913 he learned about Gandhi’s Satyagraha in the Natal, he offered everything he possessed to the movement. Gokhale, at that time the loftiest moral and political figure in India, asked him to go to South Africa to investigate and check what was going on. He went there with his friend Pearson, and the two noble young men henceforth became Gandhi’s faithful companions. Both have sacrificed their whole lives to India.
pariah among pariahs. In India he observed and denounced the criminal contracts whereby poor people were induced to sign themselves blindly into slavery. He has been particularly concerned with the problem of opium, and he wrote the preface to the Congress report for the enquiry into the drug-traffic in Assam, in September 1928. Age has not weakened his vigour or his passion for justice.

Furthermore, his long-standing friendship for both Tagore and Gandhi has allowed him to serve as an invaluable mediator between India’s two spiritual leaders, and his admirable frankness, always tinged with affection and kindness, has more than once enabled him to dissipate the inevitable misunderstandings between these two poles of the Indian orbis terrarum.

C. F. Andrews is the most perfect example of these pure apostles of the Indian cause—and, beyond that, of the human cause—whom the breath of the Indian Christ has caused to blossom forth from our West in his entourage. We can be proud that our Europe has given the Mahatma this guard of honour. Andrews, Pearson, Mirabehn (Madeleine Slade), our dear friends, and so many more of his great Servants in his Satyagraha campaigns in South Africa and India. They form the heroic vanguard of the spiritual Eurasia which we have undertaken to found.

And at the prow of the ship, forging on into the foaming waves of age-old social iniquity and the dark night of prejudices—prejudices of race, class, nation and religion—there stands our goddess of the new age: Revolution, who is clearing a path of the new age: Revolution, who is clearing a path for the universal spirit of human Labour, free, allied and sovereign.

March 1931
News reports from India are rare and biased. The Conservative Government in London which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald has taken over (or rather, been taken over by) is silent about the impressive resistance of a people seven times more numerous than the whole population of Great Britain and forming more than a sixth of the whole world's population. The official British agencies allow only a few small details to filter into the European press: apparently isolated arrests, individual acts of violence which have nothing to do with the national Civil Disobedience Movement, timid localized demonstrations at one or two points of the huge peninsula in fermentation and kept in control by the *Hoc volo, sic jubeo* of the slender personage in New Delhi who holds the function of Viceroy of India.

We shall try to follow here, through our own channels of communication, this great struggle which concerns not only the pride and fortune of the British Empire, but also, by the means used and the exceptional personality leading and dominating the battle, constitutes an ambitious and moving experiment with implications for all mankind.

First we must consider the circumstances in which battle was joined.

The failure of the Round Table Conference was foreseen by Gandhi from the start; he said so to his European friends on his arrival at Marseilles. The composition of the delegations meeting in London had been artfully arranged, chosen by the British Government among its clientele of
princes and dissident minorities (or rather the pro-British fractions of these minorities), and it in no way represented the true will of India. But faithful to his deeply-rooted optimism, which, he smilingly says, is not upset even by the absence of hope, Gandhi considered it his duty to exhaust every possibility of mutual understanding and agreement; for he always obliges himself to trust in the good will of an adversary to the last possible moment, while at the same time being careful not to drop his guard. Besides, his journey to England was not without value, for it brought him into direct contact with certain personalities and social categories of the English people—in London and Lancashire—and allowed him to make them aware of the exact state of the problem in India; he won a great deal of sympathy there, and it is not without value to note here, for those who in future would like to keep up to date with Indian affairs, that a society called the Friends of India has been founded in London (46, Lancaster Gate, W.2.), and that in the last few weeks an important review (The India Review, 146, Strand, London. W.C. 2) has taken the initiative in defending the rights of India and protesting against the harsh measures being taken there. It includes in its ranks men of such worldwide authority as Bertrand Russell, Laurence Housman and Fenner Brockway. We would urge the friends of India, in France and abroad, to take note of this review and support it if they can.

Gandhi’s first secretary, Mahadev Desai, wrote to us from Bombay on 1 January that even after the close of the Conference, before leaving London, Gandhi had an interview with the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare. “He assured Gandhiji that so far as the Round Table Conference work was concerned, it would be open to the Congress

1 Gandhi was the representative of this Congress, sent as its delegate to the London conferences.
to suggest a radical revision of safeguards and the whole constitutional position, and that the Congress view would have the consideration due to it. Sir Samuel Hoare also said that Gandhiji might go to Bengal and see things for himself and say what he thought about the Ordinances. There was also a suggestion that Gandhi might interview the Viceroy. From Switzerland Gandhiji addressed a letter to Sir Samuel Hoare asking him to confirm the gist of his talk with him and post it so as to reach Gandhiji’s hands on the day he arrived in India.” But Sir Samuel Hoare sent no reply, and has since shut himself away in a cautious silence. On the other hand Gandhi, on his way back to India, found in Aden, “Christmas boxes in the shape of fresh dictatorial measures in India and the arrest of some eminent friends, such as Abdul Ghafar Khan, leader of the Red Shirts in the North-West Frontier Province” (Peshawar). Yet Gandhi did not abandon his last hopes of negotiation, and even before landing on Indian soil he had expressed, in an article in his weekly review Young India, his determination to try all possible ways which might lead to an agreement, without ceding any of the legitimate rights demanded by Congress.

On his disembarkation in Bombay, on 28 December, Gandhi was greeted by Vallabhbhai Patel, President of Congress, but he brought news even more grave than what had gone before: one of the most respected Indian leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru, a man whose loftiness of mind and character we have personally been able to appreciate, had

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2 These first dictatorial Ordinances, which revolted Indian public opinion, had recently been promulgated in Bengal, on the pretext of some isolated acts of terrorism.

3 These Red Shirts have nothing to do with Russian Communism. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a personal friend of Gandhi, is known as “the Gandhi of the North-West Province” and is a determined supporter of non-violence.
just been arrested merely on the accusation of having left Allahabad to go to Bombay in accordance with his strict duty as Secretary General of Congress. There had been shootings at Peshawar, leaving eleven dead and fifty wounded, for the sole crime of having protested against the arrest of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. (Yet there had been not one single attempt on the lives of any government officials.) There had been more than a thousand arrests. The whole North-West Frontier Province was in a state of siege and under a reign of terror. In the United Provinces, where there was a pacific campaign of non-payment of dues unjustly demanded before the required date laid down in the Delhi Pact, the government had set in motion the whole extra-legal apparatus of public force, with extraordinary tribunals armed with draconian powers and using disproportionately forceful means. The members of the Working Committee of Congress who bore this news and the country’s emotion, were of the opinion that the hour for action had struck, and they wanted to induce Gandhi to begin it. “But then” as one of Gandhi’s closest friends wrote to me, “once again the Mahatma demonstrated his occasionally irritating patience. He insisted on demanding, by telegram, an interview with the Viceroy, despite the objections of his friends, who put it to him that such a request would risk demoralizing the nation.” Gandhi overruled this; he meant to prove to the world that all the fault and the aggression came from the other side.

On 29 December he sent this telegram from Bombay to the Viceroy:

*I was unprepared on landing yesterday to find Frontier and United Province Ordinances, shootings in Frontier and arrest of valued comrades in both on top of Bengal Ordinances awaiting me. I do not know whether I am to regard this as an indication that friendly relations between us are closed or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to the course I*
am to pursue in advising Congress. I would esteem wire in reply.

On 31 December, the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, too haughty to reply himself, as Lord Irwin would have done, replied through his private secretary that “His Excellency and his Government desire to have friendly relations with all political parties, to securing co-operation of all in great work of constitutional reforms which they are determined to push forward with minimum delay”, but His Excellency and his Government could not admit the activities in the United Provinces and the North-West Frontier Province; the former by withholding the payment of rents, and the latter by declaring itself in favour of total independence, had exhausted the patience of His Excellency’s Government. “His Excellency understands that Abdul Ghaffar Khan was in August last made responsible for leading Congress movement in the Province and that the volunteer organizations he controlled were specifically recognized by All-India Congress Committee as Congress organizations. His Excellency desires me to make it clear that his responsibilities for peace and order make it impossible for him to have any dealing with persons or organizations upon whom rest the responsibility for activities above outlined. You have yourself been absent from India on business of the Round Table Conference, and His Excellency is unwilling to believe that you have personally any share in the responsibility for or that you approve of the recent activities of Congress. If this is so, he is willing to see you and give you his views as to way in which you can best exert your influence to maintain the spirit of co-operation. But His Excellency feels bound to emphasize that he will not be prepared to discuss with you measures which Government of India, with the full approval of His Majesty’s Government, have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, the United Provinces and the North-West Frontier Province. These measures must in any case be kept in force until they have served the purpose for which they were imposed, namely, preservation of law and order essential
to good government. On receipt of your reply His Excellency proposes to publish this correspondence.”

In the last lines of this imperious message, the words “the Indian Government, with the full approval of His Majesty’s Government” will be noted. Orders from London had thus determined a return to a tough policy after Gandhi had left England. Conservative pressure had won the day. Mac-Donald had said in England that “the forces of disorder would be dispersed”, and on 30 December, at the European Association, the Viceroy made a fighting speech.

