



**DELHI UNIVERSITY**  
**LIBRARY**

DELHI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Call No. V2:1:N4

H152

Ac. No. 273936

Date of release of to

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below.  
An overdue charge of 10 np. will be charged for each day the book is  
kept overtime.

---

**LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO LTD.  
OF PATERNOSTER ROW**

**43 ALBERT DRIVE, LONDON, S W.19  
NICOL ROAD, BALLARD FSTATE, BOMBAY  
17 CHITTARANJAN AVENUE, CALCUTTA  
36A MOUNT ROAD, MADRAS**

**LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.  
55 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK  
221 EAST 20TH STREET, CHICAGO**

**LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.  
215 VICTORIA STREET, TORONTO**

# BRITAIN AND INDIA

---

---

1600—1941

---

---

*by*

R. COUPLAND

FELLOW OF  
ALL SOULS COLLEGE AND OF NUFFIELD COLLEGE,  
BRIT PROFESSOR OF COLONIAL HISTORY  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.

LONDON - NEW YORK - TORONTO

BOMBAY - CALCUTTA - MADRAS

---

---

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
I THE BRITISH INVASION OF INDIA, 1600-1857 ...	1
II THE CHARACTER OF THE BRITISH RAJ, 1757-1857 ...	16
III BUREAUCRACY AND NATIONALISM, 1857-1909 ...	33
IV THE GROWTH OF INDIAN SELF-GOVERNMENT, 1909-1935	56
V THE LAST STAGE, 1935-1941 ... ..	81

---

---

# BRITAIN AND INDIA

## CHAPTER I

### The British Invasion of India

1600-1857

*India before 1600*

**T**HE MOST REMARKABLE FACT about India to-day is its political unity. Forms of government differ in different parts of it, but all India owes allegiance to the British Crown. So familiar is this fact—it has been a fact since the middle of last century—that its importance is sometimes overlooked. We tend to regard India as a country, larger indeed than the countries of Europe, but in the same category; whereas in fact India, cut off from the rest of the world by the Himalayas and the sea, is more like a continent than a country. In size of territory and population it is roughly equal to Europe without Russia, and in most of the elements which distinguish one country from another—in race, in language, in religion, in ways of life—it is more variegated than Europe. Yet, while for the past eighty years Europe has been the scene of several wars between its component nations, the peace of India has been unbroken. In 1914 and again in 1939 India was involved in the world-wide conflict between freedom and German domination; but internally, within its long frontiers or between its many peoples, there has been no war since 1858.

India had never attained such unity and peace in earlier days. She had had a long and famous history before the first Europeans landed on her shores, but it was a history as darkly overshadowed as that of Europe by discord within and invasion from without. India, like Europe, had acquired the rudiments of a common civilisation. In India, as in Europe, prehistoric migrations from some focal area in Central Asia had imposed on the aboriginal population those basic forms of speech and custom which are known as Aryan or Indo-European; and out of this period of conquest and assimilation had emerged the elements of that religious, social and economic system which is known as Hinduism. But the

## THE BRITISH INVASION OF INDIA, 1600-1857

picture of this Hindu India that can be faintly descried in the earliest records and in the mists beyond them is a picture of strife and bloodshed. The *Mahabharata*, the great epic which, like the *Iliad* in Europe, reflects the prehistoric age, is, like the *Iliad*, an epic of war. As history grows more certain and continuous, it tells of periods in which great Indian rulers or dynasties extend their power over a large part of India, and the peace and firm administration they impose enable Indian genius to flower in all the arts. There is the Maurya Empire (c. 321-184 B.C.) with Chandragupta and Asoka as its most famous names. There is the Gupta Empire (c. 320-500 A.D.), the golden age of Hindu culture. But none of these Empires covered the whole of India, and beyond their borders princes and chieftains, big and small, were in constant rivalry and strife. Northern India, moreover, was exposed throughout these centuries to invasion from Central Asia. Invader after invader broke through the passes of the north-west frontier into the Punjab and beyond. Darius I included the whole plain of the Indus in one of the tributary satrapies of the Persian Empire. Alexander flashed across the Punjab and back again. Seleucus followed in his master's foot-steps, but withdrew before Chandragupta. For a time the Indus plain was occupied by Bactrian Greeks. In the early centuries of the Christian era, less civilised invaders—Scythians, Parthians, Kushans—swept in succession across the North, pushing farther and farther eastwards towards Bengal and southwards towards the broken belt of hills and forests that guarded the Deccan. In the fifth century came the White Huns who overthrew the Gupta Empire. That was the last major invasion till the conquering tide of Islam, having engulfed the Middle East and rolled westwards across North Africa into Spain, began to flow down from the Iranian plateau into India. Early in the eighth century Arab armies conquered Sind. Between 1000 and 1500 a succession of Afghan invaders drove right across North India. Moslem dynasties ruled at Delhi from the Punjab to Bengal. And the new conquerors pushed farther south than any of their predecessors. Five separate Moslem Kingdoms were set up in the Deccan. Only south of the River Kaveri was Hindu India saved from the invader. Lastly, from A.D. 1505 onwards, over the same north-western passes, came the Moguls. Under a succession of remarkably able rulers they brought under their control the whole area of previous Moslem occupation; the greatest of them, Akbar

## THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

(1556-1605) gave to this vast structure a more effective political unity, a better administrative and financial system, more peace and justice and prosperity than India had yet known on so large a scale. But this boon of a united India from the Himalayas to Mysore was bought at a price. The Moslems, it is true, had not forced the conquered Indians to choose between conversion and the sword. Akbar was far more liberal in the matter of religion than the contemporary sovereigns of Europe. But for one reason or another multitudes of Indians, especially in the North, accepted their conquerors' creed; and so beneath the surface of unity the soul of India was divided between two faiths or two philosophies of life—a gulf which seems to-day almost as deep as when it was first cut so long ago.

### *The East India Company*

It was during the Mogul period that Europe first made contact with India. Centuries before that, the products of India and the Far East—spices, metal-work, gems, silk, textiles—had been sold in European markets, but they had been carried thither overland by caravan to the Mediterranean. Turkish and Mongol raids and conquests had struck right across these trade-routes, and it was mainly in an attempt to find a new way to the East that the Portuguese, having acquired the art of ocean navigation, succeeded at the end of the 15th century in rounding the Cape of Good Hope and crossing the Indian Ocean to the west coast of India. In a few decades, under the great leadership of Almeida and Albuquerque, they obtained command of the Indian Ocean, established fortified strategic posts at most of the key points, and imposed by ruthless force on Europeans and Asiatics alike an exclusive monopoly of Eastern trade. But militant imperialism on this scale soon overtaxed the strength of the little maritime kingdom, and by the end of the 17th century one or two isolated and decaying settlements were all that remained of the Portuguese empire in the East. The Dutch, the English and the French had occupied the field and were contesting its partition.

The first regular contact between England and India was not political: it was purely economic, and it was effected by a commercial company, the most famous company in history. In 1600 the East India Company obtained a royal charter giving it the exclusive right of trading in the East.



Six years later the Virginia Company was founded, the first of several chartered companies which operated in North America. But the purpose of the American companies was more than trade. They were intended to acquire territory and to establish on it "plantations" of English colonists who would themselves exploit its mineral and agricultural resources; for North America was a "new" country with a scanty and uncivilised native population and a climate in which Europeans could make their homes. India, on the other hand, was part of the Old World, with an older civilisation indeed than that of Europe, a large and highly organised population, an old-established economic system, and a climate which prevented its ever being a "white man's country". Trade, therefore, and trade alone was the East India Company's objective; and trade obtained by peaceful enterprise and agreement, not by force. The Company's first act was to send an envoy to the Mogul Emperor at Delhi to obtain his permission to establish a trading-post on the coast. The envoy was followed by a full-scale ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, who defined with characteristic English shrewdness the cardinal principle of the Company's policy. Do not waste money, he urged, on military adventures, on acquiring territory and maintaining garrisons, as the Portuguese do or the Dutch "who seek plantation here by the sword". "Let this be received as a rule that, if you will profit, seek it at sea and in quiet trade".<sup>1</sup>

For a long time, no less than a century and a half, with one or two exceptions which went to prove its wisdom, Roe's rule was kept, to the great advantage of both parties concerned. Mogul India obtained what she most wanted, and that, apart from some European luxuries, was mainly silver bullion. The Company for its part obtained those Indian products—indigo, yarn, calico, saltpetre, sugar and so forth—which could be sold at a profit in Europe. And this first period of Anglo-Indian intercourse, so peaceful and so mutually beneficial, might have been indefinitely prolonged, like any similar commercial intercourse between civilised states, if the foundations of civil order in India had not collapsed. The bigotry and misrule of Aurungzeb, the last of the famous Mogul Emperors, provoked discontent and rebellion throughout his realm, and on his death in 1707 the component parts of the Empire fell asunder like the coloured

---

<sup>1</sup> P. E. Roberts. *Historical Geography of India* (Oxford, 1916), i, 37.

pieces of a kaleidoscope released from their binding rim. Provincial viceroys, like the Nizam of Hyderabad, set up as princes on their own. The Rajput chiefs reasserted their old independence. The war-like Maratha confederacy extended its control over a wide area in Western India. Hyder Ali, a military adventurer, made himself a little kingdom in Mysore. And everywhere lesser chiefs and landlords and ambitious upstarts were struggling to secure their portion from the dead body of the Empire. As for the great mass of the Indian people, the peasantry of India's countless villages, such security of life and livelihood as the system set up by Akbar had ensured them quickly disappeared. New rulers and tax-gatherers came and went. Predatory armies swept across their fields. Terrible accounts have been preserved of Maratha raids in Bengal, of "murder and mutilation, arson and rape, practised indiscriminately and without restraint"; and students of Burke will remember the famous, if somewhat over-coloured, passage in which he described Hyder Ali's invasion of the Carnatic. In such a warring world there was no security for person or property. Trade and industry dwindled. Famine and anarchy stalked the land. The state of the Indian people, indeed, could hardly have been worse than it was at the moment when the British connexion with India began to change its character and the first steps were taken that led to the creation of the British Raj.

### *Establishment of British Rule, 1746-1820*

By the time of the break-up of the Mogul Empire the East India Company had acquired three principal trading-posts—at Madras, Bombay and Calcutta; and in order to protect these posts from pirates and from European rivals and, as the internal chaos deepened, from marauding bands, forts were built and bodies of Indians, known as "sepoys", enlisted and drilled under British officers. Of those European rivals the Portuguese had retained, as they still retain, Goa, and two minor footholds on the coast, but had long ceased to play an important part on the Indian stage. The Dutch were more formidable, but had shifted their main field of operations from continental India to the East Indian islands. The real, the dangerous rivals of the British were the French, whose East India Company, founded in 1664, had also

<sup>1</sup> Moreland and Chatterjee. *A Short History of India* (London, 1936), 260.

established trading-posts and forts and garrisons of sepoys at Pondicherry and other places. It seems more than probable that the British would in any case have become involved in the internal conflict in India, if only to try to restore some measure of that peace and order on which their trade depended. As it was, they were forced into it by the fact that during this period Britain and France were repeatedly at war in Europe. Since the world was one, war in Europe meant war in North America and war in India. Inevitably the French and British companies began to align themselves with this or that party in the Indian conflict, not in order to fight Indians, but in order to fight each other. The aim of Dupleix, the brilliant Frenchman who began the game, was to drive the British from the Indian field. He was thwarted by lack of support at home, by British sea-power, and, above all, by the military genius of Clive, a young servant of the British Company. The contest began in 1746. In 1760 the first round of it ended with the final defeat of the French at Wandewash. But more had happened in those fifteen years than the collapse of French power and influence in India. In 1756 the young Moslem ruler of Bengal, the wealthiest and most populous province of the disrupted Empire, fell on the British settlement at Calcutta and wiped it out. In the following year his vast unwieldy army was routed by Clive at Plassey with a small force mostly composed of well-drilled sepoys. The result was far-reaching. The British, already solidly entrenched on the west and east coasts, had become at a stroke, without intending or desiring it, the masters of north-east India. That little body of "quiet traders" from overseas had acquired a military and political position in India comparable with that of any of the Indian rulers who had divided up the heritage of the Great Moguls.

A struggle for power ensued which lasted nearly sixty years, broken only by intervals of desperate intrigue scarcely distinguishable from war. Most of India was involved in it except the North. In the Punjab, where the long series of invasions from Afghanistan was at last coming to an end, the Sikhs, whose devotion to their faith—a sort of simple and ascetic Hinduism—was only equalled by their martial courage, were building up a strong military state; but for the time being they held aloof from the turmoil in the south, and their famous ruler, Ranjit Sinjh, made a treaty of peace and friendship with the Company. Oudh had vainly pitted its strength against the victors of Plassey at Buxar (1764), and

now, impoverished and misgoverned, it was becoming more and more dependent on the Company's goodwill and protection. The only formidable pieces in the strategic game lay southwards—first, Hyder Ali, threatening Madras from Mysore; second the Marathas, whose dominion now extended from the neighbourhood of Bombay to the fringes of Bengal; and third, the Nizam of Hyderabad, dangerously poised between the other two. It was never, till towards the end, a clear-cut fight. Each combatant was constantly shifting ground and changing sides. Nor was it ever a national conflict, an uprising of India against the European invaders. Only at one critical moment, in Warren Hastings' time, were the three Indian combatants united against the British: for the rest of the period the Nizam was on their side. And since France was again at war with Britain most of the time, the latter's Indian antagonists were aided by French agents at their courts, French soldiers drilling and leading their troops, French fleets and privateers patrolling the Indian Ocean. Napoleon, indeed, made elaborate plans for an attack on India by land and sea, and to that end concluded an alliance with Hyder Ali's successor, Tippoo, who was nominated a "citizen" of France. The issue at stake, in fact, was not whether India should be independent of Europe, but whether it should come under the control of the British or the French. British sea-power saved India as it saved Europe from subjection to the Napoleonic Empire, and, as a by-product of that world-conflict, it determined the result of the local Indian conflict. In the first stage, under Warren Hastings, the Company stood hard-pressed on the defensive. In the second stage, under Lord Wellesley, it took the offensive and crushed Mysore. In the third stage, under Lord Hastings, it finally defeated and broke up the Maratha league. And, meantime, all the lesser Indian states and principalities in Central and South India had been driven into the arena and come to terms with the ascendant power. Many of them, like Hyderabad and Oudh and Travancore and a host of smaller units, retained their domestic independence, but accepted by treaty the suzerainty of the British Crown and the protection of British arms. Other areas, large and small, were annexed to the Presidencies (as they were called) of Madras, Bombay and Bengal, and so became part of the British Empire and their people British subjects. Thus, by 1820, all India from Cape Comorin to the eastern

margin of the Indus plain and the Punjab had been brought, directly or indirectly, under British rule.

This decisive event in the history of India—more decisive for the future development of its people than the Mogul conquest—has an air of Fate about it. From the moment the Mogul system collapsed, it was almost inevitable that, given the maintenance of British sea-power, those British traders in India should become its rulers. Attacked, they were bound to counter-attack. Victory was bound to mean the subjection of the conquered. For a British administration, however pacific its intentions, to keep at peace with neighbouring Indian states, governed and often desperately mis-governed by arbitrary or capricious autocrats, was virtually impossible. To one of the ablest British officials of that time, Sir John Malcolm, the final extension of British rule "over all the continent of India" seemed quite certain. "This ultimate effect," he said, "will, I conceive, be operated by causes which we have not the power to control. It is in fact the natural progressive growth of civilisation."<sup>1</sup> But it must in fairness be added that a real effort was made to check the process. British statesmen of those days had little desire, and the British public none at all, to acquire new territories and responsibilities in India. The Act of 1784, which (as will be explained in the next chapter) brought the Company's policy under the control of the British Government and Parliament, contained an extraordinary clause forbidding the Governor-General in India to begin a war or to make a treaty which might lead to war without express permission from home, since "to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and policy of this nation." And this cautious attitude was whole-heartedly endorsed in business circles. To the directors and shareholders of the Company the Indian question was still primarily economic. Roe's rule had been broken with the results Roe had foretold. The profits of "quiet trade," all of them and more, had been consumed in costly military operations. The Company was sinking deeper and deeper into debt. It is the bare truth to say that the Indian Empire was not the product of "Imperialism." It was not desired, nor planned, by British politicians or British merchants. It was trade they wanted, not territory.

---

<sup>1</sup> P. E. Roberts. *India under Wellesley* (London, 1929), 206.

The outlook of their representatives in India was naturally not quite the same. The first of the three outstanding figures, Warren Hastings, was only concerned to save what he had got; but to Wellesley and Lord Hastings, in the period of expansion, conquest, however it might seem to have been forced on them, could scarcely be "repugnant." Mysore and the Marathas were stout opponents, and their overthrow was hardly won. And with a human pride in victory went a genuine belief that, whatever might happen to their princes, the Indian people would profit beyond measure from the peace and unity, the justice and clean government, which British rule would bring them. "I can declare my conscientious conviction," said Wellesley, "that no greater blessing can be conferred on the native inhabitants of India than the extension of British authority." Nor was it only men on the spot who thought like this. It would be hard to find a personality more different from Wellesley's than that of James Mill, the philosophic radical, who was employed at the Company's headquarters in London and knew and cared about India more than most stay-at-home Englishmen; yet the peace-loving clerk and historian wished as keenly as the militant proconsul that "every inch of ground within the limits of India were subject to our sway."<sup>2</sup>

### *British Rule Extended over India, 1820-1857*

In 1820 the process of British conquest halted for a time, but only for a time. Twenty years later it was resumed, and thenceforth it continued with the same seemingly irrepressible momentum until it reached its natural limit—the mountain frontier in the north. The broad belt of plainland stretching from the Himalayas down the Indus valley to the sea, which in 1820 was the only part of India not yet subjected to British control, was occupied by two independent States. In the south lay Sind, a thinly-peopled and largely desert country, ruled by Baluchi Amirs. Its importance was mainly geographical or strategic. It stood athwart two vital lines of communication—the trade-route down the Indus by which the products of the more fertile Punjab reached the sea, and the approaches to the easiest passes through the mountains to Afghanistan. North of Sind was the Punjab in

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

which the Sikhs, as has been seen, had established a strong military government. In this last free north-west quarter of India as elsewhere the story of British expansion begins with the intrusion of a foreign factor. It was Napoleon's threat to India that had prompted the friendly alliance of British India both with the Punjab and with Sind. The train of events which led to the breach of that friendship was also set in motion by fear of a foreign Power, not France this time, but Russia. From about 1830 onwards Russia was credited not only with those designs on Constantinople which led to the Crimean War, but also with the renewal of Napoleon's scheme of marching across Central Asia, where her dominion was now fast spreading, to the gates of India. Whether or not this "Russian peril" was more than the mere "bogey" it is sometimes thought to have been, the attempt of the Governor-General, Auckland, to forestall it was hasty and ill-conceived, and it ended in catastrophe. To prevent a Russian occupation of Afghanistan its ruler, Dost Muhammad, was deposed, a pro-British prince installed in his place, and a British force stationed at Kabul to support him. The upshot was a national rebellion (1841-2). The British officials were killed: the British force was surrounded and annihilated. Only one man out of 16,000 escaped to tell the tale in India. Though the military situation was retrieved by fresh British forces which scattered the rebels and occupied Kabul, it was wisely decided to acquiesce in Dost Muhammad's recovery of his throne and to evacuate the country.

