

[No. 70A.]

*Telegram, dated 7 May, 1917, from Government of Bihar and Orissa, to Government of India, Home Department.*¹

Reference². Uninhabited outwork of Turkaulia was burnt as stated on 1st May. Local officers report burning undoubted act of incendiarism. Incendiaries have not been and are not likely to be detected. Mr. Maude has already arranged to confer with local officers and Gandhi subsequently starts today for Bankipore, where he will decide whether enquiry can be allowed to continue. The result will be reported in the due course.

[No. 71.]

*Note, dated 10 May, 1917, by W. Maude, Member of Executive Council, Government of Bihar and Orissa, regarding his interview with M.K. Gandhi and Champaran Officers.*³

I place below a bief note of my talk with Messrs. Morshead, Heycock, Whitty and Lewis, and also with Mr. Gandhi⁴. The

¹. Political (Special) Department file no. 1571 of 1917.

². Vide *ante*.

³. Political (Special) Department File No. 1571 of 1917.

⁴. An Intelligence Report, dated Bankipore 10/11 May, 1917, gives following details regarding Mahatma Gandhis visit to Patna:—

..Mr. Gandhi arrived here from Champaran last evening by 6.50 P.M. train (on the 9th May). There was a large gathering of people consisting of Barristers, Pleaders, Students and Gentries both Bengalis and Biharis, Hindus and Muham-madans numbering about 300 to 400 to receive Mr. Gandhi.....

As soon as the train came in and Mr. Gandhi got out of his compartment, he was garlanded by the Hon'ble Babu Krishna Sahai, the members then led Mr. Gandhi from the platform to the portico making a sort of procession waving flags belonging to "Chaitanya Hindi Sabha" of Patna City and shouting "Gandhi Maharaj-ki-Jai", "Bande Mataram". The passengers of the train also joined the procession saying all the time that it was their peculiar good fortune to travel, though unknowingly, with such a noble and great man.

Mr. Gandhi then drove off in Babu Krishna Sahai's motor amidst loud cheers and went straight to Mr. Haqq's place. Mr Gandhi was peculiarly dressed. He had no shoes on his feet, an ordinary Hindustani cap on his head and a bundle on his back.

The following are said to have promised to help him in his undertaking, and others whose names have not yet been ascertained:—

- (1) Babu Brajkishore Pershad.
- (2) Babu Dharni Dhar, Vakil of Darbhanga.
- (3) Babu Rajendra Prasad, M.A., M.L.
- (4) Babu Baidyanath Singh, M.A., M.L.
- (5) Babu Sambhu Saran, Pleader.
- (6) Babu Ramugarh Narain Singh, Pleader.

It is said that Mr. Gandhi wants 100 helpers and that for this purpose he has written to Babu Ajodhea Pershad, Pleader of Patna City, to canvass for recruits. The absence of Mr. S.N. Sinha at the station was very much regretted.

Mr. Gandhi left for Champaran on the morning of 11th May 1917, and was seen off by a large gathering including most of the pleaders and public men mentioned above.

conclusion arrived at after consultation is to take no immediate action against Mr. Gandhi or his assistants. The dangers of the situation have been fully explained to Mr. Gandhi, who has undertaken now to submit a preliminary report to Government and stop the recording of evidence by his assistants. The local officers should be informed of this.

W.M. [AUDE.]—10-5-1917.

Note by the Hon'ble Mr. Maude, dated the 10th May, 1917.

On the 9th May I discussed the situation with Messrs. Morshead, Heycock, Lewis and Whitty.

The unanimous view taken was that it would be very difficult to remove at present Mr. Gandhi and all those who are working with him and under his name. In particular it would be practically impossible to remove local people like Raj Kumar Shukul who lives in the Belwa *dehat* (Mr. Amman). If these people stayed while Mr. Gandhi was removed the result would very probably be to force on disturbances rather than to avoid them. The feeling of the officers seemed to be that the chief danger of disturbances lies not while the enquiry is going on so much as when a period of disillusionment supervenes. At the same time if the doctrine of passive resistance which is clearly being inculcated by Mr. Gandhi's assistants grows and takes root, collisions may take place at any moment....

Mr. Morshead still insists that the only way to prevent this sort of feeling from spreading all over the district as Mr. Gandhi and his assistants cover more grounds, is to establish a regular recognized commission with a judicial head such as say a High Court Judge. I do not at all like the idea of being forced into such a commission at present when there is nothing definite to put before it, when we do not know what points Mr. Gandhi may take up in his report, and most of all when the Settlement proceedings are going on. The commission would necessarily have to take up matters with which the Settlement record deals. For instance, as Mr. Heycock puts it, nearly every question which Mr. Gandhi is likely to take up is referable directly or indirectly to the *tinkathia* system, a matter as to the consideration of which the Settlement record will be all important.