It must not be imagined that these measures caused unanimous delight among European opinion, British or loyalist, in India. The Christians of the Central Provinces and the tradesmen of Bengal and Bombay protested against the Ordinances and demanded their withdrawal. Many members of the League for the Good of India, composed chiefly of loyalists, seemed certain that the Viceroy would withdraw them. The *Times of India* expressed its satisfaction with Gandhi’s first telegram and invited the Viceroy to grant him an interview. The Viceroy’s refusal and the “ungentlemanly” tone of his reply made a poor impression.

Gandhi replied on 1 January with vigour and dignity:

*It grieves me that His Excellency has rejected in a manner hardly befitting his high position an advance made in the friendliest spirit. . . . I desired to understand Government version of very serious 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 by telling me that even if I became guilty of such dishonourable conduct, I could not even discuss these matters of vital importance to the nation.*

*In my opinion, the constitutional issue dwindles into insignificance in face of Ordinances and Acts which must, if not met with stubborn resistance, result in utter demoralization of the nation. I hope no self-respecting Indian will run risk of killing national spirit*
for doubtful contingency of securing a constitution, to work which no nation with stamina may be left.

Gandhi continues—the telegram is very long, and we are forced to summarize some of it—by examining one by one each of the incriminated provinces. In the version of the facts given by the Viceroy, he sees no justification for shooting on peaceful and unarmed crowds in the North-West Frontier Province, nor for the arrest of popular leaders. "If Khan Saheb Abdul Ghaffar affirmed the right to complete independence it was a natural claim and a claim made with impunity by Congress at Lahore in 1929 and by me with energy put before British Government in London. Moreover I remind the Viceroy that despite the knowledge on the part of Government that Congress mandate contained such a claim, I was invited to attend London Conference as Congress delegate. . . ."—As to the United Provinces, "this is not a matter which can be so summarily dismissed as your wire has done. The controversy is of long standing and involves the well-being of millions of a peasantry known to be economically ground down. Any Government jealous of the welfare of the masses in its charge would welcome voluntary co-operation of a body like the Congress, which admittedly exercises great influence over the masses and whose 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, Congress is at one in condemning assassinations, and would heartily co-operate with Government in any measures found necessary to stamp out such crimes, but whilst 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 limits of its prescribed creed of non-violence
such measures of legalized. Government terrorism....”

Replying to the Viceroy’s personal ultimatum, Gandhi loftily declared that “I may not repudiate moral liability for the actions of my colleagues whether in the Frontier Province or the United Provinces.” He nevertheless persisted in asking the Viceroy to receive him, “without imposing any conditions whatsoever as to the scope or subject of discussion”. He promised to study all aspects of the case with an open mind, and offered to go himself to make enquiries in the provinces in question. He concluded with a profession of faith:

“Non-violence is my absolute creed. I believe in Civil Disobedience as not only the natural right of a people, especially when they have no effective voice in their own government, I regard it also as 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 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 of Congress has accepted my advice and passed a resolution tentatively sketching a plan of civil disobedience. I am sending herewith a text of the resolution. If His Excellency thinks it is worth while to see me pending discussions, operation of the resolution will be suspended in the hope that discussions may result in the resolutions being finally given up.

I admit that 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.”

India, provoked, was picking up the Viceroy’s challenge. In Gandhi’s voice, it was confronting British power as equal to equal in declaring its rights. In the night of 2-3 January there arrived the Viceroy’s refusal, rejecting in haughty terms an unconditional interview and making Gandhi and Congress responsible for whatever happened.
This was the declaration of war.\(^4\)

Meanwhile, all day long on the 2nd and the 3rd, Gandhi was besieged by deputations of politicians, commercial organizations and the League for the Good of India, alarmed by the Government’s intransigence and vainly hoping that a complete rupture might be prevented. Gandhi himself had no illusions left; he was waiting for his arrest and that of the Working Committee of Congress, and he calmly settled his final arrangements with those who were to lead in his absence.

Very early on the 4th, Gandhi was arrested under Regulation XXV of 1827, which had already been used for his first imprisonment and which states that “no reason need be given for the detention and no term of detention needs to be fixed in advance.” Vallabhbhai Patel, President of Congress, was arrested almost at the same time under the same Regulation. Both were taken to Yeravda Jail in Poona, where Gandhi was interned as a “prisoner of state”.

It clearly emerges that the British Government was expecting the rupture and provoking it, for all the preparations for war had been worked out, and four new Ordinances followed in rapid succession, decreeing a state of siege in the whole country. They conferred all the extraordinary powers on the local governments, who in their turn delegated them to the district magistrates or the police commissioners in the towns under the Presidency of

\(^4\) Gandhi replied in a third telegram on 3 January with proud courtesy, saying that “it was hardly necessary to remind me that the Congress and I, its humble representative, are responsible for all the consequences of our actions.”
Bombay. The most serious was the Emergency Powers Ordinance, which allows: 1st, "the arrest, detention and repression of suspects" (thus suspending and violating all guarantees under the old British law of Habeas Corpus); 2nd, the annexation of buildings and the prohibition of access to certain areas; 3rd, seizure of merchandise; 4th, requisition of citizens to help the police; 5th, search orders; 6th, collective fines; 7th, special criminal courts with powers of summary justice, etc. ... These measures were closely copied from those taken in Bengal against the terrorists, but were applied in this instance to a movement of absolute non-violence. The other Ordinances dealt with so-called dangerous associations and the confiscation of their funds; with the repression of all boycotts, even of the most peaceful type; with the non-payment of rents and taxes. They embraced all Congress activities and exposed all Congress workers to heavy penalties, thus preparing the ground for the suppression of Congress. Indeed almost immediately afterwards the Working Committee of Congress was declared illegal, and one of the first to be arrested was Rajendra Prasad, perhaps the loftiest moral character among Gandhi's companions, who had been named President of the next session of the Congress of All India. All Congress Committees of every degree, all organizations associated with Congress, were declared illegal: 500 of them in the Presidency of Bombay alone, and 50 in the city of Bombay. All over the country there were mass arrests of Congress workers, without there being anywhere any action which could be regarded as a violation of the law, ordinary or extraordinary. Among the Indians arrested and held in preventive detention (contrary to Habeas Corpus), it is not without interest to note the names of some important members of the Muslim nationalist party and the Christian nationalist party, and among the groups declared illegal the Congress Committee of Anti-untouchability in Bom-
bay, also the *Muslim* nationalist party of Bombay. The President and Secretary of the All-India Muslim Conference, have resigned in protest against the suppression of the activities of the National Congress. Notable Muslim personalities in Bombay have appealed to their fellow-believers to refuse to participate in governmental reform committees. Finally, it is characteristic that Rajendra Prasad's place as President of the National Congress has been offered to Dr. Ansari, a *Muslim* and a well-known Delhi nationalist leader. There is thus a united front among Indian resistance to the government, without distinction of class or caste.

In vain has the Bombay government tried to appeal to the loyalty of its inhabitants, promising protection for those who break their connections with Congress activities, and there is no doubt that the British Government is using every means of pressure, force and interest, to divide Indian resistance and to win over to its plan of mitigated constitutional reform the petit-bourgeoisie and the small traders who would probably be the class most open to such dealings. (On the other hand, the large traders of Bombay, the Indian capitalists, seem to be in agreement with the people

5 It is well known how astutely British propaganda has played this marked card of racial and religious opposition which allows it to pose as the champion of "70 million Muslims and 70 million untouchables" against the Hindu masses; the bulk of the European press, docile and with no means of checking the facts, follows the official line. In fact this involves only some reactionary minority groups of Muslims and untouchables, in many cases mercenary, and in every case over-stimulated and exploited by British policy. Let one striking example suffice to expose the humbug of such an argument: that *North-West Frontier Province*, which (rightly) causes the British Government the most serious worry, is *almost entirely Muslim*; its Congress members, of whom more than a thousand have been imprisoned, are *all Muslims*. 
in an uncompromising national struggle.) The future will tell how India will react deprived of its leaders.\(^6\)

But it is fine, at this critical hour, to hear the greatest voice of Asia raised again, as in the days of 1905 when Bengal was in revolt. Rabindranath Tagore has spoken and his voice will echo over all the frontiers. He has addressed a pathetic appeal to the people of all India. He exhorts them "not to forget that it is now up to them to show their moral superiority over their inhuman masters who argue with their material force. The foreign masters of India consider that her people can be scornfully ignored. But the times have come when we must prove to the world that our eternal value surpasses that of the government of a day, which is only a passing accident."\(^7\)

Thus does Tagore give his hand to Gandhi on the battle front.

Our European thought greets their alliance and is with them.

25 January 1932

P.S. To conclude this letter from India I should like to draw attention to a book of the highest interest, which the Gandhian press has just brought out, with commendable promptness; it is the complete collection of Gandhi's Speeches in London, September-December 1931: The Nation's

\(^6\) In this account I pass over the popular demonstrations which took place in the early days of January (the only ones of which I as yet have an account): so far they are only the first skirmishes: a monster meeting at Bombay on the evening of the 4th to protest against Gandhi's arrest, and hartals (mourning strikes) all over the country. Clashes between demonstrators and police in Allahabad, Cawnpore, Benares. At Benares, the police shot on the crowd: about a hundred wounded, some killed. Charges in Calcutta. As I send these pages to the printer, large scale workers' strikes are in the offing.

