

Not-So-Passive Resistance: A Meeting of the Leaders of Indian Independence Movement

Roles

Mohandas Gandhi = Johann

Muhammad Ali Jinnah = Christian G

Jawaharlal Nehru = Dalshad

Kriplani = Penny

Patel = Christina

Azad = Alexis

JINNAH: Gentlemen – may I introduce Mr. Gandhi.

Gandhi bows to the others with hands together.

JINNAH: Mr. Patel you know. (Patel bows.) Mr. Maulana Azad – a fellow Muslim . . . recently released from prison. (Azad nods) Mr. Kripalani. (Kripalani bows) And of course you know Mr. Nehru. (They smile at each other).

Gandhi sits.

PATEL: Well, I've called you here because I've had a chance to see the new legislation. It's exactly what was rumored. Arrest without warrant. Automatic imprisonment for possession of materials considered seditious or in any way opposed to the British. Mr. Gandhi, your writings are specifically listed.

KRIPALANI: So much for helping them in the Great War. Our people fought for them, in their army, and this is how they treat us.

. . .
JINNAH (angrily): There is only one answer to that. Direct action – on a scale they can never handle!!!

Akward pause, then...

NEHRU: I don't think so. Terrorism would only justify their repression. And what kinds of leaders would it throw up for India? Are they likely to be the men we would want at the head of our country? We must consider this as well. (To Gandhi) I've been catching up on my reading.

JINNAH (coldly): I too have read Mr. Gandhi's writings, but I'd rather be ruled by an Indian terrorist than an English one. And I don't want to submit to that kind of law.

PATEL (to Nehru): I must say, Mr. Jinnah may be right. It seems to me it's gone beyond remedies like passive resistance.

GANDHI: (interrupting) If I may – I, for one, have never advocated passive anything.

They all look at him with some surprise. As he speaks, he rises and walks.

GANDHI: I am in agreement with Mr. Jinnah. We must never submit to such laws – ever. And I think our resistance must be active and provocative. I want to embarrass all those who wish to treat us as slaves. All of them. But I want to change their minds – not kill them for weaknesses we all possess.

AZAD: And what "resistance" would you offer?

GANDHI: The law is due to take effect from April sixth. I want to call on the nation to make that a day of prayer and fasting.

JINNAH: You mean a general strike? The whole country on strike?

GANDHI (grinning): I mean a day of prayer and fasting. But of course... no work could be done – no buses, no trains, no factories, no administration. The country would stop.

PATEL: (excited) My God, it would terrify them...

AZAD (a wry smile): Three hundred fifty million people at prayer. Even the English newspapers would have to report that. And explain why.

Jallianwallah Bagh (Amritsar) Massacre (1919)

Part One Roles

Indian Speaker = Amr

Brigadier General Dyer = Jeremy

Soldiers = Christian C, Hildi, Johann

Assembly = Fady, Joy, Alexis, Christina, Christian G

A large crowd is gathered in the middle of the room around a speaker at the front of the room. The crowd is mixed. There are Muslims and Hindus, many of them Sikhs, old men, little children, women with babes in arms. The speaker – a Muslim – clutches a copy of Gandhi's journal.

Dyer and his soldiers line up along the back wall.

SPEAKER: . . . England is so powerful – its army and its navy, all its modern weapons – but when a great power like that strikes defenceless people it shows its brutality, its own weakness! Especially when those people do not strike back. (He holds aloft the clenched journal.) That is why the Mahatma begs us to take the course of non-violence!

Soldiers, led by Dyer, line up between the inner and outer rows of desks on the door side of the room, facing the crowd. The crowd gets nervous.

DYER: Port arms sergeant major! Load!

SPEAKER:... If we riot, if we fight back, we become the vandals and they become the enforcers of the law! If we bear their blows, they are the vandals – God and His law are on our... (He glances up.) side.

Soldier #1: Do we issue a warning, sir?

DYER (stiffly): They've had their warning – no meetings. Aim!

SPEAKER: We must have the courage to take their anger... Our pain will be our victory...

DYER: FIRE!!! (Soldiers begin firing into the unarmed crowd as people fall or try helplessly to flee.) RELOAD! FIRE!

Part Two Roles

Brigadier General Dyer = Jeremy

Indian Barrister = Penny Lin

Dyer is being questioned in court for his role in the Amritsar Massacre.

INDIAN BARRISTER: General Dyer, is it correct that you ordered your troops to fire at the thickest part of the crowd?

DYER (righteously): That is so.

