

Assassination

THE HINDU, SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 1948.

GANDHIJI SHOT DEAD

ASSASSINATED WHILE ON WAY TO PRAYER MEETING IN MOURNING

GRIEF-STRICKEN CROWDS BESIEGE BIRLA HOUSE

Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated last evening while he was on his way to the prayer meeting.

Gandhiji was proceeding to the prayer meeting from his residence when a young man dressed in khaki quickly fired at him four shots at close range. Gandhiji collapsed. The assassin was captured by some among the prayer gathering.

Medical aid was given to Gandhiji after he was removed to Birla House but it proved of no avail. Thousands of people besieged Birla House, believing Gandhiji was not dead, and seeking to have darshan of him. It was only when Pandit Nehru came out and told them that Mahatmaji was dead that they dispersed.

Millions in India mourn for the Father of the Nation who was robbed of his desire to live the full span of a life of 125 years and devote himself to the service of Humanity. Gandhiji was 79. Messages have come from all over the world expressing sympathy with India in her irreparable loss.

Mahatma Gandhi's body is being cremated to-day on the banks of the Jumna. The Prime Minister has announced that the bier will be taken in procession through specified localities of Delhi.

GANDHIJI GREETED CROWD

LAST ACT BEFORE COLLAPSE

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

NEW DELHI, Jan. 30.

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, was shot at 5-12 p.m. to-day and he died fifteen minutes later.

Gandhiji left his room in Birla House for the prayer meeting a few minutes after the conclusion of his talk with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He passed through the garden leading to the shoulders of Ava Gandhi and Manu Gandhi, grand daughter-in-law and grand niece.

As he walked up the four steps leading to the prayer mandap, a young man, aged about 35, came before Gandhiji and, bending his body forward at a distance of less than two yards, offered pranam. Gandhiji returned the salute, when the young man remarked, "You are late to-day for the prayer." Gandhiji smiled and replied "Yes, I am"; but just at that moment, the young man pulled out his revolver and rang out three shots from point-blank range, the bullets piercing the frail body of the great leader. Just before he fell, he said to the assassin, "I am a Hindu."

Immediately, Gandhiji collapsed; but Ava Gandhi and Manu Gandhi stuck to their place by his side and held him firmly. But that was the last of the Nation's Father. It was then 5-12 p.m.

The last act Gandhiji did was to lift both his hands as a sign of prayer in the direction of the large gathering which had assembled for the prayer. Thereafter, he was speared in numbers, the blood of his age and so soon after his last, made death inevitable. He was beyond medical aid even from the start when shot and he died.

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Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who returned from Amritsar this afternoon, did not have an opportunity to meet Gandhiji. Pandit Nehru came out to address the huge gathering of nearly two lakhs which had surrounded Birla House, but broke down with grief more than once when he spoke. The leaders, including Pandit Nehru, who were present, were dumbfounded by the effect of the news.

The news of Mahatma Gandhi's death shocked the whole of India with the impact of atomic force. The Government-General Lord Mountbatten, the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and other Cabinet Ministers were immediately informed of the tragedy.

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EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT

NEW DELHI, Jan. 30.

An A.P.I. Correspondent who was present when Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated, says:

The congregation of about five hundred was anxiously waiting for Mahatma Gandhi to arrive at the prayer meeting when it was 5 o'clock. Mahatma Gandhi was delayed five minutes. He emerged out of Birla House being supported by his grand-daughters, Ava Gandhi and Manu Gandhi, and walked briskly, as was his custom, to the prayer platform. As he approached the congregation, they sprang to make a passage for him to reach the platform.

When Gandhiji was fifteen yards from the platform, I heard a shot, about two yards ahead of him. He appeared to be firing the shot and saw him hold a revolver in his right hand at right angle. Three more shots followed in succession from the same point. He appeared to be hit in the stomach and was shocked to see blood oozing out and staining his white dhoti. There was immediate confusion. He fell to the ground. The assassin was seized by a group of volunteers and taken to the spot where Gandhiji had fallen.