\(^7\) Retranslated.
Voice, Ahmedabad, 1932. These should be read in order to gauge Gandhi's political intelligence, and even his eloquence, which is little known.

This article appeared in Europe, No. 110, 15 February 1932

459. Letter from India-II

The King is in Check!

In my last letter I left it to the coming weeks to reveal how India would react to the violent measures decreed by the British Government. The answer is clear from the first month of the struggle. The harsh actions of Lord Willingdon, the docile instrument of English Conservative reaction, had the immediate result of uniting Indian loyalists and constitutionalists against England. What Gandhi himself could not do, the insolence of the Viceroy has achieved, at his own expense. . . . ” The King is in check!

The whole month of January was full of protests from moderates who did not support the methods of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, against the government's illegal and arbitrary action, against the Viceroy's Ordinances and against their brutal application by an unrestrained police and soldiery. I shall not dwell on the violence. Europe has a thick skin, toughened by eighteen years of war and Fascism, and is too egoistic to be moved by the sufferings of others. Shootings, lathi charges (long poles with iron ends), brutal treatment of women and children, shameful maltreatment of prisoners have little effect on the jaded Western palate, regaled by the press for the last twelve years with the atrocities and lamentations rising from the jails of

^ See Europe, 15 February
the Balkans, Hungary, Poland or Italy. But we must assume that the Indian epidermis is more sensitive, for indignation is widespread, and numerous organizations not associated with Congress, such as the Legislative Council of the United Provinces, the Council of Liberal Western India, almost half of the Viceroy’s Legislative Assembly, the Muslim All-Party Conference, the “Servants of India”, the Bombay and Madras Chambers of Commerce, all echo it. We shall not spend much time on the arrests. At the end of January they were 22,500 in number. Even this respectable figure is modest by Indian standards; Lord Willingdon’s predecessor, Lord Irwin, who passed (falsely) for being indulgent towards Gandhi’s movement, did better than that. Under

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2 Among the more notable personalities we shall name only Mrs. Gandhi, aged sixty-three; Dr. Ansari, a Muslim, President of the Congress of All India; his successor Sardul Singh, a Sikh; Dr. Alam, a Muslim member of the Working Committee of Congress, whose arrest provoked violent demonstrations in Lahore; Dr. S. K. Vaidya, Director of Congress in Bombay, a great bacteriologist and an eminent doctor, who served with distinction in London during the war; Sen Gupta, ex-mayor of Calcutta, whose arrest on board an Italian ship gave rise to diplomatic difficulties; the spiritual leaders of Gandhi’s Ashram, such as Professor Kalelkar; the Sanskritist and philosopher Sri Vinoba; the secretaries of the textile workers’ unions in Ahmedabad, whose arrest provoked a strike of 70,000 workers; many members of the Indian intellectual or commercial aristocracy, including a number of Hindu and Parsee women; Hindu holy men and English missionaries have been subjected to insults and beatings from the soldiers. . . . Among the masses in prison there are many who are in no way connected with Gandhi’s camp and were not participating in the Civil Disobedience movement, but merely protested about the humiliating repression; for instance the secretary of the powerful Association of Cotton Merchants in Bombay, who was condemned to a year’s imprisonment.
his Viceroyalty, 1930-31, there were 90,000 imprisonments. We should not despair that, given time, Lord Willingdon will reach and even surpass this glorious figure. India has numbers on her side, and is ready for it.

Nor shall we insist on the confiscations, the seizure of premises and of printing presses, the closure of institutions and even hospitals, the strangled press. All this is commonplace.

We shall make an exception only for events in the north of India, in Kashmir, and the North-West Frontier Province, because of their political importance and repercussions. Kashmir is a tributary state, but autonomous, and England has often been tempted to annex it, for its strategic situation is of vital importance for the masters of India, and its soil contains great riches whose exploitation is made very difficult for Europeans by the laws of the country. The Maharajah is Hindu; the majority of his subjects are Muslims, but Hindus and Muslims get on very well together under a just administration. Recently it appears to have been English policy to despatch pan-Islamic missionaries into these calm waters, to provoke quarrels between the two religions and give England a chance to fish in troubled waters. But the result seems to have been protests in the large Indian towns, where a trap was scented, and a day of Hindu-Muslim solidarity, as well as grave disturbances in Kashmir.

In the North-West Frontier Province, English repression has been exceptionally harsh and cruel in character, a fact which has been denounced, despite the state of siege, by two courageous witnesses: one of them an English missionary, Elwin, who has since been expelled (as also the American missionary G. B. Halstead); the other a Parsee woman belonging to an illustrious family, the granddaughter of the "uncrowned king" of Bombay Dadabhai
Naoroji. The latter came from Bombay to make an investigation, was arrested, imprisoned and sent back to the Punjab; she stubbornly returned to Peshawar and was condemned to a year of harsh imprisonment. The accounts published by her and Father Elwin bear witness to the heroic non-violence with which the warlike Pathans, enrolled by Abdul Ghaffar into the army of the Servants of God (the Red Shirts), confront English harassment, and to the tortures to which they are subjected—beatings to death, immersion for hours in icy water, their women brutally treated and their houses burned. “I am an Englishman,” writes Elwin, “and have no desire to blackguard my own people, but Englishmen should be ashamed of what is happening!”

3 See my Mahatma Gandhi. Dadabhai was Gandhi’s first master in Ahimsa, heroic passivity, in 1892. He was the founder of Indian nationalism.

4 It may be interesting to note that the brutal British policies have succeeded in mobilizing against them, not only the whole Muslim community, but also some of the purest Christian forces. Father Elwin writes: “India today presents a battlefield not so much between two nations as between two philosophies of life. The forces of the spirit have taken up their bloodless weapons against the forces of militarism. It is therefore small wonder that we should find in the jails of India today many who have small knowledge of politics, but a very deep realization of things of the spirit.” He names several of them; directors of Ashrams, missionaries of social service, such as the Servants of India, whose members have given away all their goods and live a life of poverty, devoting themselves to the poorest among the poor, tending the sick in hospitals, some Hindu, others English or Scottish (Dr. Forrester Paton). These men today are persecuted, imprisoned, often insulted, beaten, wounded and condemned. Elwin compares them to the disciples of St. Francis. “But the spirit of simplicity and love is not broken by these things. The greatest living Franciscan, Mahatma Gandhi, is in jail and all those who have something of that spirit look towards the jail as a place of pilgrimage.” (Article dated 20 January: “Franciscans in Prison”.)
It must be admitted that Lord Willingdon’s government could not have found a better way of arousing the hostility of the Indian Muslims on whom it was none the less counting and whose dissensions with the Hindus it was fomenting. This Muslim North-West Frontier Province was the most sensitive point in the whole Muslim community. But for this very reason, if the British Government chose to treat it with this exceptional severity, it was not only because of its strategic danger, but also because this unexpected adherence of the most warlike Muslim races to Gandhi’s methods and spirit foiled its plans and exasperated it. Anger is a bad counsellor, and it is doubtful whether even today it allows the Viceroy to recognize that he has blundered. But the wrath of Muslim India has made itself heard, and in threatening fashion. On 1 February, the Muslim All-Party Conference (which is nevertheless foreign or hostile to the policies of Gandhi and Congress) was seething with resentment. After an enquiry, which the Government hindered, its Working Committee demanded: 1st, the immediate cessation of all acts of repression in the province; 2nd, the immediate withdrawal of the Ordinances; 3rd, the immediate removal of officials guilty of unjust and cruel acts of repression. The Conference, warning the Viceroy of growing tension in the Muslim community, further called upon him to accede to their requests if he did not want to alienate totally the goodwill of all Indian Muslims. The same threat was voiced at the Legislative Assembly, opened by the Viceroy, at which Sir Hari Singh Gour pronounced an absolute condemnation of the present reign of violence, and Maulana Sahfee Saudee, member of the non-Congressist Muslim party, armed with personal reports of atrocities in the North-West Frontier Province, said that “if the Government were sincere and honest, it would at once remove all the officials, civil and military, in the Province”; but he added that he
did not consider the Government either sincere or honest. The resolution condemning the Government mustered only 44 votes against 62 in the Assembly; but this minority included the most important members, in face of the official servants of the authorities, and this is a serious warning.

Even more striking in the eyes of public opinion was the accusation hurled at the government by a statesman who enjoys high moral credit all over India: Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. As a Hindu delegate at the Round Table, eager to avoid a rupture between India and England and always ready to seek an honourable compromise between them, he was better qualified than anyone to do justice to the Viceroy's tough policies, and he was one of the few Hindus in a position to make himself heard publicly. He did so in two forms; a statement to the press and, above all, an open letter to the Viceroy, which has the breadth and pathos of an accusation by the whole Indian nation (Bombay Chronicle, 31 January). He had just arrived, belatedly, in India, and while still at sea he had protested by cable against the arrest of Gandhi and the proscription of Congress.

