

[No. 27.]

Extract from the fortnightly report for the first half of April, 1917 (letter No. 34 C.T., dated 17 April, 1917, from Chief Secretary to Government of Bihar and Orissa, to Secretary to Government of India, Home Department.¹)

Mr. Gandhi arrived in Bankipore on the 10th instant, and was the guest of Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haqq. He left on the 11th for Muza-farpur where he had arranged an interview with the Commissioner of Tirhut, his avowed object being to ascertain the true facts regarding the agrarian trouble in Champaran. As noted in paragraph 7 of my report of 16th March ² the relations of landlord and tenant in Champaran have grown more strained since the return from Lucknow of Raj Kumar Shukul who addressed the Congress on the subject. The proposed interference of Mr. Gandhi is viewed with apprehension by the local police and report is awaited from the Commissioner regarding the results of his interview with that gentleman.

[No. 28.]

Written Statement filed by M. K. Gandhi before Subdivisional Magistrate, Motihari, on 18 April, 1917, in response to Notice, U/S 144, Cr. P.C.³

With the permission of the Court I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the orders made under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. In my humble opinion it is a question of difference of opinions between the local administration and myself. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation to come and help the *rai-yats* who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the administration and the planters. I have no other motive and I cannot believe that my coming can in any way disturb the public peace or cause loss of life, I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The administration, however, have thought differently.

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

² *Vide* No. 9 ante.

³ Political (Special) Department, file No. 1571 of 1917.

I fully appreciate their difficulty and I admit too that they can only proceed upon information they receive. As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I could not therefore voluntarily retire. Amid this conflict of duty I could only throw the responsibility of removing me from them on the administration.

I am fully conscious of the fact that a person holding in the public life of India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting examples. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience. I have ventured to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority but in obedience to the higher law of our being—the voice of conscience.

M.K. GANDHI.

[No. 28A.]

Letter, dated Motihari, 18 April¹, 1917, from W.B. Heycock, District Magistrate, Champaran to L.F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division.¹

My dear Morshead,

Mr. Gandhi has pleaded guilty under section 188, I.P.C. He of course still refuses to leave the district unless he is compelled. This can only be done under the Defence of India Act.

I asked him to come and see me and we had an interview at which Marsham and the G. Pleader were present. I asked him to remain quietly in Motihari until Government orders are received and see in Motihari whom he will. He has promised to remain until Saturday at Motihari on these terms and see me again on that day at 7 A.M.

I have in the meantime told him I will do my best to obtain Government orders before them.

Yours sincerely,
W.B. HEYCOCK.

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