INDIAN BARRISTER: One thousand five hundred and sixteen casualties with

one thousand six hundred and fifty bullets.

DYER: My intention was to inflict a lesson that would have an impact throughout all India.

INDIAN BARRISTER: General, had you been able to take in the armored car, would you have opened fire with the machine gun?

DYER: I think, probably – yes.

INDIAN BARRISTER: General, did you realize there were children – and women – in the crowd?

DYER: I did.

INDIAN BARRISTER: But that was irrelevant to the point you were making?

DYER: That is correct.

INDIAN BARRISTER: Could I ask you what provision you made for the wounded?

DYER (a moment, then firmly): I was ready to help any who applied.

ADVOCATE: General . . . how does a child shot with a 3-0-3 Enfield rifle "apply" for help?

Part Three Roles

Viceroy Chelmsford: Christian C

Kinnoch: Ernie

Brigadier: Joy

General: Fady

Mohandas Gandhi = Johann

Muhammad Ali Jinnah = Christian G

Jawaharlal Nehru = Dalshad

Kriplani = Penny

Patel = Christina

Azad = Alexis

The leaders of Indian Independence meet with the British officials of the British Raj to discuss the events at Amritsar. They sit opposite each other in the room.

CHELMSFORD: You must understand, gentlemen, that His Majesty's Government – and the British people – repudiate both the massacre and the philosophy that prompted it. What I would like to do is to come to some compromise over the new civil legis –

GANDHI: (interrupting) If you will excuse me, Your Excellency, it is our view that matters have gone beyond "legislation." (stiffly) We think it is time you recognized that you are masters in someone else's home. Despite the best intentions of the best of you, you must, in the nature of things, humiliate us to control us. General Dyer is but an extreme example of the

principle. It is time you left.

The British are stunned almost to speechlessness

KINNOCH: With respect, Mr. Gandhi, without British administration, this country would be reduced to chaos.

GANDHI: Mr. Kinnoch, I beg you to accept that there is no people on earth who would not prefer their own bad government to the "good" government of an alien power.

BRIGADIER (indignantly, choked): My dear sir – India is British! We're hardly an alien power!

Gandhi and the others just look at him. The British sense the awkwardness of what was just said.

CHELMSFORD: Even if His Majesty could waive all other considerations, he has a duty to the millions of his Muslim subjects who are a minority in this realm. And experience has taught that his troops and his administration are essential in order to keep the peace. Surely Mr Jinnah and Mr Azad can understand my concern.

Jinnah and Azad look at each other.

GANDHI: All nations contain religious minorities. Like other countries, our will have its problems. But they will be ours – not yours.

GENERAL: And how do you propose to make them yours? You don't think we're just going to walk out of India.

GANDHI: Yes . . . in the end you will walk out. Because one hundred thousand Englishmen simply cannot control three hundred fifty million Indians if the Indians refuse to co-operate. And that is what we intend to achieve – peaceful, non-violent, non-co-operation. Until you yourself see the wisdom of leaving . . . your Excellency.

A Pinch of Salt: British Officials discuss how to deal with Gandhi's protest (1926)

Roles

Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India = Ernie
Principal Secretary = Hildi
Senior Police Officer = Sean
General = Fady

IRWIN: Salt?!

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY: Yes, sir. He is going to march to the sea and make salt.

Irwin looks annoyed and confused.

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER: There is a Royal Monopoly on the manufacture of salt, sir. It's illegal to make it or sell it without a Government license.

IRWIN: All right – he's breaking the law. What will he be depriving us of, two rupees of salt tax?

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY: It's not a serious attack on the revenue, sir. Its primary importance is symbolic.

IRWIN: Don't patronize me, Charles.

The principal secretary gets nervous.

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY: No, sir. I – in this climate, sir, nothing lives without water – or salt. Our absolute control of it is a control on the pulse of India.

Irwin ponders the situation

IRWIN: And that's the basis of this "Declaration of Independence"?

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER: Yes, sir. The day he sets off everyone is supposed to raise the flag of "Free India." Then he walks some two hundred and forty miles to the sea and makes salt.

GENERAL: I say ignore it. Let them raise their damn flags, let him make his salt. It's only symbolic if we choose to make it so.

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY (pointedly): He's going to arrive at the sea on the anniversary of the massacre at Amritsar.

IRWIN: General Edgar is right – ignore it. Mr. Gandhi will find it's going to take a great deal more than a pinch of salt to bring down the British Empire.