"Your Excellency" he writes, "knew that Mahatma Gandhi is the greatest Indian living, that for the purity and unselfishness of his life, and his high-souled devotion to the cause of his country and of humanity, he is adored by countless millions in India and widely respected in all parts of the world. You knew that for ten years he has been the recognized leader of the largest Indian political organization. You knew that only a few months ago, at the time when Civil Disobedience was at its height, the Government made a truce with him, and that Your Excellency, on the advice of the English Cabinet, invited him to the Round Table Conference. You could have imagined that whether it be this year or next year when a new constitution is introduced in India, in all human probability, Your Excellency would have to hand over
charge of the country’s affairs to Mahatma Gandhi. You also knew that your refusal to see him might lead to a terrible situation arising in the country. It is a calamity that Your Excellency did not realize that such a man had the right to expect the courtesy of an interview from Your Excellency, as the head, for the time being, of the Government of the country. The refusal of the courtesy was a flagrant departure from the path of conciliation laid out through the Delhi Pact. More than that, it was a national affront to India. And Your Excellency and the government have gone much farther...."

He goes on to condemn the Ordinances, which the government had no legal right to promulgate without first discussing them with the Legislature. He taxes them with abuse of power; he reviews the situation in Bengal and the United Provinces, and judges it no less forcefully than Gandhi did in his telegrams to the Viceroy. He attacks the illegality of the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru, who was perfectly within his rights. As for the North-West Frontier Province, he similarly claims the absolute right of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, leader of the Red Shirts, to declare the independence of his province and refuse the constitutional reforms which would have delayed that independence. He pours infamy on the arrests, shootings and exactions, and he denounces the sudden volte-face of the British Government in its attempts to crush Congress.

“The spirit of freedom which has been developed among the people, and the constitutional and other reforms, including Indianization of various services, have been in the main the result of the activities and influence of the Congress. The bulk of the European members of the Indian Civil Service, and of Europeans generally in this country, have for that reason been opposed to the Congress since it was born, nearly fifty years ago. They have often tried to kill it. But the Congress has lived and succeeded in spite of them. . . . When Lord Irwin concluded a truce with Gandhi, there were,
unfortunately, many of these Europeans in India, both official and non-official, who were opposed to it; they did not want that the Congress should be represented at the Round Table, and they clamoured against the policy of your predecessor. It was an open secret that the bulk of the European members of the Indian Civil Service chafed under it. . . .” They could not prevent the meeting of the second Round Table and the invitation to Gandhi and Congress. “But a strong Conservative party had come to Parliament. A strong Conservative had been appointed Secretary of State for India. The strength of Congress had grown and was likely to grow further. It was not likely to be satisfied by the reforms proposed. . . . It seems Your Excellency and the Secretary of State decided that the time was opportune for a change of policy and for launching a strong, well-planned, comprehensive attack on the Congress all over India. Your Excellency’s speech in Calcutta on 30 December proclaimed this change and unleashed the battle, naturally with the agreement of the British Government. As might be expected, Sir Samuel Hoare vigorously supported these measures. Thus even before the return home of Mahatma Gandhi the Government had decided on war. Herein, it seems, lies the true explanation of Your Excellency’s refusal to grant an interview to Mahatma Gandhi!”

There follows the picture of governmental acts of violence, their illegality and their inhumanity.

“But if you do not want to admit non-violent Civil Disobedience, what, then, do you imagine will result? Do you think that the Indians will accept your tyranny? Suppose the feeling is deepening that the conditions of existence are becoming unbearable, and that the minds of millions are getting more and more agitated over it. Will you let their thoughts turn to ways of violence? . . . Do not let racial pride or narrow national self-interest blind you to the glorious possibilities of the method of non-violence! It is a matter for supreme thankfulness for all mankind that one of our fellow-men has been inspired to show them a way of avoiding the evils of
war and of achieving the right by the method of civil disobedience. A wise and humane government should welcome and encourage, and not think of crushing it and thereby driving people to think that the method of war and violence is still the only effective method of regaining and upholding the liberty and justice which are the birthright of every man and woman. . . . Even from the point of view of prudence your policies are vain. When the Secretary of State repeated the cliché: “as long as we are responsible for the government of India, we must govern”, he knew himself that the method was out of date. The times when one governed a people in this way are past. The British Government is a foreign government, and as such it has no moral right to exist in India. . . . But even if it were national, at the present stage of world development it could not govern for long in this discredited fashion. The people would not allow it. . . . You cannot kill Congress. You could as easily kill the political soul of India. Just and wise conduct would be to recognize its influence and lean on it for co-operation. . . . I therefore ask Your Excellency and through you His Majesty’s Government to redress the great injustice committed by this policy of repression, to abrogate the Ordinances, to liberate Gandhi and all the men, women and children in prison, to return the confiscated property, to repay the fines, to re-establish the rule of law, to invite Gandhi and Congress to discussions and to permit the confirmation between England and India of a friendship honourable and beneficial for both countries. I pray God that he will grant to Your Excellency and to His Majesty’s Government the wisdom and the courage to act in this way. . . .”

I wanted to reproduce this magnificent plea at some length—firstly because it demonstrates once again what forceful political personalities the new India has produced, and assures us that, without Gandhi, she will not be lacking in firm and experienced pilots,—secondly, because if this is the tone adopted by a great Indian leader of the moderate, loyalist party, one can imagine the passionate and
violent revulsion aroused by the Viceroy’s measures among the Congress parties and Gandhi’s supporters who want complete independence. My faith in India and her destiny did not hope to find among the moderate masses such a profound and sharp reaction against the government’s harsh policies.

We have further testimony, no less decisive, in the confessions of the major British newspapers. Even those most haughtily deaf to Indian claims, such as the Times, admit (29 January) that “the situation has much worsened since the end of 1931.” It is in the stomach, rather than the heart, that England has been touched, by the economic boycott and the ruin of British trade. The Daily Express of 10 January, the Daily Telegraph of 16 January, the Daily Mail of 18 and 20 January and the Manchester Guardian of 18 January all lament the consequences of the boycott, which is 95% effective, and whose repercussions are making themselves felt immediately in Lancashire.\(^5\) The most striking is a long

\(^5\) A few simple figures will show the rapid decline of British trade in the last three years:

*Cotton thread* (in millions of pounds):

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<td>1931</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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Cloth (in millions of metres):

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>801</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>423</td>
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<td>1931</td>
<td>251</td>
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Metal imports (in thousands of tons):

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>31</td>
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It can be imagined how much more the present boycott will have accelerated this catastrophic decline.
article in the Manchester Guardian Weekly of 12 February on “the outlook in India and activity underground”. This organ of the great liberal and trading bourgeoisie makes an overwhelming case against government policy and the unfortunate Viceroy, for whom its disdainful courtesy must be more humiliating than harsh admonishment from Gandhi or Malaviya. For to exonerate Lord Willingdon from the enormous mistake he made in refusing to receive Gandhi, the Manchester claims that “this modest man, who rates his own intellectual qualities humbly”, would certainly have been taken in by Gandhi, “an extremely astute politician”, if he had agreed to discussions with him. He is presented as being tied to the apron strings of the authoritarian Secretary of State, Samuel Hoare, and of his retrograde advisers, who imagined that “once and for all by resolute action now they could crush the Congress. And the consequence of this fine campaign is that many who were weary of Congress are now becoming Congress sympathizers again. The Nationalist movement has merely been driven underground. There is intense activity in places Government surveillance cannot reach. . . . From loyalty to Mahatma Gandhi, men who passionately desire peace and a continuance of the Round-table methods are going to prison with bitter reluctance. . . . And the proud city of Bombay” (this is the most sensitive spot for the businessmen of Manchester, for it was the commercial centre) “Bombay, where relations between Indians and Europeans are notably friendly, is liable to be treated like a bad child because Government loses its temper with a province more than a thousand miles away! (Bengal and Peshawar) The government propaganda is wretched. If something is not done soon about Bengal (where Communist cells are smouldering under the ashes) we may as well give up trying to do anything anywhere in India. Bombay has a growing Communist movement which is anti-Congress but uses the disruptive forces of Congress. . . . We must haste to make peace, by withdrawing the Ordinances (in return for a promise to
suspend Civil Disobedience), by frank recognition of Indian right to the fullest propaganda on behalf of indigenous industries (in return for a promise that they too will exercise no pressure against the free sale of foreign goods). Above all a clear statement that self-government is being swiftly and whole-heartedly pushed forward is essential. Government quarters do not realize the passionate emotion that clings to the thought of Congress. It was by Congress that Indians after long struggle won their first recognition and most prominent Indians graduated from Congress. . . . The attempt to kill Congress is the surest way to disaster."

These statements from the major British newspapers, inspired by self-interest but intelligent, harmonize with the great Indian representatives of the moderate party. Together they form a condemnation, with no mitigating circumstances, of British policy in India.

There is no sign that the narrow-minded and stubborn Viceroy will make any show of modifying his disastrous line of conduct. Presumably this weak and violent man is dominated by his entourage; he is the prisoner of the instruments of repression he uses, as has happened more than once: (Mussolini, that so-called strong man, is an example; he leads his hordes, but on condition that they lead him). There are striking examples to show that in many places the lowest elements of power go beyond the will of the more enlightened elements; for instance, the case of a Parsee lawyer, acquitted in Bombay on 4 February by the officiating British judge, and rearrested by the police on their own authority.