These disastrous events had not weakened British power in India but they had shaken its prestige. And it was because prestige was believed to count for so much in the East that the new Governor-General, Ellenborough, was tempted to embark on the only war in the annals of British rule in India which can truly be described as aggressive. There were subsidiary reasons or excuses for the attack on Sind in 1843. The Amir's rule was barbarous, and they had failed to keep their promises in the matter of the Indus trade. The occupation of the routes to the mountains would secure the people of Sind as well as of British India from invasion from the west. But the main cause of the war was a desire to counter the effect of the Afghan *débâcle* by a victory elsewhere. Sir Charles Napier, the impulsive soldier who was chiefly responsible for the aggression and carried it to a quick conclusion by defeating the Amirs and annexing the

## THE SIKH AND BURMA WARS

country, made no pretence of moral justification. "We have no right to seize Sind," he wrote in his diary before the fighting began; "yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be." There were high British officials in India, like Outram, who condemned Napier's conduct, and public opinion in England would certainly have forbidden it, had it been informed in time.

### *The Sikh and Burma Wars*

No similar charge of aggression can be levied against British policy in the matter of the Sikh Wars. The Punjab, it was hoped, would remain an independent "buffer state" between British India and Afghanistan. There was no desire at Calcutta for a trial of strength with the Sikhs: it was the other way about. The Sikh army, confident of its power, encouraged by the British reverse in Afghanistan, and no longer restrained by the wise old Ranjit Singh who died in 1839, determined to challenge British rule in Northern India. In 1845, without any provocation, it crossed the Sutlej into British territory. Four battles ensued, the fiercest the British had yet had to fight in India and only won at heavy cost. The terms of the peace-treaty (1846) proved the innocence of British intentions. The independence of the Punjab was maintained. A Sikh army of 32,000 horse and foot was permitted to remain in being. If a British resident was sent to Lahore, supported for a limited period by a British garrison, it was mainly in the hope of strengthening the hands of the Sikh government and working with those of the military chiefs who wished for peace. The experiment broke down. The hot-heads wanted another fight. In vain the Governor-General, now Hardinge, reasserted his Government's desire for an "independent and prosperous" Punjab, whose success or failure lay with its own people.<sup>2</sup> In 1848 a local rising, marked by the murder of two British officers, quickly swelled into a general rebellion of the Sikhs against their Government and its British friends. The second Sikh War followed, a war of two big battles. At Chillianwala British casualties were over 2,000. Gujrat was a cheaper victory, and decisive. This time there could be no question of independence. The

---

<sup>1</sup> T. Rice Holmes. *Sir Charles Napier* (Cambridge, 1925), 43.

<sup>2</sup> Speech, March 9, 1846, in R. Muir. *The Making of British India* (Manchester, 1923), 336.



Punjab became part of British India. Its subsequent administration and the reconciliation of the martial Sikhs by a brilliant group of officials—Henry and John Lawrence at their head—make a memorable page in the record of the British Raj.

Similarly undesired and unpremeditated on the British side were the wars with Burma. The first broke out in 1824, when the Burmans, who had come conquering northwards and subjugated Assam, invaded eastern Bengal in the proud belief that their prowess was invincible. The British counter-invasion of Burma was ill-organised and hampered by the difficulties of the terrain; but by the peace of 1826 the King of Ava was compelled to withdraw from Assam and to cede two seaboard provinces to British India. The second war in 1852 was not so wantonly provoked, and a less high-spirited Governor-General than Dalhousie might perhaps have avoided or postponed it. But when the legitimate business of merchants from British India, Indians as well as British, was obstructed by the Burmese authorities at Rangoon in breach of the commercial clause of the treaty of 1826, Dalhousie sent a frigate to demand redress. His communication was ignored, and the frigate fired on. The ensuing campaign was better prepared and short. Owing to its distance from the coast the conquest of Ava itself was not attempted; but the whole of Pegu or Lower Burma was occupied and annexed. The third war, which, though it did not occur till 1885, may be conveniently mentioned here, was the outcome of a similar disregard of engagements and a similarly contemptuous treatment of representations from Calcutta; but a new and sharper edge to the quarrel was given by the reappearance of the old Franco-British rivalry. The French had recently acquired the foothold in the Far East which was to grow into Indo-China. Near neighbours now of Burma, they began to press their interests at the Burmese court in a manner which made it clear that the issue was the same as it had been in India in the eighteenth century—not whether Burma would retain its independence but whether it would be subject to the French or British flag. In the result Upper as well as Lower Burma was included in what came to be called the Indian Empire. This expansion of British rule across the Bay of Bengal was inevitable, no doubt, in the same sense as its expansion over all India; but diverse as were the peoples of India, geography and circumstance had brought them closer to each other than they could ever

## ANNEXATIONS WITHOUT WAR

be to the people of Burma, separated not only by distance but by differences of race, and creed and custom, stiffened by an intense distinctive national pride. Time was to show that the association of Burma with India under a single government, though dictated by administrative expediency at the outset, was not sufficiently natural or congenial to endure.

### *Annexations without War*

It remains to describe the substantial accretion of British territory in India which was effected otherwise than by war and conquest. It occurred towards the end of the period under review, and was the work of Dalhousie than whom no Governor-General, not Wellesley himself, was more convinced that British rule was better for the ruled than Indian. He put on record his "strong and deliberate opinion that the British Government is bound not to put aside or neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territory as may from time to time present themselves."<sup>1</sup> The death of the rulers of a number of Indian States without natural heirs seemed to him just such a rightful opportunity; for these were States which had not been independent before the establishment of the British Raj but subject to other States which had now been brought under British control; and Dalhousie could therefore claim that his Government had inherited the traditional right to annex such States when their rulers left no natural heirs unless they had adopted heirs with that Government's assent. Various units, big and small, were taken over in accordance with this "doctrine of lapse." But there was one great territory to which it could not be applied. Though Oudh had sought British protection, it had not forfeited its domestic autonomy; and that unhappily had meant the continuance and indeed the aggravation of gross misgovernment. Sober historians have described it as "fantastic in iniquity."<sup>2</sup> In vain successive Governors-General had complained of the bad effects in British India of this perpetual scandal on its borders; in vain they had warned the King of Oudh to put his house in order. To Dalhousie it seemed intolerable to go on standing by and doing nothing. He recommended drastic action as the only means by which

---

<sup>1</sup> Dispatch of 1848 (Muir, 351).

<sup>2</sup> E. Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (London, 1934), 407.

## THE BRITISH INVASION OF INDIA, 1600-1857

the undeniable misery of the common people of Oudh could be relieved. The authorities in London had usually been more hesitant than the man on the spot, but on this occasion they outpaced him. Dalhousie had proposed to take the kingdom under British administration without depriving the King of his throne and title. He was instructed to annex it outright.

Thus all India, and Burma too, came within the orbit of the British Raj—with one exception. The mountain kingdom of Nepal, on the slopes of the Himalayas, the home of the Gurkhas, a people as militant and fearless as the Sikhs, has never rendered allegiance to the British Crown. It was defeated, indeed, after a stubborn resistance in a war with the British in Bengal (1814-6), but the treaty of peace recognised Nepal as an independent sovereign state in a free and friendly relationship with Britain and the Indian Empire which has steadily grown stronger with the lapse of time. But everywhere else, from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, from the Indus to the Irawaddy, British rule, direct or indirect, had been established by 1857.

History must admit the greatness of the achievement. For India was not the only part of the world in which the energies of the British people were engaged between 1815 and 1857. Quickly recovering from the strain imposed on their finances and their social system by the predominant part they had played in saving the liberties of Europe from Napoleon, they were busy in their own little island taking advantage of its natural resources to win a long lead in the world's trade, and at the same time beginning to grapple with the worst social evils of the industrial revolution and to lay the foundations of liberal democracy. Nor were they free from trouble in Europe. There was more than once a risk of war with France and a risk, which materialised, of war with Russia. And meanwhile British colonists were streaming across the oceans and building up new communities in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. A remarkable feat in itself, the establishment of the British Raj seems still more remarkable in view of all that was happening elsewhere; and partly owing to the personal interest awakened by the rise of the Indian Civil Service, partly, perhaps, to the spirit of romance which still haunted the ancient East, it was the growth and achievement of the British Raj far more than the spread of British settlement in other continents or the later acquisition of tropical

dependencies that implanted in British minds, for good or ill, the consciousness of "empire," the belief that it was Britain's destiny, like old Rome's, *regere imperio populos*.

The alternative to a British India, it may be said once more, was not an independent India. Contact with Europe was unavoidable. Commercial relations were bound to merge into political relations, developing no less inevitably into an ascendancy which no Asiatic people in those days had the power to resist. That Britain rather than France or Russia acquired an Indian Empire was more than a proof of her material power and an opportunity of extending it. It was a moral challenge, a test of national character. "There we are," Burke had said at the outset of British rule in India; "there we are placed by the Sovereign Disposer; and we must do the best we can in our situation. The situation of man is the preceptor of his duty." In nineteenth-century Britain that challenge was confidently taken up. Not to a Wellesley or a Dalhousie only, but to most of their fellow-countrymen, it seemed as certain as it had seemed to any Roman that their *imperium* would give its subjects a safety and well-being they would not otherwise have got. Would a wholly impartial historian—if such there can ever be—maintain that in the circumstances they were wrong? Conquest is not necessarily or absolutely a bad thing for the conquered. It depends on the condition they are in at the time and on what the conqueror does to them. Might not the British conquest benefit a backward and disunited India as the Roman and the Norman conquests had so indubitably benefited a backward and disunited England?

---

<sup>1</sup> Burke's *Works* (London, 1826-7), iv. 44.

## CHAPTER II

# The Character of the British Raj

1757-1857

### *Company versus State*

**BRITISH RULE IN INDIA** made a bad beginning; but, if the first results of British conquest in the eighteenth century were deplorable for all concerned, it was mainly because the British authorities in England, politicians and business men alike, had failed to understand what had happened. The victor of Plassey understood. Clive realised that the "sovereignty" (as he put it) of Bengal and far more than Bengal was now within the Company's grasp; he realised too that the assumption of that sovereignty might well be "an object too extensive for a mercantile company," and in a remarkable letter to the elder Pitt he suggested that the British Government should step in and shoulder the task.<sup>1</sup> The inducements he proffered were materialistic—new provinces in India would be a more paying proposition than the old American colonies—but, whatever his motives, he was right in principle. For Plassey meant that the Company had suddenly become the dominant power over a vast Indian territory and had thereby incurred a great political responsibility. But its Directors in London—and the politicians at the time were as blind as the business men—shut their eyes to this plain fact. They acted as if the Company was still concerned only with trade. For the work of government they put a puppet prince on the throne of Bengal, and, when he disregarded their wishes, they put another in his place. Nobody on the spot had any doubt where the real authority lay. It was the Company's officials, down to the youngest, and the multitude of their Indian agents and hangers-on who were obeyed. But, while they were masters of the country, they did not govern it. They had power, but no responsibility. Human nature being what it is, the consequences were inevitable. The Company's officials had always been paid a purely nominal salary on the understanding that they were free to engage in trade on their own account. Now they could not only use all kinds of improper pressure to push their private interests, but could

---

<sup>1</sup> January 7, 1759 (Muir, 61).

repudiate or annul the taxes and restrictions which the nominal government imposed. Such Indian traders as were not lucky enough to share the spoil were soon facing ruin. The revenues of Bengal fell sharply—and so did the revenues of the Company. Clive, who had returned to England, was sent back to put things right; and, materialist as he was, he was shocked at “the scene of anarchy, confusion, bribery, corruption and extortion.”<sup>1</sup> The measures he took to clear and cleanse the air proved ineffective as soon as he had gone, and it was not till 1772 when Warren Hastings, the ablest of his subordinates, became Governor that that black period of irresponsible misrule was ended.

Meantime public opinion in England had become aware that something was wrong in India, and, if they can be blamed for their earlier blindness, Parliament and its leaders may perhaps be given credit for the rapidity with which they acted, once the facts were known. Within fifteen years the character of the connection between Britain and India was transformed.

Political, like private, motives are rarely pure, and there were several causes operating together to bring about this revolution. There was first the old economic factor. Hard-headed merchants might not have worried overmuch about the sufferings of the Indian people if they had not been their customers; but good trade with India required at least a measure of good government in India, and, since the Company had failed to provide it, it was clearly the business of the State to take control. This economic argument for reform in India was soon strengthened by events on the other side of the world. The American Revolution seemed to have swung the commercial balance of the Empire over from west to east. If, as was thought, the loss of the American colonies meant the loss of their trade, the Indian trade had become far more important. That was one reason why British statesmen, both Tory and Whig, spoke of British India as “the brightest jewel that *now remained* in His Majesty’s Crown.”<sup>2</sup>

The second motive for parliamentary interference with the Company’s operations in India might be described as constitutional. Those operations had been converted almost overnight from quiet trading into politics, and politics on

<sup>1</sup> J. Malcolm, *Life of Clive* (London, 1836), ii. 379 (Muir, 76).

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, xxii (1782), 1285.

a grand scale. Subjects of the Crown were making war, fighting battles, overthrowing governments, occupying territory, under the authority not of the Crown but of a company. Clive and Warren Hastings seemed almost as free from constitutional control as the proconsuls who destroyed the Roman Republic. Nor was it only what was done in India that seemed as irregular as it was unprecedented. Servants of the Company were returning home, still in the prime of life and with great private fortunes, and these "Nabobs," as they were called, not content to set up as *nouveaux riches* in society, were buying seats in Parliament, as in the eighteenth century they could easily be bought, and invading the very citadel of the constitution. "The riches of Asia have been poured upon us," exclaimed the elder Pitt in the House of Lords, "and have brought with them not only Asiatic luxury but, I fear, Asiatic principles of government." That, no doubt, was overdrawing the picture, but it was clearly high time to stop the growth of an insidious *imperium in imperio*. Whether in making war or in making fortunes, British subjects anywhere under the British flag must be made to obey the British Government.

### *The Humanitarian Movement*

The third motive for bringing British doings in India under State control was simpler and more widely felt. It might be called a sense of decency. Rumours of events in India led to the appointment of parliamentary committees in 1772 to inquire into the facts, and their reports revealed what had happened after Plassey. Amongst other things it appeared that Clive himself had accepted enormous sums from the puppet prince he put on the throne of Bengal—no less than £250,000, together with an estate worth £30,000 a year. Clive was quite unrepentant. Such "presents," he told the House of Commons, were a normal and indispensable factor in dealings between Indian rulers. He could have obtained much more. "I am astonished," he said, "at my own moderation." The House accepted his defence, but the fact that his conduct had been widely and sharply questioned so preyed on his disordered mind that it was probably one of the reasons for his tragic death in 1774. A similar question of decency lay at the core of the attack

---

<sup>1</sup> January 2, 1770. Quoted by B. Williams. *Life of William Pitt* (London, 1913), ii, 269.

on Warren Hastings some ten years later. Hastings was of purer metal than Clive. He took no "presents." He returned from India a relatively poor man. Most of the charges levelled at him were grossly exaggerated or quite unfounded, the outcome of personal spite or party factitiousness at its worst. But he had forcibly obtained large sums of money not from the Indian people but from wealthy rulers, and not for himself but to provide the means by which alone he could maintain his desperate fight to preserve the British foothold in India in the war with France.<sup>1</sup> In the end Hastings was acquitted on all counts, but it was the charge of extortion which had decided the cool-minded younger Pitt to acquiesce in the impeachment. For he refused to accept the plea which was urged in Hastings' defence as in Clive's—that nothing had been done which was not a commonplace of Indian custom. "Though the constitution of our Eastern possessions," he said, "is arbitrary and despotic, still it is the duty of every administration in that country to conduct itself by the rules of justice and of liberty."<sup>2</sup> Most historians are now agreed that Hastings was unfairly treated, but none would question the rightness of Pitt's principles. And to the average Englishman it was as clear as it was to Pitt that there could not be different standards of behaviour for Englishmen at home and Englishmen abroad. Twenty years later the same sort of feeling was expressed by one of the greatest and most typical of British soldiers. To Arthur Wellesley, winning on Indian battlefields the reputation that was one day to be crowned at Waterloo, the misgovernment of India, the corruption and tyranny and incapacity of Indian rulers, seemed disgusting in itself, but trebly disgusting when Englishmen connived at or acquiesced in it.<sup>3</sup> It outraged his instinctive sense of decency and order, his British faith in clean, firm, efficient government.

Ordinary Englishmen who knew the facts probably felt about them what Wellington felt; and, as it happened, there was another strong current of public opinion flowing in the same direction. Just at this time the great humanitarian movement was gathering force in England. Allied on the one hand with the philosophy of the American and French revolutions and on the other hand with the Evangelical

---

<sup>1</sup> The results of the latest and fullest research on this question will be found in C. C. Davies, *Warren Hastings and Oudh* (Oxford, 1939).

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, xxvi (1786), 110.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*, 102.



revival of a positive Christianity, it awakened the British conscience to the fact that the weak and backward peoples of the world, with whom European explorers and traders were now increasingly in contact, could not be excluded by a colour bar from the rights of man or the grace of God. Naturally the first assault by the philanthropists was directed at the crudest violation of human claims and Christian principles—the African slave system which had grown up in European colonies overseas. In 1772 the long and ultimately victorious anti-slavery crusade opened with the outlawing of slavery on British soil. In 1787 Wilberforce and Clarkson began the campaign against the Slave Trade.

The appeal of India to the humanitarian spirit was different, but no less cogent. Indian peasants were not being torn away from their homes like the Africans to a life of slavery beyond the ocean, but they were the victims of gross misgovernment and all the misery it meant in lands where Britain had the power, if she had the will, to govern. To some humane observers, moreover—to Burke, for example, with his deep respect for antiquity and tradition—the scandal seemed blacker in that its scene was not the forests and jungles of primitive tropical Africa but a country which, whatever its political weakness and misfortunes, possessed a history and a civilisation older than those of Europe. But, except in his unbalanced attitude to Warren Hastings, Burke's indignation did not cloud his common sense. He did not ask Britain to wash her hands of the whole business, to leave India to the chaos of internal strife or to the French or other potential invaders. He accepted, as has been seen, the British "situation" in India, but he insisted that it implied a duty. How that duty was faced and done, he declared, would "turn out a matter of great disgrace or great glory to the whole British nation." And the first step was for Parliament to take. Its members must realise that the power which their fellow-countrymen had acquired in India had involved them in a responsibility, and it was in defining the nature of that responsibility that Burke first enunciated what has become known as the principle of "trusteeship" in the relations of dominant and dependent peoples. "All political power which is set over men ought to be exercised ultimately for their benefit." Its possession and use are "in the strictest sense a trust."

---

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, iv., 11, 44.

## THE ACT OF 1784

### *The Act of 1784*

Thus the establishment of a new *régime* in British India was not prompted only by commercial sagacity or constitutional propriety: it was also prompted by the recognition that the fate of countless helpless Indians had somehow or other come to depend on Britain and that in common human decency she must do what she could to help them. When the younger Pitt accepted in 1784 the advice which Clive had given to his father in 1757, he gave the House of Commons two reasons for bringing British activities in India under effective control by the State. The first was "to confirm and enlarge the advantages derived by this country from its connexion with India." The second was "to render that connexion a blessing to the native Indians."

Pitt's Act of 1784, which was to remain with minor modifications the governing instrument of British rule in India till 1858, was in one sense a compromise. It did not transfer the governance of British India from the Company to British ministers and Parliament directly. The Company's administrative system was retained. The officials from the Governor-General downwards were still to be appointed by the Directors. But, while the Company was left in more or less undisputed charge of the commercial field, all its political activities were now to be supervised, its orders checked and, if need be, changed, and its officials, if need be, recalled by a Board of Control, consisting of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, one of the Secretaries of State and four other Privy Councillors. In practice the senior Privy Councillor became the President of the Board, usually with a seat in the Cabinet. On urgent occasions the Board sent its instructions direct to India over the Directors' heads. It was a dual and rather cumbrous system, but it served its purpose. The Directors, backed by a clique in the House of Commons devoted to the "Indian interest," still had great influence; but the power now lay in the last resort with the Board and its President and with Parliament to whom they were responsible, and on all vital issues that power was effectively exerted. The President of the Board, in fact, became something like a Secretary of State for India.