I gathered that Messrs. Heycock, Whitty and Lewis were also not in favour of such a commission at present at any rate. Mr. Heycock's view is that the important thing is to try to get Mr. Gandhi to send in some sort of report as quick as possible. If he can be induced to do this we should know what his points

are and if necessary, a commission could then be appointed to go further into specific points which might be clearly outside the Settlement record, such as forced labour, cart *sattas* and so-called child labour. This is, I think, the right line to take and when I see Mr. Gandhi to-day I shall explain the dangers of the situation to him and how the dangers will go on growing if his present system is allowed to continue, and shall endeavour to induce him to send in a report at once with as much material as he has already got.

It is said that he has expressed his intention of putting certain proposals before the planters now and that if they accept, he will leave the district and consider his work done. I will ask him about this. If it is true it may be assumed that it will be futile and is probably meant to be futile. Mr. Gandhi is not likely to put anything before the planters that they would accept, nor do they in anyway recognize his authority to put anything before them....

On the 10th May I had a very long talk with Mr. Gandhi.

I explained fully to him what we consider to be the chief danger of the situation, namely, the recording of evidences in sort of court fashion by a number of assistants and at length. I also explained that such procedure must cause false reports and rumours to spread about, which might develop into situations where disturbance could scarcely be avoided and might occur at any moment....

I also explained to him fully what Government has already been endeavouring to do with a view to setting things right, instancing the change of management at Bettiah, the revision Settlement, the examination of the question of leases in the Bettiah Raj villages, and so on.

Our conversation was extremely frank and discursive and I cannot attempt to reproduce the gist of it all. The upshot of it was that when I suggested that he must have got a very considerable amount of evidence together by now and might be in a position to make his report, he consented at once to send up a preliminary report, and in the meantime to stop the recording of evidence by his assistants and only make enquiries quietly by himself, visiting only fresh *dehats* where he is especially invited either by the planter or by the *raiyats*. I suggested that he should dispense with the services of his assistants and he said he could not make any definite promise about that, and that he was really grieved at the want of faith in the motives and intentions of those assistants. He insisted that if anyone believed that they were regarding it or talking about it behind the scenes as an anti-European movement, they would be quite mistaken as there was no suggestion of such a thing. He said he had intended to lay certain definite proposals before the planters which if they accepted he would be able to destroy all his papers and go away;

but he admitted that he did not think it would be much use, and that one or two suggestions he had made to planters individually had not met with the response which he had hoped for. I said I did not think it would be the slightest use his approaching the planters, and he could scarcely expect them to regard him as in anyway authorised to lay proposals of any kind before them. It would be better if he wrote a report on such materials as he had already collected and sent it to Government or to the Government of India if he preferred that channel. He said he hadn't the slightest desire to go to the Government of India and his idea had been to approach the planters themselves first, if they failed to go to the local officers, if they didn't satisfy him to the Local Government, if they did not satisfy him to the Government of India, and if they didn't satisfy him to appeal as a last resort to public opinion in India.

In conclusion, he asked to whom he ought to address his report, to the Collector or Commissioner or Local Government. I said it would perhaps be best if he addressed it to the Government as it would relieve the Collector and Commissioner of the necessity of wondering whether they were called on to discuss it in sending it up. He would send a copy to the local officers as a matter of courtesy, and Government could call for any remarks or information as might appear advisable. I said it had been rumoured that he intended to subject Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga to the same process as Champaran, and he said he had so far never had any such intention, though he might visit other parts of the Province in a general way in order to complete his knowledge of India generally. I specially commended to his notice a visit to the south of Gaya and the adjoining parts of Hazaribagh where he would find a condition of tenantry in comparison with which the Champaran *raiya*t are independent and courageous. We wound up a two hours' conversation with a most interesting talk of the Colonial emigration question which, however, does not concern this file.

[No. 71.A.]

*Cutting from the "Beharee" and "The Express" of today's date.*¹

S.N. SINGH.

11-5-1917.

EXPRESS.

Mr. M.K. Gandhi at Bankipore :

Mr. M.K. Gandhi arrived here on Wednesday evening at 6.55 P.M. In response to the notice circulated over the signature of

¹. Tirhut Commissioner's Confidential file of 1917 (Mr. Gandhi's Enquiries I).