There must be considerable disarray in New Delhi for the British Government, whose old Muslim allies are slipping away from under their feet, to have been reduced, on 25 January, to broadcasting a sort of SOS "to all Parsees" urging them to unite in an organization supporting the British Government and leading a crusade against Congress;
naturally they were promised a privileged situation in the governmental administration, legislative councils and municipal corporations of the future constitutional India. But an appeal such as this betrays the disturbed state of a government with its back to the wall, for the Parsees form only a very small minority in India, rich in intellectual and financial resources but incapable of playing a dominant role; moreover, plenty of the most eminent Parsee personalities have already gone over to the enemy, in other words to the national camp. Dadabhai Naoroji has already given us a fine example.

Thus at the beginning of February, a month after Gandhi’s arrest, which was celebrated religiously all over the country, the situation looks like being disastrous for the British Government. Presumably (always making allowances for the generally befogged state of European political minds, which over the last ten years have seemed set on proving the gloomy old dictum that it’s always the worst that happens), presumably, then, if sound political judgment were to take control again, the British Government would proceed, with all the necessary delays and precautions, to the recall of the Viceroy and the re-establishment of a legal regime of reconciliation which would try to regain the collaboration of Gandhi and Congress in order to set up a Constitution granting India limited autonomy. But there is no way of being sure that an India embittered by the repression will still consent to this tomorrow.

25 February 1932

P.S. It would be interesting to draw the attention of the European reader to one of the astonishing personalities who have recently emerged from the new India: Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the famous leader of the Red Shirts. Father Elwin has drawn an unforgettable picture of him and his army:
“Great in body, great in heart, great in his possessions, this splendid and heroic figure has captured the imagination of the Pathans. He has a spiritual outlook on life akin to that of Gandhi. Their two names are always linked, though his speeches are more fiery; and he has not the Mahatma’s power of winning the hearts of his enemies. He is a very competent organizer and an autocrat, yet he has a sincere love for the poor.”

At the beginning of 1930 he started to form an army of non-violent warriors, prepared to confront every suffering. They took the name of Khudai Khidmatgars (Servants of God); they had no uniforms, but one day a volunteer appeared wearing a shirt which had been soaked in water reddened with brick-dust, and they adopted this convenient costume along with the name of Red Shirts. They swore on the Koran to be faithful to their society, to be strictly non-violent, to endure all, never to make excuses to obtain their liberty, always to tell the truth, not to rob, and to live a chaste and honourable life. The movement was admirably organized, with its own generals, colonels, etc.; the whole country was divided into districts, each with a civil and a military administration. After the arrest of the leaders in 1930, the movement grew. During the truce between Lord Irwin and Gandhi, Abdul Ghaffar made a tour round the districts and carried on with the organization of his army. He was helped by the intrepid grand-daughter of old Naoroji, and a visit from Gandhi’s young son Devdas helped to stimulate enthusiasm. The admirable thing is that Abdul Ghaffar has been able to convince the Pathans of the message of non-violence; for the Pathans are a violent people, naturally inclined to vengeance and unwilling to suffer an insult. Today, when the savage Afridis come down from their hills to make purchases in the Peshawar bazaars and see the Pathans accepting blows without flinching or
retaliating, they climb back to their villages stupefied and furious.

In August 1931, the Working Committee of Congress, meeting in Bombay, accepted the Red Shirts into its army. From that moment, Abdul Ghaffar was given responsibility for all Congress activities in the Frontier Province. On Christmas Day he was imprisoned and the repression began; by 11 January there was not one Red Shirt to be seen. The movement had been driven underground. But it is intense, and thus all the more worrying for the English, who are doing all they can to provoke an explosion.

This article appeared in Europe, No. 111, 15 March 1932.

460. Letter from India—III

Revolution, the Invisible Leader

The war whose course I am narrating, like that of 1914, is a war of attrition. Battles and striking events are the exception rather than the rule. An immense people is tensing its muscles, with clenched teeth, to break the foreign yoke with its mute pressure. My Bulletin, if it were to appear regularly, would risk repeating the communiques issued from the great European H.Qs., comfortably installed in the rear: “All quiet on the Eastern Front. . . .” I shall in future make my reports less frequency.

The official leaders of Indian resistance have nearly all disappeared from the scene; they are now in prison, with thousands of their troops.1 On 15 March, Mrs. Naidu was the last member of the Working Committee of Congress still at liberty (for how long?), and she elected herself President

1 At the end of February, the number imprisoned was estimated at 60,000.
of Congress. But in effect Congress no longer existed. One might well ask if it had not been a serious tactical error on Gandhi's part not to have been more careful with his lieutenants, instead of driving them on to sacrifice themselves, as they did, in the early weeks of the movement. What are we to think of an army whose whole general staff allows itself to be captured or killed in the first engagements? (Not a risk in the West, where the soldiers pay for the Marshals!)

But Gandhi's calm confidence seems destined to frustrate all common-sense prudence. The reports coming in at the end of February, and at the end of March, clearly establish that despite the almost total absence of leaders and the silence of the strangled national press, the masses are active in both town and country, filled with the doctrine of Swadeshi. The boycott is continuing and spreading.

British firms in Bombay have been harshly affected; orders for textile machinery to the value of 37 lakhs of rupees (£ 300,000) had been made, but either have been cancelled or are in process of being cancelled. Foreign firms, under the influence of Congress, have decided not to sell foreign merchandise; a Greek firm which did sell some has apologized and paid a fine to Congress. British cotton-producing firms have been paralysed by the withdrawal of their employees' labour and by the hartals (days of mourning) which follow hard on each other's heels almost without inter-

2 The Government has now been forced to admit that Congress in itself is legal, but it claims to forbid as illegal any free discussion in it. As I write these lines, Mrs. Naidu and Pandit Malaviya, ignoring the interdicts, are convoking the Pan-Indian National Congress at Delhi.

The late news (25 April) is that Mrs. Naidu and Malaviya have been arrested, and every step has been taken to prevent the Congress meeting by force.
ruption: an 8-day hartal in protest against the arrival of Lord Lothian’s official “Committee of franchise”, closure of all Bombay shops (7-14 March), further hartal on 16 March for the “peasants’ day”, Gandhi day, Nehru day, “labour day”. . . any excuse will do! On 18 March the Bombay spinning mills, under government pressure, tried to reopen the cloth market for the first time since Gandhi’s arrest (4 January), but without success; a crowd collected and demonstrated, some employees of the merchants were wounded, there was a police charge, and the merchants had to close the market again. A clandestine manifesto was in circulation threatening any firms breaking strike orders: “Let them know, however insolent or wealthy they may be, still they cannot live in India and be treacherous to their country.” The secret threat of public opinion strikes fear into those who would like to trade with England. The story is told of a trader who, on the very day of Gandhi’s arrest, had exported some gold; next morning he saw his name chalked up as a traitor on the walls of the bullion exchange, and he dropped dead out of shame and fear. Father Elwin, returning from Peshawar to Bombay, arrived in die middle of a hartal; the markets were peopled only with monkeys and dogs. A handful of Congress women in saffron robes were keeping all the businessmen at bay. Emerson, the forceful Home Secretary of India and the only British administrator of any worth, determined to crush resistance but with a high esteem for his adversary, told Elwin that “the women were most embarrassing!” On 21 March, the government, after testing the ground, decided to renounce their policy of intervention and, prudently retreating, decided to leave the cotton trade to, settle its own affairs. On 23 March, one of the main foreign cloth markets in Bombay, after an official reopening, converted itself into a swadeshi (Indian national) market; its ninety-four stalls now stock nothing but Indian cloth.
In the Punjab, Muslim sects, non-supporters of Congress but anti-British above all else, similarly decided on the picketing of vendors of British cloth and alcoholic liquor; Lahore and Amritsar are the centres of this campaign, and there are others in Gujarati territory. The Muslim members of the Legislative Council of Madras supported swadeshi propaganda. On 8 March, the Mufti Kifaya Tullah, first dictator of the Jamiat-Ulemah (non-Congressist) launched an appeal to Muslims to adopt “the well-known Congress programme”, and insisted on the need for strict non-violence. He was arrested on 13 March; there followed Muslim demonstrations, lathi charges and Muslim protests to the Legislative Assembly. The working committee of the Muslim Conference in Delhi unanimously adopted a resolution to boycott the official Round Table Conference and related committees. The Committee of the Muslim All-India Conference in Lahore protested against the policy of repression and demanded the withdrawal of the Viceroy’s orders.

Thus goes on the parallel and allied march of the two armies, Muslim and Hindu, forming a united front against the British Government. To seal this union, the Hindu and Muslim leaders of Cawnpore organized on 29 March (anniversary of the religious disturbances and massacres of the preceding year) a great Unity Fair in order to inspire sentiments of fraternity between the members of the two religious communities.