More important, perhaps, than the administrative provisions of the Act was the new spirit of trusteeship that inspired it. Steps to prevent corruption and extortion had

---

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches* (1806 ed.), i, 118.

already been taken by Warren Hastings. Cornwallis, the first Governor-General under the Act of 1784, himself the soul of honour, carried on the purifying process. Officials' salaries were substantially increased, and this facilitated the strict enforcement of the new regulations forbidding them to engage in private trade or to receive "presents." But such legal safeguards against the old malpractices were fast becoming needless. One pecuniary scandal, the very sordid business of the Nabob of Arcot's debts, was not finally liquidated till 1814 and 1830, mainly owing to the influence of the creditors in the House of Commons; but long before that the cleaner atmosphere which, fostered by men like Burke and Pitt, was permeating the politics of eighteenth-century Britain, was spreading to British administration in India. And the vital spark of this moral revolution was the knowledge that responsibility was now yoked with power. The new generation of officials were plainly told that their task now was not to trade but to govern. The regulations of the college founded by Governor-General Wellesley at Calcutta for the training of cadets reminded them that they were to regard themselves no longer as the "agents of a commercial concern" but as the "ministers and officers of a powerful Sovereign," charged with "sacred trusts" for "the good government" of British India and "the prosperity and happiness" of its peoples.<sup>1</sup> Before long, indeed, the Company had ceased to be a company in anything but name. By the Act of 1813 it was deprived of its monopoly of Eastern trade except with China and in tea. The Act of 1833 annulled those remaining privileges and required the Company to "close their commercial business with all convenient speed." Thenceforward, till its final extinction in 1858, it was no longer in any sense a body of merchants, it was purely an administrative machine.

### *The New Administration*

It was as the main crank of this machine that the Indian Civil Service (as it was ultimately called) made its name. More carefully chosen than in earlier days and after 1853 recruited by open competition, it drew to its ranks some of the best brains and character in the British Isles. In many families a tradition of service in India was established which was to last for at least three generations. The pay was now

---

<sup>1</sup> Minute, August 18, 1800, quoted in R. Coupland, *The American Revolution and the British Empire* (London, 1930), 194.

## JUSTICE

high by Indian standards, but not more than a first-rate man would normally have earned in a profession or in business in Britain, and not extravagant in view of the fact that he had to live in a strange and unhealthy country, and often, since children could not be kept there long, to maintain two homes. But it was much more than financial security that tempted those young men to spend the best part of their lives in exile. It was the attractiveness of the work they had to do. The great majority of Indian civilians became, after a period of apprenticeship, Collectors, but the duty of assessing and collecting the land revenue, which had given this post its title in earlier days, was now by no means their only duty. They were the District Officers, the men on each of whom the direct responsibility lay for the welfare of an area often bigger than an English county and containing perhaps a million or more people. A time was coming when the work this entailed would include almost every kind of "social service," but in this period of expansion the District Officer's main task—and to that end he was given both judicial and executive authority as a magistrate and head of the police—was to establish the Rule of Law. And, however distasteful that may have been to the men who had maintained a different sort of rule before the British came, there can be no question that the poor submissive countryfolk were glad of it. It meant nothing to them in those days that their lord and master was a man of a strange race and faith from overseas. Anything like "nationalist" feeling was as yet quite inconceivable. The Indian peasant was used to being governed by "foreigners" from some other part of India: and these particular governors brought with them something which he prized perhaps above all else, but which in the age of anarchy he had never known—justice.

### *Justice*

Justice, if it is to be recognised as such by the people to whom it is administered, must take full account of their own laws, customs and traditions; and it was one of the many proofs of Warren Hastings' understanding of the problems of Indian government that the legal system he established in Bengal was based on the recognition and execution of Indian law, both Moslem and Hindu. In the Indian treatment of crime there was much, no doubt, that had to be altered or discarded; but in England at that time the notion was current that the merits of all English law, civil as well as

criminal, were of universal validity and that it could be applied as easily and beneficially in India as in England. Happily that insular illusion was short-lived, and the principle which governed the reconsideration of the legal system of British India under the new *régime* was Hastings' principle. "On a large view of the state of Indian legislation," said the parliamentary committee whose report preceded the Act of 1833, the next great landmark in Indian policy after the Act of 1784, "it is recognised as an indisputable principle that the interests of the Native subjects are to be consulted in preference to those of Europeans whenever the two come into competition; and that therefore the laws ought to be adapted rather to the feelings and habits of the Natives than to those of Europeans." The Act accordingly declared that in the consolidation and codification of Indian laws, which was shortly to be undertaken, "due regard" was to be had "to the rights, feelings and peculiar usages of the people." Those instructions were duly observed by the first Indian Law Commission, on whose labours and especially those of its ablest member, Macaulay, the great Indian Penal Code of 1860 and the later Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure were founded.

This liberal policy was not confined to law. It operated also in administration. The first-rate men who took the lead in the civil service under the new dispensation—Munro, Metcalfe, Malcolm and Elphinstone are the four outstanding names—differed in their opinions as to the right method of dealing with the primary problem of Indian administration, the problem of land tenure; but the only reason for their disagreement was their desire to respect the customs of the different parts of India in which they happened to be working.

The significance of this juridical and administrative policy should not be overlooked. It meant that the cardinal principle, which was to inform Britain's relations with the British Colonies now fast acquiring self-government and one day to grow into the free nations of the Commonwealth, was regarded as equally applicable to British India, to Indians no less than, say, to French Canadians—the principle that the mainspring of British liberty, respect for individuality, must extend beyond individuals to communities, that peoples as well as persons should be free to develop their own character in their own way for the common weal, that national freedom

---

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Committee of Parliament on the Affairs of the East India Company, 1832, Parl. Pap. 1831-2, viii, 21: (Muir, 305).*

and differentiation (to use modern terms) are the foundation stones of international unity.

There was genuine liberalism in this tolerant attitude to Indian custom, but it was also prompted by counsels of expediency. The effectiveness, if not the existence, of British administration in India, it was held, depended in the last resort on the assent or at least the acquiescence of its myriad peoples; and assent or acquiescence might easily give place to antagonism and even to open rebellion if the ignorant masses were given reason to believe that the underlying purpose of their new foreign rulers was to impose on them a foreign way of life. Naturally this salutary doctrine was applied with special care in the matter of religion. From first to last the British authorities in India have not merely treated its creeds with scrupulous respect; they have avoided giving ground for the slightest suspicion that they regarded it as part of their task in India to propagate their own Christian faith. To the eighteenth-century Evangelicals—and they have had their latter-day successors—such an attitude seemed almost impiously faint-hearted, but even Wilberforce's influence was not strong enough to break it down. Till 1813 missionaries were virtually barred from entering the Company's territories—the heroic Carey had almost to force his way into Bengal—and, if after 1813 they were admitted, it was, for some time, only under licence and firm control.

There was one notable exception to this rule of strict neutrality in religion, and, as the saying goes, it proved it. For the suppression of *suttee* was decided on only after long and almost timid hesitation. Whether, as the Hindu pundits insisted, *suttee* was a vital element in the practice of Hinduism or not, it was by any ordinary standards of humanity in the nineteenth century a ghastly survival of primitive barbarism. It required a dead man's widow or widows and often other womenfolk as well to be burned alive on his funeral pyre. Unwillingness to face the terrible ordeal was treated as impiety and dealt with often by force or drugs. In the period under review the rite was falling out of use in southern India and in parts of northern India where Moslem influence was strong: Metcalfe had no difficulty in stopping it at Delhi in 1811. Some of the Maratha States had abolished it of their own accord. But it was still terribly rife in Bengal, in the Rajput States, and in the Punjab. No less than 707 *suttees* were officially reported in Bengal in 1817 and 839 in 1818. For the next eight years the average was nearly 600. At last,

in 1829, Bentinck did what no previous Governor-General had dared to do. He realised his "awful responsibility." Trusted advisers, British and Indian, warned him that he was endangering "the very safety of the British Empire in India." But "I should be guilty," he declared, "of little short of the crime of multiplied murder if I could hesitate in the performance of this solemn obligation."<sup>1</sup> So he issued a regulation making *suttee* culpable homicide, and, if involuntary, murder. There were enlightened Hindus—Ram Mohan Roy was the boldest of them—who had come to loathe the brutal business as much as any Christian. But Bentinck's act was bitterly denounced in orthodox Hindu circles, and a petition with 800 signatures was submitted to the Privy Council praying for its repeal. Outside British India the task of suppressing *suttee* was more difficult. Only gradually were the Rajput princes induced to give it up by British promises or threats. Its abolition in the Punjab, where the rite was practised with a grim ferocity—10 wives and 300 concubines perished on one Sikh noble's pyre in 1844—had to wait for the coming of British rule. From about 1860 onwards it may be said that *suttee* was outlawed throughout all India. Such indulgence in it as occurred from time to time was surreptitious and, if detected, punished. The last known case was in 1937 near Agra.<sup>2</sup>

Other survivals of a darker age could be more easily handled. The Thugs, a sect who were trained to strangle and rob wayside travellers—over 3,000 such murders were reported in five years—professed to regard their victims as sacrifices to the goddess Kali; but their suppression in 1836, again by Bentinck, could scarcely be denounced as an illegitimate attack on Hinduism. It was the same with human sacrifice in the highlands of Orissa, nor could infanticide or castration be defended. Slavery was harder to destroy because it was so deeply rooted in social life, both Moslem and Hindu; and, as in the British West Indies, its destruction was a gradual business. The slave trade, which for centuries past had brought slaves to India from the Arab markets in East Africa, was steadily stifled by a series of regulations from 1807 onwards. The legal status of slavery was abolished in British India in 1843. Finally, the Penal Code of 1860 prohibited the owning of slaves as well as trading in them.

---

<sup>1</sup> Minute, no. 8, 1829 (Muir, 293).

<sup>2</sup> For details of the rite and its suppression see E. Thompson, *Suttee* (London, 1928).

## EDUCATION

### *Education*

So far the main effect of British rule on Indian civilisation may be said to have been negative. Unless they were impelled to interfere by standards of humanity which all the western world had now attained, the British authorities stood aloof and neutral. But a people's mental or cultural life needs active nourishment. If a community is to maintain its own peculiar character, then the essentials of its civilisation—its modes of speech, its arts and letters, all the heritage of its thought and custom—must be handed on from generation to generation. In other words the survival and equally, of course, the development and improvement of a people's particular qualities are a matter of education. This was another thing that Warren Hastings understood. He initiated the study of Indian languages, employed Indian scholars on the collection and translation of Indian laws, and established "an academy for the study of the different branches of the sciences taught in the Mahomedan schools."<sup>1</sup> In the same spirit the Act of 1813 provided for the annual expenditure of one lac of rupees (£10,000) on "the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences"—a remarkable step for a parliament to take which made no public grant for education in its own country till twenty years later. As Elphinstone pointed out in 1824, there was all the more need for such encouragement of Indian culture in view of the damage done to it by foreign conquest. "We have dried up the fountains of native talent. . . . The actual learning of the nation is likely to be lost and the productions of former genius to be forgotten. Something should surely be done to remove this reproach."<sup>2</sup> But it was not easy—for two main reasons. In the first place British conquest had put all the power in British India in the hands of British soldiers and officials; and intelligent and ambitious Indians who wanted to serve their country—and, as will be seen, innumerable minor posts in the administration were necessarily from the outset filled by Indians—or to advance their private interests in business or the professions were naturally tempted, almost indeed obliged, not only to learn English but to adapt themselves as far as possible to the ideas and customs of the ruling race. What practical use was the

Dispatch, February 21, 1784 (Muir, 151).  
Minute, March, 1824 (Muir, 298).



## THE CHARACTER OF THE BRITISH RAJ, 1757-1857

study of the ancient poetry and philosophy of India under such conditions? In the second place British conquest had brought India within the scope of European civilisation on its material side. In India now, as in Europe, "progress" was to be achieved by the application of modern science. But India's learning came from the past. Like China or Japan she knew no modern science. So again it might seem that the native culture was doomed to be overborne by that of the invaders.

It was a real problem—a problem of "culture contact" as sociologists nowadays call it—and in due course the British authorities had to face it. For it soon became clear that Government must do far more to provide and maintain education in India than it was induced to do in England till the last third of the nineteenth century. There were reactionaries, no doubt, who regarded the education of Indians as even more dangerous than the education of the English poor; but the weight of public opinion was behind Macaulay when he said, "I will never consent to keep them ignorant in order to keep them manageable, or to govern them in ignorance in order that we may govern them long."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, after much discussion, an educational programme for British India was drawn up in 1854 by Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control.<sup>2</sup> It provided for the creation of a Department of Public Instruction in each Province for the promotion of both elementary and higher education. Schools and colleges, maintained wholly or partly at Government cost, were to be linked in a co-ordinated scheme with examining universities on the London model at the summit. Startling as it was to conservative-minded Indians, there was little controversy over Wood's recommendation that education should be provided for girls as well as boys. The one really vexed question and the one that sharply affected the far-reaching cultural issue was the question of language. Elementary schools were not directly concerned, since children could only be taught in their own vernacular and only such simple subjects as belonged to the common stock of western and eastern culture. But what of higher education? What subjects were to be taught in the high schools and colleges and to be examined in by the universities? And in what language? Those questions had been debated twenty years

---

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, ser. III, cxxviii (1853), 759.

<sup>2</sup> Court of Director's Dispatch of 1850. Sir Charles Wood became the first Viscount Halifax: the present Viscount is his grandson.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

earlier in the well-known minute written by Macaulay when he was serving his four-year term of office as-first law member of the Governor-General's Council at Calcutta. Macaulay was always sure of his opinions, but never more so than on this issue. The choice lay, he pointed out, between the English language and the great treasury of modern literature and science to which it was the key and the classical languages of the East, Arabic and Sanskrit, whose literature belonged to the past and was incapable of conveying to its readers the facts and thoughts of modern life. "A single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."<sup>1</sup> Macaulay overstated his case with an arrogance and assurance of which nobody of his standing could be guilty nowadays: but his sense was better than his sensibility and it prevailed. It was decided, with the full assent of the Indian *intelligentsia* of the time, to make English the vehicle of higher education in British India—a momentous decision the consequence of which will be apparent later on.

### *Economic Development*

There were other and more indirect effects of the establishment of the British Raj on Indian thought and custom. By their mere presence in the country British officials and soldiers and merchants set a multitude of subtle and incalculable forces running over the time-baked surface of Indian life. The main impact, nevertheless, was not cultural: it was economic. The economic motive, the original motive which had brought Britain and India together, had by no means ceased to operate. The fact that the Company had been converted from an instrument of British trade into an instrument of British government did not mean, of course, that trade was left unattended and inactive. On the contrary, the withdrawal of the Company's monopoly opened the field to any British firm that chose to take it. What happened? What was the material aspect of the British Raj?

It should be noted to begin with that the British never attempted, like the Portuguese or the Dutch, to establish a national monopoly, to exclude all foreign rivals from Indian trade and shipping. British merchants, it is true, were constantly demanding a more restrictive policy. One of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Minute, February 2, 1835: Macaulay's *Speeches* (ed. G. M. Young, Oxford, 1935), 349. Extracts in Muir, 298-300.

charges levied against the Company's monopoly was that it allowed more Indian exports to be brought to Britain in foreign ships than in British. But the authorities refused to interfere. They had been schooled by Adam Smith, and they held that foreign competition should be met not by artificial barriers but by lowering British costs.<sup>1</sup> During and after the Napoleonic wars various western countries other than Britain were doing a substantial trade with India. American ships, in particular, were treated at British-Indian ports almost as if they were not foreign ships.<sup>2</sup>

In this connexion it may be noted that foreign shipping benefited as much as British from the suppression of the pirates who for ages past had preyed on sea-borne trade along all the coasts of the Indian Ocean from the Red Sea to Singapore. Except for Dutch operations in the East Indian archipelago, that freeing of the seas was accomplished by British naval power unaided by that of any other country.

Nor, of course, was British India excluded from the scope of the historic transformation of British fiscal policy in the 'forties. Already before then, much of the cramping network of transit and *octroi* duties inside India had been broken down. By 1857 the political unification of India had been given its economic counterpart in complete internal free trade. And, when the same unifying process—the centralisation of state finance and the introduction of a uniform coinage were other aspects of it—brought about a single customs-tariff for all British India, it was a low tariff, framed for revenue only, and it made little differentiation between British and foreign goods. Soon after 1857 all preferences on British goods and British shipping were abolished.

Meantime the character of British-Indian trade was changing. In the eighteenth century, it will be remembered, it had been mainly an exchange of Indian manufactured goods for British bullion. The industrial revolution upset this balance. In the first place it created a new demand for Indian raw materials. Cotton, hides, oil-seeds began to be shipped to Britain in increasing quantities. Plantations in company or private ownership, hitherto prohibited except for indigo, were now permitted for jute, coffee, tea. The value of Indian

---

<sup>1</sup> See the correspondence between Dundas and Wellesley in 1800: S. J. Owen, *Selection from Wellesley's Despatches* (London, 1877), 696-718.

<sup>2</sup> For the friendly treatment of American shipping see Holden Furber, *The Beginnings of American Trade with India, 1784-1812* in *The New England Quarterly*, June 1938.

exports rose to nearly £8 million in 1834-5 and to over £23 million in 1855-6. In the second place the new British industries began not only to supply the British market with articles it had previously obtained at a higher cost from India but to invade the Indian market. Imports rose side by side with exports from a value of £4½ million in 1834-5 to that of nearly £13½ million in 1855-6.

This rapid growth of Indian trade was greatly aided by the fact that the Government had begun the huge task of transforming the material equipment of India from that of a medieval into that of a modern state. This process was to reach its climax later in the century, but much had been accomplished by 1857. A large part of the country had been surveyed. Measures had been taken to develop mineral resources, especially coal and iron, to conserve forests, and to improve the breeding of horses and sheep. But the most important and beneficent achievements were in the field of communications and irrigation. At the outset of the nineteenth century the facilities for travelling or dispatching goods or sending letters from one part of India to another were still quite rudimentary; and no decision, perhaps, was taken in this period that in the end altered more profoundly the social and economic life of India than the decision of 1853 to press on with the building of railways. Already by 1857 the projected main lines had been begun. Almost as important was the construction and extension of the road system. By 1857 the Grand Trunk Road had linked Calcutta to Delhi and was pushing on towards Lahore and Peshawar; and all over India a multitude of lesser roads and innumerable bridges had been built. Steamship services had been provided on the Ganges, the Indus and the Irawaddy. The ports of Calcutta and Bombay had been improved, and Rangoon equipped with lights, buoys and pilots. Letters could now be sent comparatively quickly from one end of India to the other at the uniform postage-rate of half an anna, or three farthings; and, a portent indeed in the "unchanging East," Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Agra, Peshawar could now communicate by telegraph; its wires already ran for over 4,000 miles. More important still was the beginning of large-scale irrigation; for even more urgent than the need for better transport and communications was thirsty India's need for water. To meet it in the northern plains the great Ganges Canal was planned. By 1857 it was already more than twice

as long as any canal in Europe : 525 of the projected 900 miles had been cut. It was expected, when complete, to irrigate about 1½ million acres and to save tens of thousands of Indian peasants from the recurrent grip of famine.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the British Raj had not only given India an external security, an internal peace, and an administration of law and justice such as she had never known before ; it had also begun to provide her with a material equipment and with economic opportunities she could never in those days have obtained for herself. Human weakness, no doubt, had been exhibited in the process ; wrong had been done, mistakes made ; but, taken as a whole, the British people were entitled to be proud of the new character their association with the people of India had assumed since the days of Burke. True, the first, the selfish purpose of Pitt's Act had by no means been lost sight of. Britain had secured a good strategic position in southern Asia, and British trade with India had been substantially increased. But the second purpose had been quite as honestly fulfilled. Far beyond what could have been conceived in 1784 British rule in India had been made into "a blessing to the native Indians." High-minded Englishmen of the next generation had as little doubt as Wellesley or James Mill that the British achievement in India was not only great but good. "We have founded," said Bentinck, "British greatness upon Indian happiness."<sup>2</sup> "Few governments," wrote James Mill's more famous son, the apostle of modern liberalism, "even under far more favourable circumstances, have attempted so much for the good of their subjects."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Dalhousie's Minute, February 28, 1856. Excerpts in Muir, 352-78.