I saw Mahatma Gandhi bleeding. His eyes were closed and his head bent. His hands were folded as if in prayer. He was about 150 yards from the platform. Immediately thereafter, he was surrounded by a group of volunteers and taken to the spot where Gandhiji had fallen.

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"INSPIRATION TO THE WORLD" MESSAGE OF PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD

TRUMAN'S TRIBUTE

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30.

America was shocked and disturbed at the news of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Pending formal comment, officials expressed grave fears of new strife breaking out in the vast sub-continent.

President Truman received the news of Mahatma Gandhi's death shortly after midnight. He immediately issued an order that he be kept fully informed of the developments and that he received prompt official details from the New Delhi Embassy soon as they came in.

President Truman, in a statement issued from the White House, described Mahatma Gandhi as a leader of international stature whose life and work would be the greatest monument to him.

President Truman's statement read: "Gandhi was a great Indian nationalist, but at the same time he was a leader of international stature. His teachings and his actions have left a deep impression on millions of people.

"He was and is revered by the people of India and his influence was felt not only in the affairs of Government but also in the realm of the spirit. Unhappily, he did not live to witness the full realization of those ideals for which he struggled, but his life and his work will be through the years to come the greatest monument to him.

"His selfless struggle for the betterment of his people will, I am sure, endure as an example for India's leaders, many of whom are his disciples.

"I know that the people of India will be inspired by his sacrifice to work with increased vigour toward brotherhood and peace which the Mahatma symbolised."

MR. ASAF ALI

Mr. Asaf Ali, Indian Ambassador to Washington, said: "It is the most appalling tragedy in Indian history. I am too prostrate with grief to say anything more just now."

MR. N. G. AYYANGAR

Mr. N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, India's Chief delegate to the United Nations Security Council, in a special tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, told Reuters: "It is the saddest event that has overtaken us—the biggest disaster, not merely to India, but to the world. Mahatma Gandhi is simply irreplaceable and I do not know how soon the world can recover from this shock. He had dedicated his life to bringing about unity and harmony in the world, particularly in our own country, and he had been working for it, which were unfortunately working in other directions."

"This removal means for the time being a free play for these forces and it will take longer for India to recover than she would have if he had been spared by God who has willed it otherwise. India, however, will emerge out of this gloom. I still think that the emergence of leadership which will take her out of this morass."

Mr. Ayyangar, shortly after receiving the news of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, called Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru expressing his greatest sorrow "for the terrible tragedy that has happened."

Mr. Ayyangar said he was glad to hear that Mahatma Gandhi had continued his fast rather than meet with such fate. He asked Pandit Nehru not to let his heart be broken, everything possible to be done to ease the suffering of the people in India.

SIR ZAFRULLAH KHAN

Sir Zafarullah Khan, head of Pakistan Delegation to the Security Council, was one of the first callers on Mr. N. G. Ayyangar.

Sir Zafarullah in a special tribute to Mahatma Gandhi told Reuters: "I have been horrified at the news of Mahatma Gandhi's death. It is a tragedy, a tragedy, that the greatest hand of an assassin, brought to a close a life dedicated to the service of India and to humanity, particularly at a moment when India stood in sore need for its healing ministrations, is a calamity of the highest magnitude."

"So tragic and so violent a catastrophe has befallen the subcontinent, and great disasters in many fields, and it is devoutly to be prayed for, in this hour of grief and distress, that the people of India and the world should be united to devote every effort towards averting these disasters and pushing forward to the beneficent goals that the great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, so deeply mourn to-day had throughout striven to achieve."

"Not only India, but the world, is to-day much the poorer on account of this irreparable loss."

Among the early callers at Mr. Ayyangar's hotel suite to express condolences was Mr. C. H. Langenhove, President of the Security Council.

Washington officials received the first news of the assassination from breakfast on the 30th.

Mahatma Gandhi's death came at a time when his standing here is perhaps higher than ever. His most recent fast was a sincere expression of protest against the Chinese Government's refusal to accept the terms of the Yenching Conference.

A few minutes later the Government-General, Lord Mountbatten and the members of the Cabinet were alerted to the news of Mahatma Gandhi's death. The Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and other Cabinet Ministers were immediately informed of the tragedy.

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