This unity extends to the “depressed” classes (the untouchables). It is well known that British policy is to try to arouse among them what one might call an untouchable nationalist movement demanding separate seats in India’s future Constitutional Assembly, out of a show of mistrust against Gandhi’s Congress majority, which they suspect of seeking to crush them. In fact Gandhi and Congress want to weld all classes and those outside classes into one people
of equals, and the whole of their policy is aimed at allaying the suspicions of minorities which England is craftily fostering, by offering them guarantees of a certain number of seats reserved for them. On 25 February, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Pan-Indian Association of Depressed Classes succeeded in making a pact, called the Rajah-Moonje Pact, on the basis of one single electorate, but reserving for the "depressed" classes a certain number of seats proportional to the population. This agreement, accepted by the Congress and other organizations, has an importance going beyond the problem of the "depressed" classes, and concerns all minorities; it will be the blueprint for the solution of the remaining difficulties between the most important of the minorities, that of the Muslims, and the Hindus. At a meeting on 6 March between Hindu and Sikh leaders in New Delhi, in which the pact of 25 February was approved, the following resolutions were adopted:

1. All problems of minorities should be solved, for preference, on the basis of the treaties guaranteeing minorities issued by the League of Nations, of which both England and India are members.

2. The argument for a separate electorate for any religious community is rejected.

3. No community having the majority in a province should have reserved seats.

4. In any plan for the protection of minorities by reserved seats, no account should be taken of the proportion

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3 Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, representative of the Depressed Classes, and Dr. B. S. Moonje, representative of the Mahasabha.

4 On 30 March, the representatives of 21 associations of "Depressed Classes" in the Presidency of Bombay sent a telegram to the Government in support of the Moonje-Rajah Pact. In Delhi, a demonstration in support of this pact by the "Depressed Classes" filed underneath the windows of the Government.
of the population in the province to decide the representation of the minority in the Legislative Assembly of that province: (for this principle could be exploited to the detriment of the minority); there should be an attempt to evaluate the general importance of minorities according to a principle applicable to all.

Thus independent India, even in the absence of Gandhi and the Congress leaders, has been carrying on with its law-making and the preparation of its future constitution without any heed to the Viceroy's official assemblies. Also the union of religious communities, of classes and those outside classes, is making great strides forward. A ceremony symbolizing this took place on 10 March when, in the presence of Pandit Malaviya, a hundred and fifty untouchables and many Indians of all classes solemnly received the sacred ribbon of the Brahmins. It was a kind of "Night of 4 August", in which privileges were not abolished, but extended to all; equality spreading from the top.

In face of this rising tide, how is the British minority reacting, clinging to its New Delhi islet? The answer is, by its usual violent means: lathi charges, brutality, whippings in the prisons, shootings, deportations. Most of the victims are in the countryside, for there is no middle-class control there to keep the aggressors in check, and therefore violence is unrestrained. Along the lines of "black shirt" punitive expeditions in Italy, the police arrive by coachloads in the villages at night and rush into the houses. Beatings would be too little; the aim is to humiliate. People are stripped naked, forced to walk on all fours, tethered to carts, beaten and left for dead, given electric shocks; children are whipped, women harassed and forced (in the Ahmedabad region, they have now hung long knives on their belts, to kill themselves if their honour is threatened). A whole village is punished for the refusal of a few; cattle, utensils, women's
ornaments and agricultural implements are seized (completely against the law), for a few annas of tax, property worth hundreds of rupees is confiscated, old people and children are thrown into the streets at night. Hospitals are closed, patients are turned out, the wounded are refused admission to governmental hospitals, in Madras the ambulance-men going to the aid of wounded and unconscious volunteers were beaten. The aim is to break and demoralize the population by every base means available. Pandit Malaviya, the only great Indian voice to succeed in making himself heard without the government yet daring to gag him, denounced these ignominies in a crushing diatribe dated 28 February, cabled to the foreign press in London (Spectator, Daily Herald, India Review), which he was refused permission to transmit in Benares. In it, he proved that the reign of terror was having an effect contrary to what was expected; the energy of the population had been strengthened, and the country was seething with bitter indignation. "Even those who up till now had never been concerned with politics are throwing themselves into the movement. The prestige of the Government is lower than it has ever been before."

Another renowned Indian personality, V. J. Patel, recently released from prison on grounds of his serious state of health, subscribed early in March to Malaviya's declaration: "British policy," he said, "is digging the grave of British trade and also of good relations between England and India: there can be no more conciliation before Great Britain is ready to abandon the last vestige of power...."

The better English elements are worried, and a forceful protest movement is developing among them, both in India and England. The Rev. John Kellas laments in the Guardian, a weekly Christian magazine in Calcutta, on 3 March:

5 This has now been done (25 April), Malaviya is in prison.
“There is belief in India that there is complete unanimity among Europeans in India in favour of the present policy of the Government. It would be strange if it were so. British people at home are not given to unanimity, not even in support of a “national” government. There is more difference of opinion than is commonly supposed. The British mercantile community are so divorced from the common life of the country that they have seldom the means to form unbiased judgment. But there is a large non-vocal section of the British public, and, without claiming to speak in its name, I declare that Lord Willingdon (the Viceroy) is guilty of a great betrayal of peace. It was he who made the first step in breaking off negotiations, in his refusal to discuss the Ordinances with the leaders of the Congress.”

In the Times of India, late in February, an Englishman protesting against the deplorable policies and monstrous sentences imposed on honourable people, did not fear to declare: “If this is the British Raj and British methods of government, then I say frankly that I have had enough of them, and the sooner a Swaraj government is installed in Delhi the better.”

At a public meeting on 15 February, Bertrand Russell, George Lansbury, Professor Laski and Kingsley Martin

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6 The same note is struck in the liberal English press; the Manchester Guardian Weekly often sounds the alarm. On 8 April it published a letter signed by several members of the Friends warning of the gulf being hollowed between India and Great Britain, taking as evidence opinions expressed by their friends in India, missionaries, academics, moderates, independent Englishmen, all drawing attention to the bitterness and revulsion provoked by the acts of the government.

A recent journey to London (first fortnight in April) made by our friend Edmond Privat, just back from India after a two-month visit, has done a lot to enlighten the opinion of Members of Parliament and the press, to whom he passed on his impressions.
spoke against government policy. In the House of Commons on 29 February, the Labour opposition showed some energy. Morgan Jones, Attlee and above all Lansbury spoke in defence of India and denounced government hypocrisy: “Let us have an end to this nonsense about the Congress not representing this, and the people of India not wanting that! At the Round Table all the delegates without exception demanded autonomy. I do not think that it is for us to decide whether India is or is not capable of self-government. Like the people in Canada, of whom it was said for years that they could not live peaceably together, those of India will find a way of coming to terms. And let us say nothing more of the ‘Depressed Classes’! I never heard any talk about taking care of these people until the question of self-government reached its present stage.” In Oxford, Lord Irwin recognized that force was useless, as well as illegitimate, against the natural rights of India:

“I think that the trend of India’s political thought is the perfectly natural outcome of human instinct and desire to develop her own life and mind and that development has been inevitable from the history of the last hundred years. . . . Force is no longer a solution of the political problem; all that force can do is to create a situation in which the powers of reason and conciliation have not a chance to find the solution that we are seeking.”

And in Bristol, in Kingsley Hall, a mass demonstration heard these words from Miss E. Wilkinson:

“The only solution of the Indian problem is for Britain to clear out of India.”

If Great Britain does clear out of India, it will not be before squeezing all its blood away. The most tangible and ruthless aspect of British policy is the monstrous pumping operation which is sucking away all the gold of India. Every week since 26 September, a liner has set sail with a load, and on 27 February the total was already estimated at 513,107,790 rupees, in other words more than £38,483,084.
Add to that the enormous fines that have been levied for Civil Disobedience, mainly on the press, in order to crush it; confiscations and sales (359 properties sold by the end of February in one district alone). The Indian budget at the beginning of March was £8,625,000 in deficit. One gets the impression that greedy England, sensing India slipping away from her, is making haste to carry off the spoils and bleed her white.\(^7\)

Besides, the New Delhi government is spending the gold it has extorted in an absurd display of luxury, which scandalizes even the English in India (Manchester Guardian, 11 March). None of these high-placed Indian officials has any idea of the privations imposed in England.

If this waste is shocking even for the English in England, what feelings can we expect this luxury based on their spoils to evoke in the poverty-stricken Indian masses! A circular letter from Father Elwin, dated Epiphany 1932, paints a vivid picture of the terrible poverty in the Indian countryside, above all in the United Provinces and the Central Provinces: villages are collapsing into ruin, children are dying of hunger, hungry and half-clad people are further crushed by taxes, pools of filth, hopeless desolation...

"What a difference from the villages where there is the khadi (Gandhi's domestic industry of the spinning wheel)! There, everyone is busy, energetic and gay; the situation is very different again from the slums where the mill-workers collect. But the true remedy in the end can only be the transfer of political power from the hands of Great Britain into those of the Gandhists. Only a national government resolved on the strictest economy can reduce this heavy burden of taxes, and give to the relief of the poor all the money

\(^7\) The Bombay Federation of Chambers of Commerce ordered a ban on the export of gold, and the brokers on the bullion exchange decided on 30 March to oppose it.
wasted on the army and the Indian Civil Service. Today India is spending three times more on its army than all the Dominions put together. In a district where 90% were suffering from a virulent form of malaria, the government allocated to the health budget a meagre hundred rupees per year! Today it has suppressed them. In parentheses, these hundred rupees represent what the Viceroy receives as his salary every three hours! I have calculated, says Elwin, that the salary of one single government chaplain would support an Ashram of twenty members with a hundred children. On the financial side, as well as on the moral and psychological side, I can see no hope for the Indian poor except in the complete independence of India. I know that Congress lays itself open to many criticisms, and that many Congressmen are narrow-minded, violent and fanatical; but it is the only organization in India which has the good of the poor at heart and is in a position to find a practical remedy.”