<sup>2</sup> Minute of 1805 (Muir, 283).

<sup>3</sup> *Memorandum on the Improvements in the Administration of India during the Last Thirty Years* (drafted by John Stuart Mill), Parliamentary Papers, 1857-8, xliii, 35.

## CHAPTER III

# Bureaucracy<sup>1</sup> and Nationalism

1857—1909

### *The Indian Mutiny*

“**M**Y PARTING HOPE AND prayer for India,” wrote Dalhousie at the close of the great dispatch in which he summed up the work of his ten-year proconsulate, “is that in all time to come the reports of the presidencies and provinces under our rule may form in each successive year a happy record of peace, prosperity and progress.”<sup>2</sup> Within fifteen months that tranquil prospect had been shattered by the sudden outbreak of strife and bloodshed known as the Indian Mutiny.

Up to a point “mutiny” is the proper word. It was the sepoys of the Bengal Army, recruited mainly from Moslems and high-caste Hindus from more martial areas than Bengal, who began the revolt and did most to sustain it. And the reason why they mutinied is clear. Despite all the official caution described in the last chapter, they had come to believe that the ultimate intention of their British rulers was to subvert their faith. This suspicion was strengthened when, with a view to the need of garrisons in Burma, Dalhousie proposed and his successor, Canning, decreed that enlistments should be made for service outside as well as inside India—a deliberate attempt, it seemed, to break down the rule of caste which forbade the crossing of salt water. Suspicion became certainty when new rifles were served out which necessitated the biting-off greased cartridge ends—an unpardonable blunder, since the grease was animal fat, and the cow was sacred to Hindus and the pig the essence of pollution to Moslems. Ill-disciplined, proud of their warlike traditions, and measuring British power by the small British force in India, the Bengal regiments were spurred by this last wanton insult, as they conceived it, to rise and overthrow the British Raj.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> “Bureaucracy” best expresses the method by which British India was governed in this period, i.e., by a Government not responsible to the people it governed and operating through a civil service of which its own members were the official chiefs. “Bureaucracy,” however, suggests that all the officials were working in offices at their desks, whereas, as has been seen, most of them were out in the country districts.

<sup>2</sup> Minute of February 28, 1856, cited above.

<sup>3</sup> There were 233,000 sepoys in India in 1856 and 45,300 British troops.

The sequel is a familiar story that need not be repeated here. One point, however, may be noted—the shortness of the struggle. It began in May, 1857. The issue was decided before the end of that year. In June, 1858, it was all over.

It was a mutiny, but more than a mutiny. It was backed by malcontents in Oudh who had not forgiven the annexation and its consequences. Here and there the Marathas rose in the hope of restoring their old confederacy. Though there was little overt disturbance elsewhere, there was dangerous tension at most points where sepoy garrisons were stationed; and, if the mutineers had shown signs of gaining the upper hand in the north, the scope of the rebellion would probably have been far wider. For behind the particular grievances of the Bengal Army lay a more general and impalpable discontent, not indeed among the mass of the people, who had no quarrel with the men who had brought a new peace and lawfulness to their village life, but among those who had been the governing class before the British came to usurp the prestige and emoluments and all the other advantages of place and power. And behind that again was the national reaction of one civilisation under pressure from another, of an old order threatened by a new, of Asia invaded by Europe. Undoubtedly the energy and efficiency of Dalhousie's administration had stiffened that reaction. Did not his annexation mean that very soon not an acre of Indian soil would be governed any longer in the old Indian way? Nor could old-fashioned Indians, Hindu or Moslem, observe without alarm the grip that modern science was riveting so quickly on their ancient land. Those long lines of steel, those engines belching steam and flame, those magical electric wires—was there not something diabolical about it all? Ignorantly and dimly, but with a quite true instinct, they realised that under the impact of the West with all its material power the East could not remain unchanged.

But if the outbreak was more than a mutiny, it was not a national rebellion against foreign rule. Some sepoy regiments fought bravely beside the British. The Sikhs made no attempt to recover their independence: on the contrary Sikh and other Punjab volunteers marched to join the British force at Delhi. Southern India, on the whole, stayed quiet. Except the redoubtable Rani of Jhansi, none of the leading Princes, who held the strategic keys of Central India, joined in the revolt. Canning, indeed, who had succeeded Dalhousie, went so far as to describe them as "breakwaters to the storm

## THE INDIAN MUTINY

which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave.” Nor was there any anti-British feeling on India’s borders. Dost Muhammad at Kabul was scrupulously faithful to his treaty of friendship with the British-Indian Government. Nepal sent a force to its aid in Oudh.

On the great mass of the population, the countryfolk, the Mutiny had little effect outside the areas of disturbance. Within those areas they cowered in their villages praying for the trouble to end; for, wherever orderly government broke down, the lawless elements—the bad characters, the broken men, the professional criminals—seized their chance and turned on their helpless neighbours, killing and looting. That aspect of the Mutiny was proof, if it were wanted, of the need for a strong administration in a country where so much that was primitive and barbarous still lurked beneath the crust of civilisation.

Limited though it was in range and short in duration, the Mutiny was none the less a terrible tragedy. Maybe a trial of strength some time between the old *régime* and the new could only have been avoided by a wisdom and capacity beyond the scope of ordinary men. Maybe, too, it served the peace and welfare of an India incapable of governing itself that the power of its alien governors should be so irresistibly displayed. But that in itself was bound to widen the gulf which nature had set between them. It was bad for both British and Indians to be made more conscious of the fact that the one was a ruling race and the other a subject people. And bitter memories made it worse—memories of the brutality bred of fear or of revenge. It took a long time for Englishmen to forget the atrocities committed by the mutineers, the massacre of women and children at Cawnpore, the murder of helpless isolated white folk here and there. It took longer still for Indians to forget the punishments exacted by the victors, the revival of the Maratha custom of execution at the cannon’s mouth,<sup>2</sup> the indiscriminate hangings and burnings in rebel districts, the venomous attacks on “Clemency” Canning’s efforts to restore the rule of law. Many individuals of both races, it is true, had learned a new trust and respect for one another as brothers in arms, but the story that presently was

---

<sup>1</sup> Thompson and Garratt, 468.

<sup>2</sup> Elphinstone executed some Maratha conspirators in this manner some 40 years before the Mutiny, “remarking at the time ‘that the punishment contained two valuable elements of capital punishment; it was painless to the criminal and terrible to the beholders.’” Sir T. E. Colebrooke, *Life of Elphinstone* (London, 1884), ii, 74-5.



told in British history books was mainly a story of British heroism and British victory, and for latter-day Indian patriots it has probably not been much comfort to reflect that the massive mid-Victorian memorial on Delhi Ridge to those who died in fighting down the Mutiny is inscribed with Indian as well as British names.

### *The New Dispensation*

The Mutiny precipitated two constitutional changes, the spirit of which was more important than their form.

In the first place the shock brought down the cumbrous structure erected by the Act of 1784. By the Act of 1858 the historic Company was at last dissolved. The Crown assumed direct charge of the government of India. Lord Stanley became the first Secretary of State for India, succeeded a few months later by Sir Charles Wood. The India Office took its place beside the Foreign Office and Colonial Office in Whitehall. The old system, as has been observed, had vested the control of Indian policy in the British Government, but its powers could be exercised more firmly and quickly now that the Company's intermediate machinery had been swept away. More significant than the change itself was the sense that it closed a chapter of Anglo-Indian history and opened a new one. More vividly even than the trial of Warren Hastings, the dramatic events of the Mutiny had reminded the British people of the fact of British rule in India and the responsibilities it entailed; and Queen Victoria was expressing, as so often, the instinctive human feelings of the general public when she desired her famous proclamation to breathe a spirit of "generosity, benevolence and religious toleration." "We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories," she declared, "by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects." The "ancient rites, usages and customs of India" would be respected. The government would be administered for the benefit of all its peoples. "In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward."<sup>1</sup>

The second constitutional change was the creation of Legislative Councils by the Indian Councils Act of 1861. The Mutiny had revealed the chasm of ignorance and

---

<sup>1</sup> Muir, 381-4.

misunderstanding that divided the rulers from the ruled in India; and it seemed foolish to continue, as Sir Bartle Frere put it, "to legislate for millions of people with few means of knowing except by a rebellion whether the laws suit them or not."<sup>1</sup> The Act accordingly provided for the nomination of a few "unofficial" members to sit on the Governor-General's Council and on the Provincial Councils, and in the Provinces the members duly nominated were mostly Indians. The powers, however, of these enlarged Councils were purely legislative. They could not even discuss the action of the Executive. They were akin to the *durbars* which Indian rulers had traditionally held in order to sound their subjects' opinions. But, if there was thus nothing new, nothing un-Indian, in the function allowed to these Councils, their form was the British form. In Canada, for example, the establishment of a legislative council with nominated "unofficial" members had marked the initial advance from military to civil government.

Another change, for which the time was ripe, if not overdue, was unhappily not made. The wisest British officials had long pleaded that Indians should be appointed not only to the lower posts in the administration—in which, of course, they had necessarily been employed in thousands from the beginnings of the Raj—but to posts of real power and responsibility. Munro had pointed out that the spread of British rule had meant the steady elimination of Indians from all effective share in the government of their own country: the result would be something more and worse than Indian discontent, a gradual deterioration of Indian character.<sup>2</sup> Malcolm, Elphinstone, Henry Lawrence felt the same. The strength of the case, indeed, had been admitted in the highest quarters. The Act of 1833 had prescribed that no native of British India "shall, by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office or employment" in the administration.<sup>3</sup> And Queen Victoria had now proclaimed "that so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in the service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity, duly

---

<sup>1</sup> *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*, 1918, known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, [Cd. 9109], par. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Minute of 1817; Thompson and Garratt, 657-9.

<sup>3</sup> Clause 87; Muir 304.

to discharge.”<sup>1</sup> Yet little was done to carry out those good intentions. In theory the Queen’s promise had already been fulfilled by the provision made in 1853 for the recruitment of the Civil Service by open competition : but the fact that few Indians could afford, and no strict high-caste Hindus would attempt, the voyage to London in order to compete was ignored. One Indian was admitted to the I.C.S. in 1864, three more in 1871. It cannot fairly be said that this protracted hesitation to carry out an accepted policy was due merely to the desire of British officials to monopolise all the places of real power. There were far fewer English-educated Indians then than there are now, and there was still a lingering distrust not so much of their “ability” as of their “integrity.” Time, of course, was to disprove the easy assumption, repudiated long before by Warren Hastings, that orientals were congenitally incapable of honest government; but it was not altogether an unnatural mistake. Englishmen had witnessed themselves the previous orgy of injustice and corruption in territories now under their own control. Some of them, too, remembering eighteenth-century England, may have reflected that political chastity is the hardest and often the last achievement of a civilised state.

### *The Indian Civil Service*

To regret the long delay in admitting Indians to the higher ranks of the public service which, after the Mutiny as before it, governed British India is not to disparage its actual character and achievements. No bureaucracy has ever been better officered. This was, indeed, the golden age of the I.C.S., and those Englishmen who were now entering it in increasing numbers—by the end of the century it was a thousand strong—were the pick of their countrymen. That wise and liberal-minded administrator, Cromer, called them “the flower of the youth of England”<sup>2</sup>; and it is sometimes forgotten that the service they gave to India meant so much loss to their own country—that British democracy, its politics and government, its professional and business life, were the poorer for the exile of so much ability and integrity and capacity for leadership. But the magnet drawing those young men away from home was stronger than ever now. In the period of expansion the District Officer had been mainly occupied in the primary task

<sup>1</sup> Muir, 383.

<sup>2</sup> *Ancient and Indian Imperialism* (London, 1910), 76, note.

of establishing law and order. Now he had many more positive duties than that of keeping the peace. Making roads and building bridges, helping to improve and market crops, defending the tenant against the landlord, providing against drought and famine, fighting plague and cholera and malaria and all the ills of primitive sanitation in a sun-baked land—to exhaust the list of his activities is impossible, since, until in later years he was relieved of some of them by the creation of technical departments, they covered everything he could find time to do for the protection and well-being of the poor and ignorant countryfolk entrusted to his care.

In the course of the last fifty years the growing complexity of government has involved a deplorable increase in his office-work, but in those days he could spend most of his time "touring" his district, pitching his tent by village after village, talking to their humble inhabitants, listening to their difficulties and grievances, settling their disputes. And there can be no doubt at all that, just as they had welcomed the new justice—especially in areas of Hindu-Moslem friction where the foreigner's impartiality was at once more effortless and more convincing just because he was neither a Hindu nor a Moslem—so now those innumerable Indian peasants were grateful for their rulers' friendly interest in their daily life. New-fangled regulations might be unintelligible and irritating, especially in the matter of sanitation; but in the end they could not help realising that whatever the masterful white man did was done with a genuine desire to help them. We are his children, they would say, and he is our *ma bap*, our mother and father. And to the best type of Englishman, as most of those District Officers were, it seemed well worth while to spend the thirty best years of his life six thousand miles from home on a job which gave him not only an exhilarating sense of power, but also—a rarer thing—the certainty that he was using it for other people's good.

Those happy relations with the great majority of the Indian people were easy for the average member of the I.C.S. to come by; but to attain a similarly friendly footing with the minority, the upper or educated class, was a far harder task, and one for which his very "Englishness" unfitted him. The trouble was not, as a general rule, that so-called "colour-feeling" from which Latin peoples are said to be relatively free. Nor was it sheer racial arrogance. Englishmen's race pride is real enough, but it is latent and rarely betrays itself unless it is directly challenged; and, if it is true that they find

it difficult to make friends with foreigners, it is due not so much to a sense of superiority as simply to a sense of difference. Deep-rooted in their insular temperament is an indifference to or distaste for what is strange, a distrust of what they cannot understand: and it needed a very unusual kind of Englishman to surmount the impalpable barriers between the eastern and the western way of life and thought and to understand or even, perhaps, to try to understand a personality, a mentality, so very strange, so very different from his own, as that of an educated Indian. It was easier, no doubt, in some cases than in others. Till recently at any rate, the normal Englishman has usually got on better with the simpler or more old-fashioned upper-class Indians than with some of the new middle-class *intelligentsia* which the spread of higher education in this period was rapidly creating, men who seemed to him to have more brains than character, the subtle-minded lawyer, the glib and cocksure journalist. But if British officials were sometimes handicapped by a temperamental antipathy as well as a lack of imagination, they have never as a class behaved with the discourtesy, still less, of course, the overbearing insolence that have marked the conduct of some other *Herrenvölker*. If they had the failings, they also had the virtues of the "English gentleman." What kept them apart from Indians of similar social standing and ability was not arrogance; it was an instinctive desire, when the day's work among all kinds and classes of Indians was done, to draw off and be themselves, so to speak, in a way they could not be in foreign company. There were only a few thousands of them stationed among the Indian millions, and they were cut off for years at a time from faraway England and subjected to the strains and influences of the alien Asiatic world all round them. It was with a sort of defensive instinct, therefore, that they held aloof, clinging to the way of life that made them English, building their foreign-looking Government Houses and offices and bungalows, zealously pursuing their English sports, running their English clubs, admitting Indians on occasion and as a duty to a social intercourse which, it must be remembered, could not be really close or equal as long as Indian women, Moslem and Hindu alike, were excluded from it. The India of the later nineteenth century was Kipling's India, and the brilliant drama he made of it was startlingly un-Indian. The scenery is Indian; the background and the wings are full of picturesque Indian folk; but the centre of the stage is occupied by English

people whose goings on are so much the same as those of their kinsmen in an English county that they seem almost to have transplanted to India little isolated bits of England. Generalisations are always dangerous and of course there were exceptions to this racial aloofness even in the official world and still more outside it. Strong personal ties were formed between British officers of the Indian Army and their *risaldars* and *subadars*. To-day the State educational system is mainly Indian in personnel, but there are many Indians still alive who remember with affection the friendship their British teachers gave them in times past. Indian Christians, too—there are over six million of them now—would be the first to extol the humanity and humility of the devoted company of British missionaries in India. Nevertheless, it is broadly true that the gulf which conquest had cut between the rulers and the upper classes of the ruled remained unbridged. Indeed the spread of Indian education widened it. "Our administration," Malcolm had written earlier on, "though just, is cold and rigid."<sup>1</sup> "Our people," Governor-General Hastings had echoed, "are too dry with the natives."<sup>2</sup> Seventy or eighty years later, an educated Indian might still respect these cold, dry British officials, aloof, Olympian, "heaven-born," but it was harder for him now than it had ever been to like them; for he was feeling the first throbs of a national self-consciousness which was bound in course of time to make him regard the mere presence of those alien rulers as a wound to his national pride.

Unhappily Indians were not only in contact with British gentlemen. Not every British civilian, nor every British soldier, maintained the high traditions of their service, and there were two or three thousand British business-men in India of various types and standing, most of whom, no doubt, were also gentlemen by upbringing or nature, but not all. The most discreditable pages of the British record in India since the Mutiny do not figure in the history books: they are concerned with a number of mean and petty personal incidents which betrayed the fact that there were Englishmen in India—and Englishwomen, too—who, whatever their own station, were capable of demanding from any Indian, whatever his, a deference inconceivable on any ground but race and, worse still, of enforcing the demand at times with unforgivable

<sup>1</sup> Thompson and Garratt, 281.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

insolence. Needless to say, such conduct was sternly reprobated by the authorities. "In India," said John Morley when he was Secretary of State in 1907, "bad manners are a political crime."<sup>1</sup> But public opinion in the British community at large failed to make it impossible for those incidents to happen; and no less deplorable in its way than those individual offences was the one notorious occasion on which that latent pride of race of the British community as a whole came suddenly to the surface. In 1883 the Viceroy, Ripon, whose other liberal measures will be mentioned later on, sponsored the so-called "Ilbert Bill," which made it possible for a European to be tried by an Indian for a criminal offence. At once the unofficial British community was up in arms; nor were the rank and file of the officials all on the Viceroy's side. The insults flung at Ripon recalled those flung at Canning. He bowed to the storm. The Bill was whittled down. It was a lesson in race-relations which no educated Indian could forget.<sup>2</sup>

### *Economic Development*

Meantime the Government of India was busily engaged in continuing the huge task of providing India with the material equipment of a modern country. Of a multitude of "public works" of every kind—roads, bridges, docks, schools, hospitals, prisons—the railways and the canals still kept the lead they had taken when Dalhousie began them. The cutting of canals was enormously extended, especially in the dry north-west. By the end of the century India possessed far and away the greatest system of irrigation in the world. To-day more than 32 million acres of British India are watered by Government works. Areas which had been nothing but an arid wilderness, growing only a few parched shrubs, inhabited only by a few primitive nomads, have been transformed into fertile garden-land. On much of it, particularly in the Punjab, tens of thousands of peasants from over-populated districts have been systematically settled in agricultural "colonies." While irrigation was thus helping to sustain a growing population, it was also helping to protect it from the worst of all the dangers that had threatened it in the past. With the

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Speeches* (London, 1909), 43.