Without Congress and Gandhi, there is no room for anything but violence, and there are signs that it is coming: it is inevitable if means are not found of coming to terms with Gandhi. Secret reports which have reached us from Congress members admit in February (25, 27, 28, 29) and the beginning of March that there have been at Cawnpore, Sitapur (United Provinces) and Sitamarhi (Patna), fires in shops selling foreign cloth and houses not observing the hartal, bombs and armed attacks on police stations. Communism is making its way in some religious and intellectual circles in Northern India. Elwin writes:

“At Brindaban where Krishna played the flute and frolicked with the shepherdesses, my Brahmin host was studying Lenin. At my host’s house in Benares, the book-shelves were full of Communist literature, while the Sanskrit manuscripts were relegated into a little room. In these circles, the ‘Sannyasin’ and the priest are now looked upon with scorn. A little boy of ten (his father told me) had set out to ask me for my autograph. On the way he reflected:
'This Father Elwin is a man of religion. Religion is the opium of the people. I do not want the autograph of this person.'—This does not mean materialism, it certainly does not imply the destruction of Hinduism. Hinduism is a culture, a temperament, equally ready to receive the atheist and the believer. The new Young India, even when it is atheist, is passionately attached to its Hindu characteristics. The ideals of Truth, Love and Justice form the religion of many young men and women. On the other hand, in the masses the myth of Gandhi is growing rapidly. At Brindaban and Mattrra, I have seen idols of the Mahatma, images representing him seated on the lotus in the sacred river. When he was liberated at Champaran, the peasants tell that an angel descended in the midst of the tribunal and forced the police to release him. Miraculous powers over snakes and other animals are attributed to him. I myself have seen old men crowding to touch the hem of his garments, so that some virtue may pass from him into them. Naturally the Mahatma detests this sort of thing.'

One last point Elwin insists on: India still admires the ideal of renunciation. But she expects of her ascetics something more than flight from the world and self-salvation. The problem of poverty weighs so crushingly on the best minds in India that they can no longer bear anything which is not directed towards the solution of this problem. Vivekananda’s lesson has been heard: “My God in the form of the wretched, my God in the form of the poor of all races! ...” In the harsh words of his tender master:® “Religion is not for empty stomachs.” “The contemplative life as an end in itself,” writes Elwin, “is clearly in disfavour at present; so too is the study of theology, philosophy, even literature. I have been astonished at how few books I have seen in my journeys. . . .” As Vivekananda said, “We want a religion which will give us faith in ourselves and the

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respect of others, the power to feed the hungry, to overcome poverty, to relieve the masses. If you want to find God, serve man!"

In this Gandhi shows himself to be the true heir of these masters who turned the spiritual forces of India towards social action. Elwin relates that at the Conference of mill-owners and employees in Lancashire, in which during a prayer meeting they had asked God to “let them warm themselves in the sun of his divine presence”, Gandhi said to them: “It is all very well to talk about God when you have had a good lunch and expect to have a good dinner. . . . But it is impossible to warm yourselves in the sun of the divine presence when there are millions of hungry people knocking at your door!”

All these data go together to prove the necessity, inevitability and imminence of a social revolution. Everything points to it, as much the errors of the English oppressors as the various aspirations of oppressed India. The whole question is the means by which this revolution will be achieved, by violence or by non-violence.

But its name, its flame and its thought have now, consciously or unconsciously, found their way into all hearts. An example quoted by Father Elwin gives us a living symbol of it. In the North-West Frontier Province, “Inquilab” is the Urdu word for “Revolution”, and the heroic Pathans, the “Red Shirts”, leaderless, disorganized and hounded, look upon Inquilab—the spirit of non-violent revolution—as their leader. He cannot be crushed; by truth, patience, suffering and love, he will lead the people to victory. Their rallying cry is: “Inquilab Zindabad!” (“Long live the Revolution!”)—But the savages of the movement, who are struck by its heroism, imagine that India in revolt has two

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9 Retranslated.
10 A reminder that the Pathans of the Frontier Province, under the lead of Abdul Ghaffar, practise non-violent resistance.
leaders: one who is in prison (Abdul Ghaffar, or Gandhi); the other, the greatest leader, Inquilab, a man of flesh and blood, who will lead the people to liberty.

They are not so far wrong. Inquilab is more alive than the living. Our brothers in India and we in Europe are waiting for him.

20 April 1932

P.S. Please note a very interesting article in the India Bulletin

March 1932: “Gandhi and the Indian Capitalists”, by Miss Amy Moore. Against the thesis argued on the one hand by the Rothermere press, and on the other by the Communist press which claims to see Gandhi and the Congress members as agents of the bourgeoisie and instruments of the Indian exploiters, this article shows the very clear stance which Gandhi and Congress have taken against capitalist exploitation, both English and Indian. The resolutions recently adopted by Congress in Karachi are particularly categorical. This article appeared in Europe, No. 113, 15 May 1932.

461. The Christ of India

The cause of India is not only that of a great nation—a human continent—the common source of our European languages and thought, of the age-old roots from which sprang the great tree of our European civilizations. It is not simply that we have a filial interest in her destiny, her

11 The India Bulletin is the organ of the Friends of India, 46 Lancaster Gate, London. W.2. (President Laurence Housman; vice-president Reginald A. Reynolds). In Paris there is a publication Nouvelles de l’Inde, monthly bulletin of the French group of the Friends of Gandhi (166 Bd. Montparnasse).
awakening, her will to independence. So many other peoples today are moved with this thrill of legitimate revolt, and are claiming their right to resume the direction of their own destinies! It is as if a breath has passed over the whole world, over the tombs in which the world's old nations were sleeping in chains, an appeal saying: "Lazarus, arise!"

What makes this Indian awakening exceptional in our eyes among all peoples, what makes her cause our own, the cause of all humanity, quite apart from any political reason or passion—is not so much the object it pursues: the autonomy of a great people, or rather the United States of Indian races and peoples; it is the means by which she pursues this object; her spirit of action, her mission, and the holy man who embodies it; the Mahatma of non-violence—Gandhi, the hero and saint of Satyagraha.

He has come at the world's darkest hour, at which the principles supporting Western civilization have been undermined. The tottering European world is abandoning itself to primitive and violent instincts of the most bestial kind, served by all the means of destruction which a highly refined science can offer. On the morrow of a terrible four-year war, and on the eve, not just of one war, but of ten related wars which will not leave a single neutral state in safety—between these suspended menaces, as between the parted waves of a Red Sea on the point of engulfing mankind as they close—there sits the frail sage of India, the second Buddha; he is alone and, calm and firm unto death, he holds the forces of savagery at bay by the force of his own non-acceptance; the mere threat of this old man's fast unto death is bending the power of the proudest of Empires, and winning a victory which years of warfare would never have imposed: for all armed victory leaves death in its past and sows inexpiable resentments. For the first time,
a practical example has been given to the world of Europe, that St. Thomas who believes only what he sees—the victorious example of what Gandhi himself has called “The sword of self-sacrifice”. For the first time Gandhi has carried out, in the eyes of the world and in his own eyes, that triumphant experiment which he announced in theory as long ago as 1920; he has resumed on a large scale the experiment of the Rishis, of whom he has said that “when they discovered the law of non-violence, in the midst of violence, they were greater geniuses than Newton, they were greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness and taught a weary world ‘the overwhelming effects of Non-violence in its dynamic condition, which means the conscious suffering of the whole soul put against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, he added, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire, to save his honour, his religion, his soul,’ that of his people and its liberty, and ‘he could not lay the foundation for that empire’s fall or its regeneration.’” (Young India, 11 August 1920)

He has proved his point. It is not directed for or against any one state; all the states of Europe bear the same weight of injustice and error. The point has been proved by a Christ, for the salvation of all humanity. But to be saved, one must will to be saved, and will the world will it? Is it able to, at this hour at which the last barriers still restraining the torrent of devastation are beginning to crack? Let the world not deceive itself with the illusion that it can prolong the status quo! It must act; there must be a change in our corrupt old society, which maintains itself only by iniquity. There are only two ways open, both of which seek to install a new order: Violence and Non-violence. Both are revolutionary. It is up to you to choose!1

1 Written for an International Indian Day, organized in Geneva on 6 October 1932 by Mrs. Cousins and C. F. Andrews.
About people referred to in the volume. (The list includes only Indian personages or those who had identified themselves with India.)