<sup>2</sup> The Bill was drafted by Sir Courtenay Ilbert, then the Law Member of the Governor-General's Council. The issue arose because Indian members of the I.C.S. were now rising to the posts of District Judges. The final compromise was that a European tried by a District Judge could claim that half his jury should be European.

aid of the railways, bringing food from areas beyond the stricken belt, the spectre of starvation which had never ceased to haunt the Indian countryside was at last destroyed. Famine was still a grave disaster, not to be avoided by any human skill, but it no longer meant the sentencing of whole districts to a lingering death; its worst results now were unemployment and destitution to be met by the provision of direct relief and public works; and the ardour and efficiency with which the officials grappled with that task were as remarkable as the skill and daring of the engineers who planned and cut the great canals. Nothing, indeed, that the British have done in India has been purer in its motive or more beneficent in its effect.<sup>1</sup>

Almost as spectacular as the work of irrigation was the rapid expansion of the railways. Within fifty years of the Mutiny over 20,000 miles had been built; by 1920 over 35,000 miles. It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of this steel network, fed by tramways and new roads and linked with telegraph wires, in lifting India out of what was still a more or less medieval state of civilisation. "Railways," it was said in 1865, "may do for India what dynasties have never done: they may make India a nation."<sup>2</sup> But they did more than bring the varied and divided Indian peoples into contact and make them conscious of the fact that all of them were Indian; they did more, too, than help in killing famine and in maintaining order and in defending the frontier. Railways broke through the natural barriers which, since history began, had kept the countless villages of India isolated little units such as the villages of Europe had once been, feeding and housing and clothing themselves on a primitive economic basis. Now suddenly, owing to the railways and the complementary development of ports, sea-transport, commercial law and practice, and all the machinery of modern business, the products of the peasant's labour in his fields or at his craft became saleable and profitable far outside his own locality, not only anywhere in India but in the world at large. Indian wheat, in particular, was soon selling in the world-market, and prices soared from their poor local level to those fixed at Liverpool or Chicago. Other agricultural products shared in the growth of the export trade—rice, oilseeds, cotton, jute, tea. Their higher value meant a little rise in the peasant's standard of living—a little, not, unhappily, a great rise, partly

<sup>1</sup> Strangers to Kipling might well read *William the Conqueror in The Day's Work*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir E. Arnold, *Administration of Lord Dalhousie* (London, 1862-3), ii, 241.



because, in certain areas at least, the landlord took more than his due, partly because the peasant was slow to learn the need of saving money against bad seasons or a slump and succumbed with a fatal readiness to the money-lender's stranglehold, but mainly because the growth of trade was accompanied by an equally marked growth of population. The population of British India was estimated at 143 millions in 1861. The census of 1881 made it 198 millions; that of 1901, 231 millions.

There was another way in which the railways helped those multitudes to make a livelihood. By linking up coalfields, iron-mines and ports they facilitated the fuller development in India of the world-wide process of industrialisation. Indian Industry is still on a relatively minor scale: there are only 38 towns in India with a population above 100,000: over ninety per cent. of the people are still countryfolk. Nevertheless, by 1911, industry was employing 17½ million workers. At the outset the lead in industrial enterprise, as in banking, was taken by British business-men; but, as time went on, Indians acquired an increasing hold on both. There had always been a class of very wealthy men in India, and the new industrial progress, though at first it was eyed askance by high-caste Hinduism, was not to be sustained for long by an unnatural combination of purely foreign capital with purely Indian labour. Indian capitalism was to breed its Indian capitalists.

### *Growth of Trade*

Thus a growing stream of Indian exports was flowing overseas, aided by the shortening of the voyage to Europe when the Suez Canal was opened in 1869. Their total value rose from £53½ millions in 1870 to £69 millions in 1900 and £137 millions in 1910. In return came a similarly increasing flow of imports, valued at £33½ millions in 1870, at £51 millions in 1900, and at £86 millions in 1910. If Britain supplied the lion's share of imports, it was not with the help of preferential tariffs or other artificial aids. Between 1882 and 1894 there were no import duties except on a few special items. Before and after that period there was a general revenue duty levied at 10, 7½ and 5 per cent. at different times on imports coming from whatever country. Similarly there was no artificial restraint on the direction of Indian exports. All nations, in fact, were free to compete in the Indian trade, and, as time went on, the lead which the establishment of British rule had given to British trade was inevitably reduced.

# GROWTH OF TRADE

## Percentages of Exports (value) from India

			<i>To the United Kingdom</i>	<i>To other parts of the British Empire</i>	<i>To Foreign Countries</i>
1870	...	...	54	20	26
1890	...	...	33	23	44
1910	...	...	26	17	57

## Percentages of Imports (value) into India

			<i>From the United Kingdom</i>	<i>From other parts of the British Empire</i>	<i>From Foreign Countries</i>
1870	...	...	85	6	9
1890	...	...	70	15	15
1910	...	...	61	8	31

It should be added that Britain's trade with India, imports and exports together, has always been a substantial fraction of her total overseas trade. In this period it ranged from about one-seventh to about one-fifth. But while Free Trade created a *régime* of which none of Great Britain's external trade rivals could complain, her insistence that British products should compete equally with the products of India in the domestic market was bitterly resented by India. The cotton goods of Lancashire were in competition in India both with the hand spinning and weaving industry, which, even before the middle of the century, had been severely hit in its external markets by the products of the British mills, and with the mill industry which was growing up in India throughout the latter part of the century. The Government which alone had the power to protect them was a Government which believed that Free Trade, while it certainly benefited the Lancashire producer, was no less beneficial to the Indian consumer, since it enabled him to meet his needs at a lower cost. It is interesting to recall that about the same time the same issue was being settled in the opposite way in another part of the British Empire. In 1858-9, some ten years after responsible government had been conceded to Canada, the Canadian Finance Minister, anxious to safeguard the young industries of Canada from British at least as much as American competition, raised his tariff to a protective level and met the anxious protests of the British Colonial Secretary with the firm assertion that a self-governing Canada must govern herself. A self-governing India would presumably have taken the same line.

Earl Grey at the Colonial Office was quite honestly convinced that Free Trade was as good business for Canadians as it was for Englishmen, and there is no reason to doubt that his colleagues applied the doctrine just as honestly to India. But there was more than a grain of selfishness in the Lancashire manufacturers' claim, when a low revenue-tariff was restored in India in 1894, that Free Trade logic required the imposition of a "countervailing excise" on those grades of Indian cloth which competed with theirs; and they were strong enough in Parliament to induce the British Government to concede their claim against the wishes of the Government of India. On all grounds, and even from the standpoint of British industrial interests, this was a great mistake; for beyond question the imposition of the excise and its retention till as late as 1925 created in Indian minds a distrust of British motives which not only prejudiced political and racial relations but which was bound in the long run to injure British trade.

But Lancashire was not the sole agent of the economic revolution, which, just as it killed cottage industries in Britain and elsewhere, so ruined the hand-spinning industry in India and reduced the hand-weaving to the coarsest kinds of cloth and a few high-class specialities. The responsibility rests quite as much on Indian manufacturers. The advance of the Indian mill industry would no doubt have been more rapid if the British Government had not resisted the demand for a protective tariff; but, after the war of 1914-8, various factors—including higher costs of production in Lancashire, the natural expansion of Indian enterprise, higher import tariffs, and the growth of nationalist sentiment in favour of home-made goods—combined to accelerate the pace of progress, and it is impossible to doubt that India as a whole has benefited from the development achieved. Unlike Lancashire, which imports the raw material and exports the final product, India enjoys the triple advantage of having the raw material, the facilities for manufacture, and an outlet for the bulk of her cotton-mill production within her own borders. It is a legitimate ambition in any country to obtain the equipment needed to enable it to clothe its own people, and in India, where cotton clothing is a practically universal necessity, the Indian mill industry, in not unfriendly co-operation with the surviving cottage industry, has gone most of the way to meet that demand. And this local manufacture has not only provided Indian workers with a new means of livelihood; it

has also benefited the Indian cotton-grower, for a large percentage of the Indian cotton crop is absorbed by the Indian mills, whereas Lancashire piecegoods were made chiefly from non-Indian cottons. Despite a production now approximating to 4,500 million yards a year, Indian mills are still advancing in number and in the range and quality of their manufactures; and it is to the advantage of the local consumer that this growth of internal competition helps to keep down prices despite the retention of protective tariffs.

### *Finance*

A Free Trade policy meant that the Government of India had to look for other means than a tariff of meeting its expenditure. How, to begin with, was the building of those costly railways and canals financed? The first railways were entrusted to private enterprise, with a guaranteed profit, but under what Dalhousie called "a stringent and salutary control." In 1869 the Government began to build and operate railways of its own—an experiment in State Socialism which it would have been hard to envisage in Britain at that time. There followed a period in which private and State railways ran side by side. Finally most of the system was appropriated by the State, though the working of about one-third of it was left to companies. The canals, on the other hand, except for one or two minor and unsuccessful private ventures, were from first to last the Government's responsibility, and, since the huge sums needed for them and still more for the State railways were clearly unobtainable from current revenue, they had to be raised by loans. It was mainly for this reason that the public debt of British India was more than trebled in fifty years. In 1858 it was £74 millions: in 1908 it was £266 millions, and of that no less than £177½ millions had been spent on railways and £30 millions on canals. Most of this money was raised by successive issues of Government of India market loans in England and in India. India was able to borrow large sums in London upon favourable terms because of the confidence created by the fact that the Secretary of State for India was both in effective control of the Indian administration and responsible to Parliament. The payment of the interest from year to year has run into many millions, and the sterling portion of it, together with the remittances and pensions of British officials, accounts for most of what has been called "the Drain," i.e., the flow of wealth from India to Britain revealed in the unequal balance of their

trade. But it seems extravagant to describe this economic process as a form of "tribute" or as an "imperialistic exploitation" of a subject people. It must be remembered (1) that young or backward countries cannot afford to equip themselves with the material fabric of a modern state without borrowing from abroad, and that in this respect India's indebtedness to Britain is on the same footing as that of Australia, say, or the Argentine: (2) that it was an advantage to India to have access to the London money market on terms almost as favourable as those enjoyed by the British Government itself: (3) that the borrowed money was mostly spent on productive works which quite soon in the case of the canals and in due course in that of the railways have yielded profits higher than the interest, thus providing Government with a surplus to spend on reducing the debt or on other public purposes: and (4) that the stock has been bought by and the interest paid to many Indians as well as Englishmen.

Another kind of interest than that on the public debt has year by year been paid out of India into Britain—the interest on British capital privately invested in Indian plantations, industries, mines, banks, shipping and so forth. Only the roughest estimate can be formed of the amount of this private debt, but it may well be heavier in proportion than that incurred in the same way in the dominions. Whereas, moreover, the Dominions were able to man their commerce and industry with their own personnel, it took time for India to provide much more than the labour force required, and until the swift industrial developments of recent years the better-paid work was mainly in British hands and most of its reward was spent not in India but in England.

### *The Cost of Defence*

To return to the question of public finance, the next weightiest charge on Indian revenues was the cost of defence. Happily this was not swollen in this period as it had been in the period of territorial expansion by constant wars inside the boundaries of India. After the Mutiny all the fighting was on the frontier or beyond it. The Second Afghan War (1878-80)—an ill-starred, though not equally disastrous, repetition of the first—was prompted by the old fear of Russian expansion and launched by an impetuous Viceroy (Lytton) against Disraeli's better judgment. Its chief result was to plant in British minds the conviction that Russian interference

with Afghan independence might well prove less dangerous to India than British interference, and in Indian minds a suspicion that Indian troops and taxes might at any time be sacrificed in "imperial" adventures from which India had little or nothing to gain. The third Burmese War (1885) has already been mentioned. Except for the dispatch of some troops to Abyssinia in 1867, all the rest of the fighting in which the Indian Army was engaged was on the frontiers, and mostly in that restless, dangerous triangle in the extreme north-west. The explanation of the constant trouble there is simple enough. The Pathan tribesmen of the border are fierce, fanatical, war-loving folk, armed by illicit gun-running. They live in poor, dry mountain country which barely yields enough for their subsistence. When they are not engaged in tribal feuds with one another, they can be all too easily inflamed against the infidels who bar the roads down which in the old days they would set out from time to time to surprise and loot the cornfields and bazaars of the more civilised and fertile Punjab. Only the slow influence of civilisation, only the discovery of a more profitable way of life than fighting, can bring peace to that frontier, the one difficult frontier in all the British Empire. Meantime, throughout this period, the Indian Army was needed, as it is needed still, to defend it. Now the Indian Army was not all Indian: till recently all its commissioned officers were British. Nor was it strong enough alone to hold the frontier as well as to suppress internal disorders which, especially at times of communal excitement, were more than the police could deal with. Beside it, therefore, then as now, was stationed a substantial part of the British Army. And it was those British officers and those British regiments, with their relatively high rates of pay, that gave, so to speak, an unnatural weight to the military charges on the Indian budget. For, though it could be argued that, while the British soldiers were unquestionably needed for the external and internal security of India, they also served the strategic interests of Britain and the British Empire as a whole, nevertheless the entire cost of them was borne, till a few years ago, by India.<sup>1</sup> In 1871 defence accounted for 32 per cent. of the Government's expenditure, in 1891 for 25 per cent., in 1911 for 27 per cent. Add to that the cost of other material needs, of roads and bridges and government offices

---

<sup>1</sup> India, on the other hand, paid only a relatively small subsidy (about £130,000 a year) towards the cost of the British Navy which protected her shores and trade by sea.

and schools, of the telegraph and of the railways before they began to pay, of debt charges and administrative salaries and pensions, and there was little enough in those days—there is far too little now—for social services.

The truth is, of course, that India, a needy and backward country, had been provided with a government, a defence force, and, as far as it went, a material equipment akin to those of a wealthy and progressive western state. Nor can it be argued that such good as the British Raj has done for the Indian peoples could have been done by second-class officials and second-class soldiers or by second-rate engineering and second-rate steel. But the best is usually the dearest, and the Indian population, poor as it is huge, consisting for the most part of peasants scratching a living from the soil and slow to learn to make the most of it, have found it hard to pay the price. How, in fact, did they pay it? To take 1891 for a sample year, of a total revenue of £62 millions, 26.9 per cent. was obtained from the land-tax, 9.7 per cent. from a tax on salt, 9.0 per cent. from a tax on opium, 5.7 per cent. from excise on drugs and spirits, 4.8 per cent. from stamps on deeds and documents, and 1.9 per cent. from income-tax, the last a recent innovation and still on a light scale. Customs provided only 1.9 per cent., and of all those other items the only tax, apart from the land-tax, that pressed directly on the peasant was the tax on the salt he could not do without.<sup>1</sup> Far his heaviest burden, and at the same time the mainstay of the revenue, was—and still is—the tax on land. That tax was not, of course, a British novelty. The British Government had inherited the time-honoured right to levy it as ultimate owners of the soil from the Indian rulers they supplanted; but, whereas those rulers had normally levied it in kind—one-third of the gross produce was a customary rate under the later Moguls—it was all levied now in cash. The process of assessment and re-assessment has been highly complicated, and the method of settling tenure varies in different parts of India; but it has been broadly reckoned that the average tax on an acre at the beginning of this century was not more than 10 per cent. on the value of its yield or about two shillings a year. By European standards, then, India was lightly taxed; yet any increase of the burden to provide, say, for education or public health must have mainly fallen directly or indirectly on the peasant to whom every shilling was worth far more than a

---

<sup>1</sup> The salt-tax was gradually reduced and it has been reckoned that before the war of 1914 it cost the Indian peasant about twopence-halfpenny a year.

## THE GROWTH OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

European's pound. The hard fact was that, unless and until the cost of administration and defence could be substantially reduced or economic production substantially increased, India could not afford a full-scale extension of modern social services.

### *The Growth of Indian Nationalism*

Europe's impact on India was not confined to the material field. With its railways and manufactures and finance came also its ideas, and among them the idea of national unity and independence, the strongest political force in the contemporary western world. But there was a striking difference in its effects in Europe and in India at the time. Nationalism deepened the old divisions of Europe. In the form of Prussianism, in particular, it was responsible for three wars before the nineteenth century ended. But though, as was observed at the beginning of this essay, India is not only nearly as big as Europe but exhibits an even greater variety of human thought and conduct, there are certain common factors in all its life that make it easier for the peoples of India than for those of Europe to feel themselves to belong to one "nation," to be all sons of "Mother India." Thus in India, at the outset and up to a point, nationalism was more a unifying than a dividing force.

Even so, the idea of an Indian nation could scarcely have been born if the work done by the British in India had not been done. They had brought all India for the first time in its history under a single allegiance and two-thirds of it under a single frame of government; and they had not only made it possible, as never before, by developing higher education through the medium of a single language, for Indians from all parts of multilingual India to understand one another, they had also made it possible, as never before, by creating a modern system of communications, for them to meet and know and correspond with one another. It might almost be said, indeed, that Indian nationalism was the child of the British Raj; and it can certainly be said that in making it easier for Indians to acquire a sense of common interests and a common destiny the Raj was doing as great a service to India as any that it could do; for it was helping her to meet her greatest need.

Indian nationalism was born when the Indian National Congress assembled for the first time in Bombay in 1885. Its seventy-two members came from most parts of British India; but the great majority were Hindus. Its purpose was to discuss the political and social problems of the day and among



them the growing desire of educated Indians for a larger share in Indian government. But, though its prospectus described the Congress as "the germ of a Native Parliament" whose proceedings should demonstrate the fitness of Indians for representative institutions,<sup>1</sup> it was in no sense the vehicle of an "opposition," still less of a seditious movement against the British Raj. Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay, was known to be so warmly sympathetic that it was suggested that he might preside; and, if the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, decided that officials should not take part in the proceedings, he gave it a friendly blessing. British "non-officials," moreover, had actively assisted in its organisation, and, when it met, its leading spokesmen, some of whom had visited and made friends in England, at once made it clear that the last thought in their minds was to undermine "the stability of the British Government." Mr. Bonerji, who presided at the first meeting, spoke for the whole Congress when at its second meeting at Calcutta in 1886 he said:

I ask whether in the most glorious days of Hindu rule you could imagine the possibility of a meeting of this kind . . . Would it have been possible even in the days of Akbar for a meeting like this to assemble, composed of all classes and communities, all speaking one language? . . . It is under the civilising rule of the Queen and the people of England that we meet here together, hindered by none, freely allowed to speak our minds without the least fear or hesitation. Such a thing is possible under British rule, and under British rule only.<sup>2</sup>

There was nothing, then, in the first efflorescence of Indian nationalism to widen the gulf between British and Indians, and up to a point, as was said above, it made for unity among Indians themselves. It brought Hindus together from all the scattered provinces of British India, and of India's many millions about two-thirds were and are Hindus. But it did little to unite this great majority with the minority communities. There was an influential group of Parsees at the first Congress, but only two Moslems. At the second Congress, held in the more Moslem north, there were 33 Moslem delegates out of 440. In later years the proportion of Moslems grew; there were 156 out of 702 in 1890; but, owing largely to the influence of the most eminent Indian Moslem of the day, Sir Saiyid Ahmed, the Congress claim to represent all India became less and less acceptable to the bulk of Moslem opinion until in 1906 a separate All-India Moslem League was founded. This did not mean that Moslems differed radically

<sup>1</sup> Sir V. Lovett, *History of the Indian Nationalist Movement* (London, 1926), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Sir V. Chirol, *India* (London, 1926), 89-90.

## INDIAN UNREST

from Hindus in their national sentiment or in their attitude to the British Raj. Sir Saiyid Ahmed's voice was the voice of Mr. Bonerji, "Of such benevolence," he said, "as the English Government shows to the foreign nations under her there is no example in the history of the world." Thirty years later, as will be seen, the Congress and the League combined in advocating a single programme of constitutional advance. Why, then, did they not keep from the first more closely together? Because the kind of renaissance now at work among educated Indians was quickening communal as much as national self-consciousness. All nationalist movements feed on memories, but the greatest memories of India were not national. While Hindu patriots recalled the golden age of Hindustan, Moslem pride remembered a more recent record of conquest and dominion. More conservative in their outlook, Moslems had been slower than Hindus to take advantage of the new facilities in higher education, and to many of them the very success of the Congress, its efficient organisation, the eloquent speeches, and not least, perhaps, the emphasis laid on representative government which appeared to imply "majority rule"—it may all have seemed something like a challenge. And, if so, the Moslems had their answer. A minority in India, they were members of a great fraternity which, with the Caliph at its head, spread far across the world. But that high note was out of harmony with any Indian national anthem. Indian Moslems who sounded it were clearly Moslems first and Indians second.

### *Indian Unrest*

For ten years or so after 1885 an atmosphere of good-will, even of gratitude towards the British Raj, was still prevalent in educated Indian circles. It was a time, indeed, of almost indiscriminating admiration for all things British. India, it seemed, was backward because she lacked what Britain had. To be powerful and prosperous she must imitate Britain. But then this impetuous, rather unnatural, tide of "westernising" sentiment suddenly reached the full and began rapidly to ebb. It was the story of the Mutiny over again. Once more foreign pressure on India, in cultural matters now as well as material, was coming to a climax; and once more it awakened in the old hard core of Indian feeling—and now not only or mainly among orthodox and conservative folk—a sense of danger and

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Cromer, *op. cit.*, 71 note.

hostility. Having turned, the once pro-British current was soon running as fast and as far in the other direction. "Extremists," such as nationalism in any country is bound by its nature to breed, now denounced the British connexion as the curse of India. Not liberty and justice, but tyranny and greed, were the hall-marks of British rule, as witness the fate of Ireland. From the British India had nothing to gain, nothing to learn. She could only save herself by throwing off the yoke of the West and becoming again the purely Indian India she had been before Europe touched and soiled her.

The reaction might not have gone to such lengths if it had not been fostered by certain conditions and events of that particular time in India and elsewhere. In India the colleges and universities were now flooding urban society with a multitude of young men whose education had suffered not so much from being in Macaulay's English as from being almost wholly literary and scarcely at all "practical" and for whom the only available professions, particularly the bar, became quickly overmanned. As in other countries, the problem of the "educated unemployed" accentuated the nationalist problem; for, however real their patriotism, it was naturally easier for those restless, frustrated young men to resent the presence of foreigners in the land if they held all the best-paid posts in its civil service. In Britain this was unhappily precisely the time, and the only time, when the bulk of public opinion was "imperialist" in the vulgar, jingo sense. The fever began in the "seventies," it grew at Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887 and again at her Diamond Jubilee in 1897, it came to a head at the time of the Boer War in 1899-1902, and then it fast subsided and presently died away. There was good as well as bad, of course, in that flag-waving phase, idealism as well as vainglory; but the Britain of those days was not so attractive a partner to India as the Britain of Burke or Bentinck or Macaulay. And then, in 1904, came the war in which Japan defeated Russia. To Europe it was a highly significant incident. To all Asia and not least to India it was more than that, it was a portent: for it destroyed the legend of the white man's invincible superiority.

The "Indian Unrest," as it was called, which developed concurrently with those developments outside India, had two main centres. The first was in the Bombay Presidency where Tilak, an able Maratha Brahmin, launched a violent anti-British campaign on the platform and in the press which, since Ripon's repeal of previous restrictions in 1882, had been

virtually as free in India as in England. In the end his appeal to patriotism, and especially to the memory of the Maratha hero, Sivaji, was scarcely distinguishable from incitement to assassination; and on the day of the Diamond Jubilee the I.C.S. president of the Poona Plague Committee and another Englishman were murdered by a young fanatic of Tilak's caste. In 1909 another I.C.S. official, well known for his interest in Indian culture, was shot by another young Maratha. The second centre was Bengal. It was Bengalis who had taken the lead in the nationalist movement—the Congress had been mainly their creation—and with their Indian patriotism went an equally passionate pride in their own premier province. This pride was deeply wounded when in 1905 Lord Curzon, Viceroy from 1898 to 1905, mainly for administrative reasons, divided the province into two. The most sinister feature of the subsequent agitation was the secret propagation of a cult of political murder, associated with the goddess Kali, among emotional young Bengalis. Several officials, not all British, were assassinated. On one occasion, a bomb intended for a British magistrate killed two British women.

Taken in themselves and against the vast background of Indian life, these symptoms of unrest were relatively unimportant. The danger to the British Raj was almost negligible compared with that of 1857. There was no sedition in the Indian Army. There was no mob-violence in the towns. And no ripple of disorder stirred the placid pool of rural life. Like their fathers before them, the silent millions of country-folk were absorbed in their eternal task of wresting a living from the soil, knowing nothing, caring nothing, about "nationalism" or "unrest." And over their heads the great machine of Government ran on undisturbed, reinforcing its old functions, creating new departments, providing new social services. It was Curzon's period and, if Curzon typified the limitations of the great bureaucracy he headed, its cold detachment, its lack of imaginative sympathy with Indian character and aspirations, he typified also its untiring industry, its devotion to public duty, its faith in its high mission. The majestic *darbar* he held at Delhi in 1903 to celebrate King Edward VII's accession seemed similarly to reflect the splendour and the power of the British Raj. And, indeed, it had nothing material to fear from the little cloud that hung that day on the horizon. The new temper of Indian nationalism was not a challenge to British strength but only to British statesmanship.

## CHAPTER IV

# The Growth of Indian Self-Government

1909—1935

**T**HE PROBLEM SET TO British—and to Indian—statesmanship in Curzon's day has overshadowed all other Indian problems ever since. At first sight this might seem strange since India's most urgent and vital needs have been social and economic rather than political. The elevation of the "depressed classes"—those 40 million *pariahs*, Hindus yet "outcast" from the Hindu social system—the emancipation of women, the broadening and safeguarding of education, and the old paramount need of relieving, by more irrigation, by the introduction of new agricultural methods and crops and by the development of industry, the poverty and pressure on the land of a population which by 1939 had grown to over 350 millions—such problems, it might seem, were big enough and grave enough to fill the minds of public-spirited Indians without raising also the even harder and more contentious problem of government in a country that was reasonably well governed. But for two main causes the political issue could not be avoided. First, nationalism was now coming to its zenith in Asia as elsewhere. Chinese, Persians, Turks were beginning to contest the "influence" of Europe, and Arabs to dream of a free and unified Arabia. Could Indian patriots do less? Secondly, it became apparent that in its traditional unwillingness to interfere with Indian customs the British Raj had tacitly admitted a certain inherent weakness. Some of India's worst social evils could not be cured by a foreign government, however benevolent, but only by the response of Indian public opinion to Indian leadership. Was it mere rhetoric to say that "self-government was better than good government?" For those and other reasons, soon backed by the pressure of events in the world at large, the political issue not only came to the front of the Indian stage: it was pressed so fast and far that within a single generation it had come within sight of a final settlement. The swift transformation of the moral relations of Britain with India at the end of the nineteenth century was described in an earlier chapter. Since 1909 a no less swift and drastic revolution has come about in their political relations.

It is sometimes forgotten that the men who established the nineteenth-century *régime* in India never supposed that it would last for ever. Trusteeship is normally a temporary function. It ceases when its purpose is fulfilled. From the outset, therefore, the more thoughtful British officials in India were looking forward to the day when their Indian wards would have outgrown the need for a trustee. "If we pursue steadily the proper measures," said Munro in 1824, "we shall in time so far improve the character of our Indian subjects as to enable them to govern and protect themselves."<sup>1</sup> "Let us so conduct ourselves," said Henry Lawrence in 1844, "as, when the connexion ceases, it may do so . . . with mutual esteem and affection, and that England may then have in India a noble ally, enlightened and brought into the scale of nations under her guidance and fostering care."<sup>2</sup> Statesmen at home were of the same mind. In his speech on the Bill of 1833, Macaulay contemplated "some future age" in which India would have acquired self-government on the European model. "Whether such a day will ever come I know not, but never will I attempt to avert or to retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history."<sup>3</sup>

No one, however, imagined that that day would come soon, and already in 1833 the cardinal difficulty in advancing India towards it was apparent. Englishmen had developed the capacity for self-government by long usage. They had used representative government to establish, after four centuries, the principle of responsible government, and had used that in turn to develop, after another two centuries, the complete parliamentary government of the present day. But in India the process had to begin from the beginning. In many villages in earlier days there were councils of elders (*panchayats*) charged by old tradition with minor local duties; and it has been suggested that these might have been maintained and improved into effective organs of local government by those methods of "Indirect Administration" which are now applied in British Tropical Africa and Malaya. But, for good or ill, the *panchayats* faded away before the onset of the direct, efficient British Raj. And nowhere else in Indian life, accustomed beyond human memory to autocratic rule, was there any trace of representative institutions as understood

<sup>1</sup> Minute of December 31, 1824 (Muir, 285).

<sup>2</sup> *Essays* (London, 1859), 59-60, quoted by J. L. Morison, *Lawrence of Lucknow* (London, 1934), 57.

<sup>3</sup> *Speeches*, 155.

in Europe. Hence the bewilderment of the Early Victorian champions of democratic principles when confronted with the crux of governing India. So stout a radical as James Mill declared that representative government was "utterly out of the question" in India. "We have to frame a good government," complained Macaulay, "for a country" in which it is impossible to provide "the one great security for good government . . . The light of political science and of history is withdrawn : we are walking in darkness : we do not distinctly see whither we are going." It was impossible to conjecture, he went on, "the fate reserved for a state which resembles no other in history." He could only assert his robust belief in the universal value of representative institutions and his lofty hope that India would some day be fitted to enjoy them.<sup>1</sup>

Meantime, as has been seen, the Act of 1833 left the British bureaucracy in India more or less unmodified and the Mutiny led only to the creation of Legislative Councils with strictly limited powers by the Act of 1861. Thirty years later another cautious step was taken. Since the co-operation of Indian "non-officials" had proved useful, the Act of 1892 not only permitted the Legislative Councils to discuss, though not yet to vote on, administrative questions, but in order to ensure that the non-official members were in touch with public opinion it provided that some of them should now be nominated from persons chosen by the local bodies or corporations which had recently come into being—municipalities, universities, chambers of commerce. But these councillors, it was plainly understood, would not be *elected* : they would only be *recommended* for nomination. This repudiation of the elective principle was the more remarkable because it had already been conceded in the system of local self-government introduced by Lord Mayo in 1873, and extended by Lord Ripon in 1883, under which downright elections had been regularly held for Municipal Councils and Rural District Boards. But this difference in method between local and provincial government did not imply a radical difference in policy. The intention of introducing British institutions in either field was expressly disavowed. The Councils Act, said Dufferin, certainly did not imply "an approach to English parliamentary government."<sup>2</sup> The new scheme of local government, said Ripon, did not mean that he was "trying to

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, 126, 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Montagu-Chelmsford Report*, par. 68.

## THE "MORLEY-MINTO" REFORMS

impose our English system on India." But these disclaimers soon proved unavailing. Practice outran theory. The recommendations to the Legislative Councils were invariably accepted and were thus tantamount to elections. To that extent the "English system" had in fact been introduced. The government of the Provinces as well as that of local areas was now, in a measure at least, representative government, and that was certainly a step towards "English parliamentary government."

### *The "Morley-Minto" Reforms*

Such was the constitutional position when, at the outset of the twentieth century, the sharpening temper of Indian nationalism made its challenge to British statesmanship, and no British statesman seemed better qualified to meet it than the Secretary of State for India at that time (1905-1910). Morley was not only a philosopher and historian, he was the foremost living exponent of the great Liberal tradition. Morley, if anyone, might be expected to approach his task with something of Macaulay's faith. And what he did—aided and abetted by a progressive Viceroy—was not illiberal. The "Morley-Minto" Reforms of 1909 enlarged all the Legislative Councils, accepted the elective principle, provided for non-official majorities of nominated *plus* elected members over official members in all the Provinces and of elected members alone in Bengal, and not only enabled the Councils to vote on all matters of administration but—a far more radical step—gave Indians a direct share in it by admitting an Indian member to the Executive Council in each of the Provinces and at the Centre.<sup>2</sup> It was not Morley's acts but his words that seemed out of tune with Macaulay. He vigorously repeated Dufferin's disclaimer. "If it could be said," he declared, "that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I for one would have nothing at all to do with it."

Morley, in fact, in 1909 could not share the faith of 1833 in the universal utility of a British parliament. He repeatedly derided the "gross and dangerous sophism" that what is good in certain circumstances is good in all. You might as well argue, he would say, that, because a fur coat is wanted

---

<sup>1</sup> L. Wolf, *Life of Ripon* (London, 1921), ii, 100.

<sup>2</sup> Centre is used for brevity to mean the Government of all British-India, i.e., the Governor-General in Council.

<sup>3</sup> *Indian Speeches*, 91.



in the Canadian winter, it is wanted in the Deccan.<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, of course, had recognised that parliamentary government was quite impracticable in the India of his own time, but he had hopes that it might be practicable some day. Morley, on the other hand, put no time-limit on his repudiation of democracy for India. Why? It was not so much the lack of an educated electorate—the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Indian people were still scarcely less ignorant and inert in 1909 than in 1833, the conviction that in such conditions parliamentary government in India would not be democracy but an oligarchy run by a relatively small professional class out of touch with rural life. That obstacle would not seem insurmountable to a Liberal who remembered how boldly the extension of the franchise had outpaced the growth of education in England. It was not so much the backwardness as the diversity of India that seemed to deny the possibility of democracy. For democracy, whatever form it may take, can only work in a more or less homogeneous society. It means “majority rule,” which presupposes that all the members of the community have so much ground in common, are so alike in their fundamental beliefs and values and purposes, that a minority of the day can not only acquiesce in the majority’s decisions but hope to become itself the majority of the morrow. Manifestly there was no such homogeneity in India. The British Raj, as pointed out in the preceding chapter, had provided the framework on which national unity could be built, and in 1909 the building had begun. But there were still gaping fissures to be closed. First there was the division between British India and Indian India, the one equipped with legislative councils and with politicians as free-minded and a press almost as free as anywhere in the West, the other still controlled by oriental autocracies rarely and slightly tempered by the beginnings of liberal institutions, yet both required to think and act together if the common affairs of all India—foreign policy, defence, tariffs, communications, and so forth—were to be dealt with on any basis of self-government. Second, and more daunting, were the old intractable communal differences and antagonisms—more daunting because, until the religious communities could learn, as most, but not all, of them had learned in Europe, to keep faith and politics apart, not only would that indispensable stretch of common ground be lacking, but

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

## THE "MORLEY-MINTO" REFORMS

the members of a minority could never hope, except by the unthinkable process of conversion, to be in a majority. Nor was communal strife the only discouraging factor in Indian society. The Hindu caste-system, especially its treatment of its "outcast" proletariat, was a stark negation of the essence of democracy.

If those barriers to self-government on the British model were evident to the Secretary of State and the India Office in London, they were still more obvious to the Government of India and its officials on the spot. This, no doubt, was one of the reasons why the interest taken by such men as Munro or Lawrence in the question of India's ultimate emancipation had died away. Another reason was, perhaps, that the more elaborate and varied the technical side of government became, the less easy it was to conceive of such immense, yet delicate, machinery being entrusted to inexperienced Indian hands. So statesmen and officials alike continued to "walk in darkness," too much preoccupied with the day-to-day fulfilment of their trust to worry as to when and how it would terminate.

There was no such indifference or uncertainty among Indian nationalists. They might be doubtful as to time—few of them, it is safe to say, can have expected the advance towards self-government to be as rapid as in the event it proved to be—but they had no doubt at all as to method. Without any personal experience of parliamentary government, of its difficulties and strains, of the test it imposes on national character, they were incapable of sharing Morley's pessimism. Most of them, it must be remembered, had been brought up on English literature, and the classics of English literature are the classics of English liberty. Indian students were better acquainted than British with Milton and Shelley and Mill. They observed, too, that all their tutors and rulers were quietly certain that the British form of government was the best in the world. When, therefore, they were told that India was not suited for that sort of liberty, they were almost bound to take it either as a slight on Indian character or as an excuse for not giving India any liberty at all. In such a mood they discounted the difficulties. They were exaggerated, they declared, and they would disappear as soon as the Indian people were free to deal with them themselves.

The "reforms" of 1909, therefore, were welcomed, as far as they went, by Indian nationalists for the very reason which

Morley had disavowed. They interpreted them as an advance towards parliamentary government. They refused to regard the Canadian analogy as inapplicable. They would pursue their freedom, said Mr. Gokhale, the outstanding Indian statesman of the day, along the path of "colonial self-government."

### *The War of 1914 and its Sequel*

The Act of 1909 had a calming effect on Indian opinion. The more moderate-minded leaders held the floor of Congress. Agitation became less bitter. The weapon of assassination seemed to have been sheathed, though, as the attempt on the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge) showed in 1912, it had not been quite discarded. In 1911-12 the acclamations which greeted the King-Emperor George V on his visit to India were so manifestly genuine that Disraeli's bestowal of the imperial title on Queen Victoria in 1876 no longer seemed a flamboyant gesture but rather an imaginative response to a deep-rooted Indian instinct of personal loyalty. But this tranquil period was very short. There was widespread unrest again in 1912-13; and the future seemed dark and disquieting when in 1914 came the storm which shook the political and economic structure of the whole world to its foundations. When it had passed, four of the five Empires it had smitten were in ruins. Only the British Empire stood, more united and more powerful in 1919 than it had ever been.

German publicists believed not only that the Dominions would leave Britain to fight alone but that her strength in Europe would be seriously impaired by the outbreak of an Indian revolution. On both counts they were soon disillusioned. They had underrated the intelligence of Indian nationalists who were as well aware as anyone in Europe that the primary cause of the war was the desire of Prussian militarism to attain a *Weltreich*, not excluding India. And they had overrated the hostility of Indian nationalism to British rule—the failure of which, it may be added, to impose its own *Kultur* on India they had derided. Events quickly showed that, if British government in India was not government with the consent of the governed; it was at any rate government with their acquiescence. Though now, if ever, was the opportunity to strike a blow for independence, so peaceful was the country, so loyal to the common cause, that it was possible to bring most of the 50,000 British regular troops in India

back to the war-zone and replace them with newly recruited territorials. But India gave more positive proof than that of her devotion to the cause of freedom. From first to last she sent a million men to the battlefields. They endured a European winter in the early critical days in Flanders. They suffered from the muddle and misery of the Mesopotamian campaign. They fought with Allenby in Palestine and with Smuts in East Africa. And money was given as freely as men. Over £146 millions were voted out of British Indian revenues towards the cost of the war. Princes and other wealthy Indians vied with one another in gifts to the British Government and subscriptions to patriotic funds. No historian can miss the significance of this demonstration. Nor did British statesmen, not always quick to appreciate Indian feeling, miss it. The Indian war effort brought back to their minds the ideas that had almost been forgotten since Macaulay's and Lawrence's day. It compelled them to think again about Indian self-government, and not only to look ahead and anticipate, however distant it might still seem, the termination of the British "trust" in India, but also to do what they had never yet done, to consider the practical steps by which that end could be attained.

More than a year before the war was over, the British Government, now headed by Mr. Lloyd George, and containing such eminent "elder statesmen" as Balfour, Curzon and Milner, defined its Indian policy. It was, said Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State, in his famous pronouncement on August 20, 1917,

the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.<sup>1</sup>

Progress in this policy, it was added, would be "by successive stages," and the "time and measure of each advance" would be determined by the British and Indian Governments. In the following winter Mr. Montagu visited India to consult the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, and sound Indian opinion. The upshot was the "Montagu-Chelmsford Report" of 1918. It explained how the pronouncement of 1917 should be implemented, and on it the new Government of India Act of 1919 was based.

Pronouncement, Report and Act together mark, so to speak, the watershed in British-Indian history. Hitherto the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, series V, xcvi, 1695.

main tendency had been the extension and consolidation of British rule in India. Henceforward the main tendency was to be the extension of Indian rule.