Ali Brothers (see Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali)
Ali, Mahomed (1871-1931); led the Khilafat deputation to England in 1920; President, Indian National Congress, 1923.
Ali, Shaukat (1873-1938); nationalist Muslim; took a leading part in the Khilafat movement.
Andrews, C. F. (1871-1940); British missionary, whose devoted services for many years in the cause of the Indian people, especially those in distress or difficulty, won him the name "Deenabandhu", friend of the poor; he was deeply attached to Gandhiji.
Ansari, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed (1880-1936); nationalist Muslim leader; President, Indian Muslim League, 1920; President, Indian National Congress, 1927-28.
Bhave, Vinoba (b. 1895); Sarvodaya leader; founder of the Bhoodan movement; Gandhiji selected him as the first satyagrahi in the individual satyagraha movement in 1940.
Bose, Sir Jagdish Chandra (1858-1937); eminent Indian scientist; Fellow of the Royal Society; author of books on plant physiology; founder, Bose Research Institute, Calcutta.
Bose, Subhas Chandra (1897-1945); President, Indian National Congress, 1938; re-elected in February 1939, but resigned in April 1939 and started the Forward Bloc; left India in 1941 and worked from Germany and South-East Asia to further the cause of Indian
independence till his reported death in 1945; founder of the Indian National Army.

Chatterjee, Ramananda (1865-1943); editor of the *Modern Review*.

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917); popularly known as the Grand Old Man of India; thrice elected President, Indian National Congress; first to enunciate swaraj as objective of the Congress; Liberal member of the British House of Commons, 1892; author of *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*.

Das, Chittaranjan (1870-1925); President of the Indian National Congress, 1922; founded the Swarajya Party in 1923.

Desai, Mahadev Haribhai (1892-1942); Gandhiji’s Private Secretary for 25 years.

Doke, Rev. Joseph J. (1861-1913); devoted his entire life to the service of the Church and missionary activity in South Africa, England, Egypt, Palestine and India; author of *An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, the first biography of Gandhiji; closely associated with Gandhiji and the British Indian Association.

Gandhi, Devdas (1900-1957); youngest of Gandhiji’s sons; was associated with Gandhiji in most of his public activities; Managing Editor of the *Hindustan Times*, (1940-57).

Gandhi, Indira (b. 1917); Prime Minister of India since January 1966; President, Indian National Congress, 1959; daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru; took active part in the freedom struggle, spending 13 months in prison.

Gandhi, Kasturba (1869-1944); Gandhiji’s wife; completely identified herself with Gandhiji’s constructive programme and the country’s freedom struggle.

Gandhi, Maganlal (1883-1928); Gandhiji’s nephew and co-worker; some time manager of the Phoenix Settlement; Manager, Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, 1915-28.
Ganesan, S; Madras publisher who first brought out Gandhiji's *Satyagraha* in South Africa.

Gokhale, Gopal Krishna (1866-1915); President, Indian National Congress, 1905; founder of the Servants of India Society; Gandhiji regarded him as his political mentor.

Kalelkar, Dattatreya Balakrishna (b. 1885); educationist, writer and constructive thinker, popularly known as Kakasaheb; his association with Gandhiji began in 1915; was Principal of the Sabarmati Ashram School and Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith.

Khan, Abdul Ghaffar (b. 1890); close associate of Gandhiji; also known as Frontier Gandhi; noted Congress leader from the former N.W.F.P. where he organised Khudai Khidmatgar movement; after independence spent several years in Pakistan jails.

Lajpat Rai, Lala (1865-1928); nationalist leader and social reformer from Punjab; was deported in 1907 in connection with an agrarian uprising; lived for some years in the U.S.A.; President, Indian National Congress, 1920; died following lathi blows by police in Lahore during the demonstration he led against the Simon Commission.

Malaviya, Madan Mohan (1861-1946); Founder, Benares Hindu University; President, Indian National Congress, 1909 and 1918; President, Hindu Mahasabha, 1923-25.

Mirabehn, see Madeleine Slade.

Moonje, Dr. B. S. (1872-1948); Hindu Mahasabha leader; attended the Round Table Conference in 1931.

Nag, Kalidas (1892-1966); Professor, Calcutta University, 1923-1955; Member, Rajya Sabha, 1952-54.

Nehru, Jawaharlal (1889-1964); first Prime Minister of India, 1947-1964; President, Indian National Congress, 1929-30; imprisoned several times during India’s struggle for independence; author of Autobiography, Discovery of India and Glimpses of World History.

Nehru, Pandit Motilal, (1861-1931); lawyer and Swarajist leader; President, Indian National Congress, 1919 and 1928; father of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Pandit, Ranjit S., Barrister-at-Law; married Vijayalakshmi Pandit, sister of Jawaharlal Nehru; died in 1944.

Pandit, Vijayalakshmi (b. 1900); President of U.N. Assembly, 1953-54; former Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union and the United States and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

Patel, Vallabhbhai (1875-1950); first Deputy Prime Minister of Free India; famed for integration of princely states with the Indian Union; President, Indian National Congress, 1931; hailed from Gujarat and led the Bardoli Satyagraha, one of the early landmarks in the freedom struggle.

Paul, K. T.; a friend of C. F. Andrews; was connected with the Federation of National Youth Association at Calcutta; Chairman of the Committee for Arrangements of the World Student Christian Federation.

Paul, Richard M., French writer, who in 1921 visited the Gujarat Mahavidyalaya started by Gandhiji.

Pearson, William Winstanley; began his work in India as a missionary in the London Missionary Society in Calcutta; friend and close associate of C. F. Andrews and Rabindranath Tagore; studied conditions of labour in sugar estates in Natal; during the first World War the British Government deported him from Peking; was placed on parole in Manchester; in 1923 while on his way to India, died in a railway accident in Italy.
Privat, Edmond and Mrs.; Swiss couple; Gandhiji called them Anand and Bhakti; they had visited India to study its freedom movement.

Pyarelal (b. 1899); Gandhiji’s Secretary, 1929-48, and biographer.

Radhakrishnan, Dr. Sarvepalli (1888-1975); President of India, 1962-67; Vice-President, 1952-62; Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, 1949-52; world-famous philosopher, educationist and author.

Rajah, Rao Bahadur M. C. (1883-1943); leader of the depressed classes.

Prasad, Dr. Rajendra (1884-1963); first President of the Indian Republic, 1950-62; Chairman, Constituent Assembly of India, 1946-49; served various prison terms during the freedom struggle.

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886); great saint from Bengal; preached synthesis of religions.

Raychandbhai (Raychandbhai Ravjibhai Mehta); saintly person reputed to have influenced Gandhiji’s life and thought.

Roy, Dilip Kumar; exponent of Indian music; was an inmate of the Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry; author of Among the Great; established a temple-ashram, Hari Krishna Mandir, in Poona, where he resides today.

Roy, M. N. (Manavendra Nath Roy); Social Democratic leader; Indian representative of the Comintern; founder of Radical Humanism.

Seshadri, P.; Professor of English, Banaras Hindu University.

Sheth, Ambalal Sarabhai (1890-1967); industrialist of Ahmedabad who took keen interest in Gandhiji’s activities.

Slade, Madeleine (b. 1892); daughter of Admiral Sir Edmond Slade; joined Mahatma Gandhi’s Ashram at Sabarmati, 1925; Gandhiji gave her the name Mirabehn; suffered
imprisonment during India’s struggle for freedom; at present in Gaaden, Austria.

Tagore, Rabindranath (1861-1941); poet and painter, popularly known as Gurudev; was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1913; founder of a school at Santiniketan, later known as Visvabharati.

Tagore, Saumyendranath (1901-1974); founder of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India.

Tilak, Bal Gangadhar (1856-1920); Indian political leader, scholar and writer, popularly known as the Lokamanya; one of the founders of the Deccan Education Society, Poona and the newspapers, the Kesari and Mahratta.

Vivekananda, Swami (1863-1902); disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa; great religious teacher; eminent exponent of Vedantic philosophy.
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Passionately committed to the ideal of “the Civitas Dei,” the “city of all men in which reigns the peace of God”, Romain Rolland felt that the West lacked Gandhiji's faith in God to be able to fight the forces of capitalist exploitation and military imperialism with the spiritual weapon of ahimsa and he could not, therefore, recommend Gandhiji's way to Europe. But he looked upon Gandhiji as “the last barrier still holding out against the immense accumulated flood of violence” and on behalf of the “intellectuals, scientists, writers and artists” of Europe sent a “fervent tribute of love and veneration to Gandhi our master and brother, who in his heart and in his action realizes our ideal of the humanity to come.”
This book is considered a classic Gandhian literature. It is a collection of letters, diary extracts, and articles of Romain Rolland's correspondence with and about Mahatma Gandhi and other writings. The correspondence gives a glimpse of the minds of Mahatma Gandhi and the Nobel laureate Romain Rolland, and brings to life the intellectual engagement between the two great thinkers.

Rolland's writings reveal the affection and faith that he had in Gandhi and his principles. All material in French has been translated by R. A. Francis, except for a few letters of Mirabehn, who did the translations herself. This book, divided in three parts, covers letters and diary extracts from 1920-1948, letters sent by Rolland to various foreign correspondents that contain references to Gandhi, and prefaces and articles by Rolland.

Publications Division, in collaboration with National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi, has restored this slice of history for posterity.