*The Act of 1919*

What were the main elements of the new policy? To begin with it was now admitted that the development of self-government in India must continue, as it had begun, on British lines. The Legislative Councils were not to be *durbars*, but parliaments. Of the two steps now taken to that end, the first was the natural advance on 1909. In all the nine Provinces the majorities in the Legislative Councils would now be elected. The second step was more difficult and decisive. The pronouncement had promised that government was not only to be representative but to become progressively responsible: in other words the executive as well as the legislature were to be brought under Indian control. For that purpose the Congress and the Moslem League submitted an agreed proposal—"the beginning," the Report observed, "of united action between Hindus and Muhammadans which every well-wisher of India hopes will grow." The proposal was that half the Executive Council in each Province should be chosen by the Legislative Council. To this the Report objected (1) that, since the officials and the elected members of the executive would be responsible to different authorities—the former as before to the Secretary of State, the latter to the Legislative Council—it would be impossible to fix or to enforce responsibility for the administration; and (2) that the Legislative Council, with its power over legislation and especially the budget, would be able to obstruct and even nullify the work of the executive without being able to provide an alternative government, since only half of it would be subject to its control—a situation which was bound to breed irresponsibility and lead to deadlock. It was a similar situation which had provoked the historic crisis in the development of colonial self-government; but Durham's "British" solution—the simple transference of power in all domestic affairs from officials responsible to the Secretary of State for the Colonies to ministers responsible to the Canadian legislature—seemed inapplicable to the India of 1919. Nobody, not the Indian nationalists themselves, suggested that the *whole* field of government should straight-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Montagu-Chelmsford Report*, par. 27.

way be entrusted to inexperienced Indian politicians. Hence that word "progressive." But how to progress was a baffling puzzle till it was ultimately solved by an ingenious device, known as Dyarchy or dual rule.<sup>1</sup> The Act provided that the Provincial Governments should each consist of two parts. One part would be composed as before of officials. To its control would be "reserved" the two primary functions of administration—finance and the maintenance of law and order.<sup>2</sup> It would discuss its policy with the Legislative Council, but would be responsible not to it but, as before, to the Secretary of State. The other Provincial subjects—education, agriculture, public health, local government and so forth—would be "transferred" to "ministers" chosen from and responsible to the majority in the Legislative Council. Like the Crown in Britain, the Governor would normally "act on their advice." The interference of the Secretary of State or Parliament was by implication barred, and by a rule made under the Act it was, with certain minor reservations, expressly forbidden.<sup>3</sup> At the same time the status of the Provincial Governments was heightened by an increase in their taxing and borrowing powers and by the "devolution" on to them of most of the functions hitherto exercised by the Central Government in the provincial field. While the separate responsibility of the two parts of the Government was to be maintained as clearly and strictly as possible, it was hoped that they would work harmoniously together. "There cannot be too much mutual advice and consultation."<sup>4</sup>

A great advance was also made at the Centre. The Governor-General's nominated Legislative Council was to be transformed into a full-scale bicameral legislature. Of the 60 members of the upper house or Council of State 33 would be elected. Of the 146 members of the lower house or Legislative Assembly, 106 would be elected on a wider franchise. No responsible government, no "dyarchy," was to be attempted at the Centre at this stage. The Governor-

<sup>1</sup> See L. Curtis, *Dyarchy* (Oxford, 1920).

<sup>2</sup> In two Provinces irrigation was "reserved," and in one Province forests. The Act only defined the "transferred" subjects. Anything not so defined was automatically "reserved."

<sup>3</sup> In 1921 the Speaker ruled that administration of "transferred" subjects was beyond the purview of Parliament. *Hansard*, series V, cxxxviii, 899-902, 1147-50, 1614-8. For H. of L., see xlv, 377-85. See also the statement in 1937, H. of C. cccxxv, 544ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament on the Government of India Bill* (1919), 7.

General and his Executive Council would continue to be responsible to the Secretary of State alone.<sup>1</sup> In case the legislature should force a deadlock, the Governor-General would be empowered to carry over the heads of one or both the chambers any measure he might "certify" as "essential for the safety, tranquillity or interests of British India."<sup>2</sup> Nobody again, supposed that the time was ripe for opening the Central field to popular control; but the creation of this great legislative body representing all British India was clearly another step in the "gradual" advance. Sooner or later, if all went well, the process begun in the Provinces would extend to the Centre. The British-Indian legislature would become a parliament.

But British India is not all India, and no new dispensation could be imposed on the Indian States unless their rulers were prepared to acquiesce in the modification of their existing treaties. In order to foster a fuller consciousness of their common interests and of their interconnexion with those of British India, a Chamber of Princes was to be established at Delhi for regular meetings and discussions. But, if it seemed impracticable at this stage to do more than that to close the structural gap in the unity of India, it was frankly intimated that both the conservatism and the aloofness of the States were bound to be affected by the permeation of democratic and nationalist ideas from adjacent British India; and the day was dimly envisaged when British and Indian India might be willingly united in "some form of federation."<sup>3</sup>

Nor could anything be done, it seemed, to heal that deeper schism in Indian life—communal and especially Hindu-Moslem antagonism. When the elective principle was definitely established in 1909, the Moslems had insisted on "communal electorates," i.e., that seats in the Councils should be reserved for Moslems elected by Moslem constituencies; and their recent co-operation with Congress had been conditioned by a carefully calculated agreement on this point. It was no use arguing that to retain the system under the new *régime* meant a hardening of the schism and a weakening of the civic sense which admits of no divided allegiance in the State.<sup>4</sup> British wishes and warnings were of no avail.

---

<sup>1</sup> The S. of S. was, and is, advised by a Council at the India Office which was wholly British in personnel before 1907 when Morley appointed two Indian members.

<sup>2</sup> Government of India Act, 1919 (9 & 10 Geo. V, chap. 101), 67 B 1.

<sup>3</sup> *M-C. Report*, pars. 157, 300.

<sup>4</sup> *M-C. Report*, pars. 227-231.

The Moslems stood firm. Communal electorates were retained.

Such was Britain's response to India's loyalty to their common cause. Previous steps towards Indian self-government had been short and hesitant; this was a long and bold one. Democracy had hitherto been expressly repudiated; now it was expressly accepted as the goal of British policy. The charge that it put the ignorant masses at the mercy of a small educated minority was squarely faced. On the one hand, said the principal authors of the Act, the urban intellectuals, "a creation of our own," were showing signs of an increasing interest in the problems of the countryside. On the other hand, the new constitution was meant to awaken in the submissive peasantry a new sense of their political importance, to teach them to stand on their own feet and to use their votes to uphold their rights. We are guided, said Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford, by "the faith that is in us . . . We believe that the placid pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which Indian nationhood will grow and that in deliberately disturbing it we are working for India's highest good."<sup>1</sup>

Those words were an authoritative expression of British policy: they were written by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy. Macaulay or Mill could not have made a more confident confession of British faith in freedom.

### *Gandhi and Non-Co-operation*

The new order opened in bad weather. India was suffering, like Britain, from war-weariness and the discontent it bred, and in her case the *malaise* was worsened by an appalling epidemic of influenza which affected nearly three-sevenths of the entire population in 1918-19 and killed more than six million people. In this atmosphere Indian nationalism was resuming a more militant temper. *Swaraj* was now its cry, and that implied much more "self-rule" than the Act of 1919 offered it. It had acquired, moreover, a new leader who was soon to attain to a wider fame throughout the world than any Indian of modern times. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had come to the front between 1907 and 1914 as the leader of a "passive resistance" movement among Indians domiciled in South Africa against what Lord Hardinge, boldly voicing the feelings of educated India, described as "invidious and unjust laws." Having succeeded in achiev-

---

<sup>1</sup> *M.C. Report*, pars. 139-44.



ing a tolerable compromise with General Smuts, he returned to India fortified in his belief that the ancient Hindu doctrine of *Ahimsa*, the repudiation of force or hurtfulness, was not only a moral precept which appealed to his deepest religious convictions, but also an effective political weapon—a rather unfair weapon, some might say, since it could only in fact be effective against a Government that was reasonably humane or responsible to a civilised public opinion. But for a long time Gandhi, who had been trained at the English bar and had many English friends, did not draw this weapon on the Raj. On the contrary he stoutly upheld the cause of Britain and her allies. He volunteered for ambulance work in France as he had done in the Boer War. As late as March 1918 he spoke at a great meeting at Delhi called by the Viceroy to stimulate a final effort on India's part to help in winning the war. But soon after that his attitude changed. A committee, headed by Mr. Justice Rowlatt, had been appointed to inquire into the "terrorism" which was still lurking in certain areas, particularly Bengal. The publication of its report in July 1918 revealed the existence of a secret subversive agitation, marked by bomb-outrages, murders and gang-robberies, which had not been suppressed by means of the ordinary law; and on the Committee's recommendation an Act was passed in March 1919, equipping the Government with special powers for use in an emergency. Gandhi denounced this Act as proof that the British tradition of justice had been overmastered by the love of arbitrary power. He launched a campaign of passive resistance against the Act, not only in the towns but in the country districts; and it was soon apparent that in this small, frail, gentle, ascetic, subtle-minded evangelist Indian nationalism had obtained a most formidable champion. For, while Gandhi's revival of old Hindu doctrine appealed to Hindu intellectuals, his bearing and behaviour stirred one of the deepest chords in the Indian peasant's heart—reverence for a saint; and, if now at last those peasants were awakened from their "placid, pathetic contentment," it was not by the prospect of a democratic constitution but by a primitive belief in the inspired utterances and supernatural powers of a *Mahatma*.

#### *Amritsar*

In the spring of 1919 a wave of excitement spread northwards from Bombay to Lahore; and unfortunately an Indian mob, once its passions were aroused, was quite incapable of practising *Ahimsa*, however earnestly Gandhi enjoined it.

The worst scenes occurred in the Punjab, and there, too, occurred the most tragic event in Anglo-Indian history since the Mutiny. At Amritsar four Englishmen had been brutally done to death and one Englishwoman had barely escaped the same fate. Two other Englishmen had been murdered in a neighbouring town; and the telegraph wires to Lahore had been cut. To General Dyer, to whom the civil officer had surrendered his authority, the situation seemed so critical that on learning that, in defiance of a proclamation he had issued, a crowd had collected in a walled garden in the town, he led a section of Gurkha soldiers to the spot, and, opening fire without warning, killed 379 and left about 1,200 wounded on the ground. British opinion on this incident may never be unanimous. Dyer himself believed that his punishment of the crowd had prevented a general rising throughout the Punjab in which many British lives would have been lost. Some of his compatriots agreed. Subscriptions were raised in India and in Britain to present him with a sword of honour. But that was not the judgment of the authorities when, after a belated inquiry, the full facts were known. Dyer was severely censured by the Government of India, the Commander-in-Chief in India, the British Army Council, the British Government and the House of Commons. Only a majority of the House of Lords, rejecting the advice of all its most distinguished members, dissented.

A student of history, looking down the years, might argue that the severity of the shock occasioned by Dyer's action was a sort of unhappy tribute to the character of a government under which nothing like that had happened for more than half a century. But the shock was certainly severe. "The shadow of Amritsar," said the Duke of Connaught when he went out to inaugurate the new constitution in 1921, "lengthened over the whole of India." Gandhi's condemnation of British rule became for a time unmeasured: he even used the word Satanic. And the bulk of Congress readily followed his lead in rejecting outright the opportunities of public office which their numbers and organisation put within their grasp when the new Act came into force. A "non-co-operation" movement was set on foot. It was not confined to Hindus, for it was linked with the "Caliphate movement" launched by Indian Moslems as a protest against the British treatment of Germany's ally, the old Turkish Empire. Nor did "non-co-operation" mean only a refusal to have anything to do with the new constitution. Patriots were expected to break

contact with all the political, economic and social institutions of British India, to resign their public posts, to abandon their work on the bench or at the bar, to withdraw their children from colleges and schools, to boycott British banks and goods, to wear only homespun cloth (*khaddar*) and so forth. Perhaps the movement was too ambitious to be more than partially successful. Moderate-minded members of Congress seceded and presently formed a new Liberal party. The more conservative Moslems also held aloof. It was, indeed, more among the peasantry and the new industrial workers in the towns than among the better-off and better-educated classes that the movement spread. Funds were raised, centres of agitation started, and young enthusiasts employed to preach the coming of an agrarian millenium. All this activity was not without result. Villagers showed, here and there, a new antagonism to sanitary or forest regulations, a new unfriendliness towards the District Officer. There was an epidemic of strikes in the towns, sometimes ending in rioting and bloodshed. Spasmodic acts of violence culminated in a peculiarly barbarous attack on Indian policemen in 1922. In that year the situation became so serious that Gandhi himself was brought to trial for seditious agitation and condemned to six years' imprisonment. Within a year he was released on grounds of health. By then, it seemed, the movement had spent its force. In 1923 and again in 1926 Congress took part in the provincial elections with the purpose not of working the constitution but of wrecking it from inside. But they only succeeded in two Provinces in bringing about a deadlock which compelled the Governors to resume official control of the "transferred" departments. And, as the "non-co-operation" movement weakened, so did the new bond of union between Hindu and Moslem nationalists. The old gulf, indeed, had been grimly re-opened when in 1921-2 the Moplahs, fierce Moslems of the Malabar coast, converted an anti-British rising into a savage onslaught on their Hindu neighbours which recalled the blackest memories of a half-forgotten past. And, when the "Caliphate movement" was exploded by events in Turkey, Hindu and Moslem leaders backed away from an alliance which had never meant the fusion of their communal interests in a single national cause.

#### *The New Constitution in Operation*

The collapse of the "non-co-operation" movement gave the new constitution a chance. For sixteen years it withstood the

## THE NEW CONSTITUTION IN OPERATION

assaults of the extremists and enabled more moderate Indians to show what they could do for India.

The Central legislature displayed from the first not only a dignity and capacity in debate which some older parliaments might well have envied, but also a greater reasonableness and sense of responsibility than was to be expected of a mainly elected body confronted by an executive it could not control. There were occasional outbursts of undisguised race-feeling on the Left; but the spokesmen of the Government, of which there were now four or five British and three Indian members, were usually listened to with patience and often with assent. Throughout those sixteen years the Governor-General only exercised his power of "certification" ten times.

The main problems at the Centre were economic. The public debt had been increased by the war, and at the end of the financial year 1935-6 it stood at £720 millions. Despite drastic economies, the annual expenditure remained at an average level of about £91 millions, of which about £37½ millions were allotted to the cost of defence.<sup>1</sup> Revenue was inevitably affected by the world-wide post-war slump. But India did not suffer quite so severely as some other primary producers, such as the United States or Australia, and the total volume of her overseas trade soon began to rise again towards the level it had reached before the depression. In 1935 the value of her exports was over £120 millions and of her imports over £100 millions. The distribution of this trade was roughly as follows:

	<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>Other parts of the Empire</i>	<i>Foreign Countries</i>
Percentage value of			
Exports to ...	31½	14½	54
Imports from ...	39	10	51

This growth of trade was mainly due to industrial development. The 715 factories registered in 1893 had grown by 1931 to over 9,000, employing more than 1½ million workers. In the same period the average mill-production of cotton piecegoods rose from about 500 million to about 2,300

<sup>1</sup> In India expenditure on many public services (e.g., irrigation, police, education, agriculture, public health) is borne by Provincial revenues and not, as in many countries, wholly or partly by the Central Government. The average *total* expenditure of the Centre and the Provinces in this period was about £156 millions, of which the amount spent on defence was about 24 per cent.

million yards. The range of Indian industry similarly increased,<sup>1</sup> and the amount of Indian enterprise and of Indian capital invested. An outstanding example was the Tata Iron and Steel Company, a genuinely Indian concern, which, operating near the Bengal coalfield, produced nearly 500,000 tons of finished steel in 1929. Though most of the whole industrial output was absorbed in the Indian market, the value of goods wholly or partly manufactured in India rose from 17 per cent. of the total value of exports in 1904 to 27 per cent. in 1929. Clearly India was no more content than the Dominions to confine her economic energies to primary production.

That meant that India must share the Dominions' freedom to protect their industries from competition, British as much as foreign, and nothing better illustrated the "new angle" of 1919 than the establishment of the so-called "fiscal convention." Tariffs under the new constitution were still controlled by the Government of India, still in its turn controlled at need by the Secretary of State; but Parliament had accepted the principle laid down by the Joint Select Committee of 1919 that, "whatever be the right fiscal policy for India . . . it is quite clear that she should have the same liberty to consider her interests as Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa."<sup>2</sup> It was understood, accordingly, that the Secretary of State would not overrule any tariff measure on which the Government of India and the Indian legislature were agreed. And, throughout this period, despite strong protests at times from British manufacturers and milder representations from the British Government, they did agree—as to the need of a protective tariff, as to the concession of a preference to British imports similar to that given by the Dominions, as to the acceptance of the Ottawa Agreements in the framing of which Indian representatives took part, as to the conclusion of a commercial treaty with Japan.<sup>3</sup>

### *National Status*

There were other indications that India was being "brought into the scale of nations." It was in 1923 that the

---

<sup>1</sup> It now includes cotton, jute, iron and steel, leather-goods, chemicals, ceramics and numerous other industries.

<sup>2</sup> *Report*, II.

<sup>3</sup> In 1939 the Assembly rejected an Indo-British trade agreement, though it could fairly be regarded as a good bargain for India. It was approved by the Council of State and "certified" by the Governor-General.

status of the Dominions as equal members with Britain of the British Commonwealth of Nations was first defined, and already at that time India, though not yet fully self-governing, was exercising the same sort of national functions as the Dominions. Like them, India had her own representatives in the Imperial War Cabinet and in the Imperial Conference during and after the war : a High Commissioner for India was likewise now established at his "India House" in London. And in international as well as inter-imperial affairs India played a Dominion's part. She separately signed the Treaty of Versailles and became a separate member of the League of Nations. She was separately represented at the International Labour Office : as one of the eight leading industrial countries she obtained a permanent seat on its Council of which an Indian was elected Chairman in 1933. Though in all these cases her representatives were appointed by the Government of India or the Secretary of State and were not responsible to the Indian Legislature, the international footing thus accorded to India was by no means that of a quasi-British "dummy." It brought Indian statesmen into the centre of world politics ; it ensured that Indian opinion should not be overlooked ; and it was in itself a sort of guarantee that India's full and equal partnership in the Commonwealth was the ultimate objective.

There was other evidence in this period that India was being equipped for nationhood. The pronouncement of 1917 had not been concerned with responsible government only. Its first sentence had promised the fulfilment of the old demand for the greater "Indianisation" of the higher civil services. How slowly this had hitherto been met has been observed in Chapter III. In 1923 the Indian members of the I.C.S. still numbered only about ten per cent. But in that year a commission was appointed, half British and half Indian in personnel with Lord Lee as chairman, which unanimously recommended—and the recommendation was accepted and implemented—(1) that recruitment should be so adjusted as to ensure that half the I.C.S. would be Indian after ten years and half the Indian Police Service after fifteen ; and (2) that the other services, concerned as they were with the "transferred" field of administration, should likewise be transferred from the control of the Secretary of State to that of the Provincial Governments, which meant, broadly speaking, that no more British officials would be recruited for them.

## THE GROWTH OF INDIAN SELF-GOVERNMENT, 1909-1935

Nationhood requires not only a national civil service but also a national army, and even more striking, if only because they were the first, were the steps now taken to "Indianise" the officer corps of the Indian Army. Vacancies were reserved at the military colleges in Britain for Indian cadets and in 1934 an Indian "Sandhurst" was opened at Dehra Dun. As the first stage of an expanding process intended in due course to cover the whole Army, it was decided that eight units should be converted into wholly Indian units as quickly as possible. In 1932 this scheme was enlarged to cover a little more than one whole division.

### *Dyarchy in the Provinces*

These advances at the Centre, these preparations for nationhood, were by no means negligible; but more public interest was taken in the Provinces, for it was there alone that Indians had been entrusted with a real, if incomplete, measure of parliamentary self-government. How would Dyarchy work?—that was the vital question.

In view of its cumbrous and unprecedented dualism it is, perhaps, surprising that it worked at all. But it did. Most Indian ministers frankly accepted their exclusion from the "reserved" field, and much of the work they did in the "transferred" field was of high quality and utility, especially their attack on the social problems, such as housing, created by the growth of industry in the crowded towns. Equally notable and generously admitted by ministers themselves was the loyal service given them by the heads of the civil service, still mostly British, whose aid was quite as indispensable to them as Whitehall's aid to their prototypes at Westminster. But the maximum of energy and public spirit could not do much in a period of financial stringency. A large part of the Provincial revenues went to the Central treasury. Expenditure on the "reserved" subjects was kept to a minimum, but, even so, there was little left for such so-called "nation-building" subjects as education and public health. And there were other reasons why Dyarchy proved disappointing. The party system, on which British parliamentary government has always depended, failed to develop except in Madras.<sup>1</sup> The groups in the legislatures of which

---

<sup>1</sup> In Madras the party division between Brahmins and non-Brahmins induced the Governor, Lord Willingdon, to "jump" Dyarchy and run the government on a unitary basis.

ministers were leaders seemed unable to throw off their old habits of constant and sometimes irresponsible criticism. They were inclined to put their ministers in the same dock as the official executive councillors, and they gave far more of their time to criticism of what was done in the "reserved" field than to their own "transferred" business. Though it tended to defeat the intentions of the Act of 1919, this was not unnatural. It was galling for Indian politicians to be reminded by the operation of the constitution from day to day that they had been judged unfit for more than a limited responsibility. They had had none at all before, it is true; and yet, if it had not been dictated by a caution not altogether unjustified in a war-shaken world and in a restless and divided India, and also, no doubt, by the need of breaking the shock of the "reforms" on more conservative British circles, the stress laid on "gradualness" and especially the machinery set up for its application might have seemed to illustrate the British lack of psychological imagination. For the Act provided that at the end of ten years a commission should examine and report on the working of Dyarchy and advise as to whether the scope of responsible government should be extended *or restricted*.<sup>1</sup> The governness, said the mockers, was to watch the children and see if they behaved themselves.

In any case the political tide was now running too fast for such deliberate procedure. The new constitution had been working for little more than a year when the Government of India accepted a resolution moved in the Assembly that its revision need not wait till 1929, and in 1924, under continued pressure, it set on foot its own inquiry into its operation. In 1927 the Home Government acquiesced in this process of acceleration and appointed the Commission two years before it was required by the Act. Thus began a long, painstaking, many-sided discussion comparable in its historical importance with the famous debates of 1787. For, while the Fathers of the American Constitution were dealing with a people who were not to number more than 100 millions till over a century had passed, the British and Indian statesmen who framed the Act of 1935 were concerned with a population already numbering some 350 millions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Section 84A (2).



*The Act of 1935*

This long discussion made an inauspicious start. The Simon Commission's duty was only to inquire and report, not to decide, and there were doubtless good reasons for limiting its personnel to members of Parliament. But to sensitive Indian nationalists it looked as if, in contrast with the Dominions who had framed their own constitutions, India was to have a constitution imposed on her in the framing of which her own people had had no voice. The British Government did what it could to dispel this misunderstanding. Committees of Indians were at once appointed to work side by side with the Commission when in India, and it was presently announced that a Round Table Conference would be held in London to which representatives of all India, States as well as Provinces, would be invited to consider the Commission's report and the framework of the new constitution.

The Commission took more than two years over its complicated task, and, when its report appeared in 1930, it was clear that once more the tide of Indian nationalism had outpaced the British response to it. Thus the Commission's recommendation that Dyarchy and "gradualness" should be abandoned and the Provinces advance forthwith to full responsible government might have seemed bold enough a few years earlier, but by 1930 it was almost taken for granted. Indian nationalism was now demanding national, not merely provincial, self-government, and this demand the Commission did nothing to meet. It proposed no substantial change at the Centre. It left the question of an all-India federation still in the dim future. It seemed, therefore, as if the report was already out of date when the Round Table Conference assembled towards the end of 1930.

\* Meantime Congress was in full revolt. It had greeted the Commission's visits to India with the slogan, "Simon, go back!" and had boycotted all its proceedings. Gandhi put the same ban on the Conference unless the Government would give an impossible pledge that its work would result in the immediate concession of Dominion Status to India. Other Congressmen went further and demanded separation from the Empire; and in the spring of 1930 the Government's authority was directly challenged by a "civil disobedience" movement led by Gandhi in person. Starting with a relatively harmless defiance of the salt-tax, it quickly

## THE ACT OF 1935

assumed, like the "non-co-operation" movement before it, a wider and more dangerous complexion. Again there was rioting, arson, looting and bloodshed in many Indian towns. Again a group of Moslems, the "Red Shirts" on the North-West Frontier, made common cause with Congress. But there was one interesting new feature. Congress was now financed on a generous scale by Indian capitalists and advised by Indian business men. In India as elsewhere nationalism was showing its economic side.

Once more, however, there was nothing like a national uprising; and when Gandhi was again arrested with many of his followers, the back of the movement seemed broken. But to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin (now Lord Halifax), whose unmistakable sincerity as statesman and Christian alike had made a strong appeal to Indian sentiment, repression seemed no solution. Defying the charge of weakness, he invited Gandhi to an interview early in 1931 and persuaded him to agree that, if the prosecution of Congress were suspended, he would recommend its taking part in the second session of the Round Table Conference and call a truce in the meantime to "civil disobedience." Unhappily the peace thus made did not last long. Gandhi came to the Conference but, as he had wished and Congress had agreed, he came alone; and, while he received a typically friendly, if somewhat puzzled, welcome from the British public, including the cotton operatives in Lancashire, he was ineffective and unconstructive at the Conference. At the beginning of 1932 he was back in India, evidently regretting that he had ever left it, and soon he was back in prison. For the truce was over: "civil disobedience" had begun again; and, since conciliation had been tried and failed, Lord Willingdon, who had now succeeded Lord Irwin, could do no other than uphold the law.

Meantime the work of constitution-making steadily went on. Three sessions of the Conference were held (1930-33), and in the light of its deliberations a draft scheme was prepared and submitted to further lengthy consideration by a highly competent Joint Select Committee of Parliament. Then at last the new constitution was embodied in a Bill, which, after full debate in both Houses, became the Act of 1935.

### *Provisions of the Act*

In all the Provinces, now increased to eleven by the separation of Sind from Bombay and Orissa from Bihar,

## THE GROWTH OF INDIAN SELF-GOVERNMENT, 1909-1935

the Act entrusted the whole field of administration to undivided Indian ministries. In other words, all the internal affairs of a Province, including justice and police—and these are the affairs which most closely affect the everyday life of the people—were to be dealt with by an Indian prime minister and cabinet responsible, like their originals in Britain, only to their own legislature and through it to the electorate. Each Governor was expressly instructed to act, as the King acts in Britain, “on his ministers’ advice,” subject to the observance of what were called “special responsibilities” or in common parlance “safeguards”. On certain specific matters, of which the most important were the maintenance of peace in grave emergency and the just treatment of minorities, the Governor was empowered to override his ministers and to take the steps needed to carry out his decision on his personal responsibility.

Since the minority communities<sup>1</sup> still insisted on it, communal representation was retained for all of them, including the “depressed classes” of Hindus.<sup>2</sup> No other subject occupied so much of the Conference’s time as the treatment of these minorities, and, when in the end it proved impossible to obtain agreement on the allocation of minority seats, it was left to the British Prime Minister (then Mr. MacDonald) to make an “arbitral award.”

This advance to full responsible government in the Provinces was, as has been seen, not unexpected. More startling was the advance towards national unity. The main difficulty of extending responsible government from the Provinces to the Centre had always been that it implied the control by British-Indian politicians of all-India matters, such as tariffs and communications, with which the interests of the States were concerned. There was general satisfaction, therefore, when at the very first session of the Conference the project of federation was suddenly brought out of the misty future on to the stage of present-day practical politics. The Princes, it appeared, were willing to consider a federal union with

---

<sup>1</sup> At the census of 1931, of a total population in India of over 350 million (an increase since 1881 of 32 per cent.), there were almost 177.7 million Hindus in British India (61.5 in the States), 67 million Moslems (10.7), 12.7 million Buddhists (0.1), 3.9 million Christians (2.4), 3.2 million Sikhs (1.1). Most of the Buddhists were Burmans and must not be reckoned as part of the Indian population after the separation of Burma from India in 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Through Gandhi’s intervention, pressed home by his “fast unto death,” it was afterwards agreed that the “depressed classes,” while retaining their separate seats, should also vote with the general Hindu electorate.

## PROVISIONS OF THE ACT

British India provided that their domestic rights were not infringed. The Act, accordingly, provided for the establishment of a Federal Government and Parliament in which both British India and the States would be represented. Indian ministers would be responsible for all federal subjects except three—defence, foreign policy, and (a very minor matter) the control of the British chaplains required as long as British officials and soldiers should continue to serve in India. Under a variant of Dyarchy, these subjects would be “reserved” to the control of the Governor-General, responsible only to the Secretary of State. Over the rest of the field the principle of parliamentary responsibility would prevail, subject, as in the Provinces, to “safeguards” which, though on paper they might seem a serious limitation of ministers’ powers, especially in finance, would not in fact be needed in normal circumstances and might, indeed, if all went well, never operate at all.

This federal part of the Act was not to come into force unless and until a prescribed number of the Princes should signify their willingness to accept it. Meantime the provincial part was not to be held up. It came into force in 1937.

At the wish of the majority of her provincial legislature Burma was not included in the federation. A Burma Round Table Conference was held, and in 1935 a constitution was enacted enabling Burma to resume her separate national life with the same measure of self-government she would have enjoyed if she had elected to remain linked with India.

How far the Constitution of 1935 has satisfied the aspirations of Indian nationalism will be discussed in the next chapter. Suffice it to note here that it was not thrust on India by dictation: it was the offspring of full and lengthy consultation. It is true that, except for Gandhi’s brief and unfruitful share in the proceedings, the largest political party in India was not represented; but all the other parties and interests had their say, and the credit for the outcome, a system of government by rule of law for one-sixth of mankind, must go to Indian as much as to British statesmanship—to such men as Sir T. B. Saprú and Mr. Jayakar from British India and Sir Akbar Hydari, Sir Mirza Ismail and Colonel Haksar from the States. It is true, again, that the Act did not go so far towards complete self-government as some of those Indian moderates wished; but they were willing to acquiesce in it and do their best to work it as a measure of transition towards their final goal. Nor could it be said

that British statesmen's response to India's claims, now that they had conned and weighed them as never before, was hesitant or half-hearted. The Act of 1935 would have been quite inconceivable in the days of Kipling's India or of Curzon's.

To many Englishmen, indeed, it might well have seemed to go too far. Business men, for instance, remembering that new economic edge to Indian nationalism, were bound to feel some disquiet at its attaining so much power. But what was the alternative? British trade could only prosper in the long run in a friendly India. Repression and estrangement would wither it up. When the American colonists had demanded freedom, "If you conquer them, what then?" Chatham had asked his countrymen. "You cannot make them respect you. You cannot make them wear your cloth." Lord Irwin made the same sort of appeal to commercial common-sense when he visited the industrial north on his return from India in 1931. Economic difficulties between India and Britain "can only be solved," he said, "by reasonable discussion."

It was harder, perhaps, for the I.C.S. to acquiesce in its own abdication. But for a generation past the old gulf that had separated its members from the political *intelligentsia* had been steadily narrowing; and, especially since the introduction of Dyarchy, they had come to understand and respect what nationalism meant to Indians. If some senior officials or ex-officials opposed the Act, it was not so much, to do them justice, because they were clinging to the last shreds of their old power as because they still hesitated to surrender to apprentice hands the trust to which they had given the best years of their own lives. Was it wise, they asked, to shoulder Indian politicians yet awhile with the life-and-death business of maintaining law and order? But no one contested the goal of *Swaraj*: it was only the pace now set towards it that the opposition quarrelled with. And it proved in the end a remarkably small opposition. Only 133 votes were cast against the decisive second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons. The other 403 members followed Mr. Baldwin's lead. India, he said, was no exception to the rule that the unity of the Empire had been maintained by meeting "with good judgment and in good time" the wishes of its peoples to manage their own affairs.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, May 7, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, ser. V, ccxcvii (1934-5), 1719.

## CHAPTER V

### The Last Stage

1935—1941

#### *Dominion Status in Sight*

THE Act of 1935 was no more intended to be final than the Act of 1919. It was intended, as Government spokesmen explained, to lead on to Dominion status; and since the Declaration of 1926 and the Statute of Westminster of 1931 it was quite clear what Dominion status meant. The Dominions had acquired complete self-government, both legislative and executive. They had become independent states on an absolutely equal footing with Britain, "in no way subordinate in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs." They were "united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations"; but those ties did not infringe their liberty. The Crown was no longer the symbol, still less the instrument, of Britain's predominance. In Dominion matters the King could now only act in accordance with the advice of his Dominion Ministers. As his voyage across the Atlantic was presently to show, he was King of Canada in exactly the same way as he was King of Britain. How free, similarly, was a Dominion's association in the Commonwealth was soon proved by the sternest test. On the outbreak of war in 1939, the Parliaments of Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand chose, without any pressure from Britain, to take part in the war at her side. Eire's decision to be neutral was not contested.

How near to this national independence was India brought by the Act of 1935? Apart from the "safeguards," which (as will presently appear) proved difficult to work, and the retention of British officials in the Central Government and—a dwindling company<sup>1</sup>—in the provincial administration, the status of India, if the Act came into full operation, would be comparable with that of a Dominion before 1914. For India would then manage practically all her own business

---

<sup>1</sup> In the I.C.S., I.P.S. and other all-India services there are now 1,544 British officers and 1,241 Indian. In the Provincial services, which vastly outnumber the all-India services in total personnel, there are now no British officers.

except foreign policy and defence; and till after 1914 the Dominions had acquiesced in the British Government's control of foreign policy, though the whole Empire was affected by it; as to defence most of the Dominions had created national forces for their own protection by land, but a British regular force was still stationed in South Africa in 1916.

The Act of 1935, therefore, would take India far along Mr. Gokhale's path of "colonial self-government," right up, indeed, to the last stretch of it; and from the purely constitutional standpoint the time it would take to cover that last stretch could be roughly measured by the time it would take for India to acquire a Dominion's capacity to defend herself with her own army.<sup>1</sup> During this period it might be possible to arrange for the continued participation of British troops in the defence of India by voluntary agreement between the British and Indian Governments or, since the security of the whole Commonwealth would be affected, between all its national Governments.

Yet, though the new constitution would bring India so near its goal of freedom, Congress refused to accept it. And the reason is obvious enough. The Simon Report may have missed the tide, but its authors showed that at least they had realised why it ran so fast.

We should say without hesitation that . . . the political sentiment which is most widespread among all educated Indians is the expression of a demand for equality with Europeans and a resentment against any suspicion of differential treatment . . . It is a great deal more than a personal feeling; it is the claim of the East for due recognition of status.<sup>2</sup>

For Indian patriots, eager to show what a free India could do for herself and the world, it was hard to wait for that recognition even a little while. Equality is not a matter of degree, and a people trained in the philosophy of freedom cannot easily be content with less, however little less, than the footing accorded to other peoples in world society. The British people, for their part, had been slow to understand this Indian feeling, but, now that they did understand it, they were bound to respect it. They could only plead for a patience which, had the Indian case been theirs, they would certainly have found it hard to practise. They could only point out that the Acts of 1909, 1919 and

---

<sup>1</sup> For the constitutional difficulty of putting British troops under the control of any other authority than the British Parliament, see "India and Dominion Status," in R. Coupland, *The Empire in These Days* (London, 1935).

<sup>2</sup> Cmd. 3568, 408.

## PROVINCIAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AND THE WAR

1935 had carried India along the path of freedom to a point which it had taken the Dominions twice as long to reach. They could only argue that the last remaining obstacles to India's attainment of an equal status with that of any other nation were real ones and that their removal lay mainly in Indian hands.

### *Provincial Self-government and the War*

Fortunately Congress, when it came to the point, relaxed its root-and-branch antagonism to the new constitution. It still repudiated the federal part of the Act, but, when the provincial part came into force early in 1937, it fought the elections, and, having won clear majorities in no less than eight of the eleven Provinces, it withdrew, after a few months' hesitation, its refusal to take office. From July 1937 to September 1939 those eight Provinces were governed by Congress ministries.

The result was far more satisfactory than that of Dyarchy. There could be no question now where the responsibility lay for every act of government. As long as the "reserved" subjects, particularly law and order, were still controlled by an Executive Council which was not responsible to the legislature, it seemed as if the British Raj had undergone no real, decisive change. Now, it was soon evident, it had not merely been changed: as far as the normal internal life of a Province was concerned, it had virtually ceased to exist. Congress ministers, who had denounced the self-government offered by the Act as a sham, discovered that it was genuine. They found that the British officials, whose presence in India they had declared to be intolerable, were willing to serve them as loyally and usefully as they had served their own superiors in earlier days. Prime Ministers and Governors were soon on the friendliest terms. Even the notorious "safeguards" proved something of an illusion. To students of politics it had always seemed that those special powers would rarely, if ever, be used. For ministers would be unlikely to compel a Governor to override them unless they were sure of public support, and in that case, if they were overridden, they would presumably resign and force an election, at which, presumably again, they would retain, if not increase, their majority, thus bringing about a deadlock, with the British Governor and the Indian electorate in open conflict. On one occasion, on the question of releasing "political prisoners," the overriding power was



used and ministers resigned; but after some discussion an agreement was reached between all parties concerned. Thus Congress ministers—and equally, of course, their *confrères* in the other three Provinces—realised that they were in fact masters in their own houses. British officials, similarly, found that many of their anxieties had been unjustified. Like politicians elsewhere, Congress ministers generally proved more realistic in office than on the electioneering platform. So far from trying to wreck the constitution they worked it with relentless energy. In matters that closely touched the welfare of the mass of the people, such as land tenure, rural development and education, they showed an honesty of public spirit not always to be found in democratic office-holders. In sum it may be said that, save for one very serious drawback to be mentioned presently, this brief trial of the new constitution fulfilled the best hopes of its authors, British and Indian alike. The difficult ground between half and full self-government had been crossed without disaster.<sup>1</sup>

Unhappily the time allowed for this “new growth of freedom” before Prussianism in its new and uglier shape made its second assault on freedom everywhere was not long enough for the second part of the Act to be brought into operation. The Princes, observing the success which Congress seemed to be making of the first part, hesitated more than ever to tie themselves to a federal machine the working of which would be so powerfully influenced by that highly democratic body. They were determined at any rate to make still more certain of their rights under the new scheme, and a protracted discussion of the exact terms of their “accession” to the federation was still in progress when the storm broke.

This was a double misfortune. It meant, in the first place, that Congress leaders had not been given the same chance of testing the realities of the federal constitution as they had of the provincial. They would have found, it is safe to assert, that parliamentary control had been no less genuinely established in a great part of the federal field, and it is hard to believe that, given a wise Viceroy, prepared to consult and adjust, they would not have come to acquiesce in the temporary “reservation” of the rest of it. As it was, they continued to repudiate the second part of the Act as

---

<sup>1</sup> For a brief account of Congress government in one Province see “The United Provinces and the New Constitution,” by Sir Harry Haig (Governor 1934-1939) in the *Asiatic Review*, July 1940.

## CONGRESS OPPOSITION

fiercely as they had once repudiated the first part. In the second place, if responsible federal ministers had been actually in office at the Centre, it is inconceivable that, though foreign policy was still "reserved" from them, the Viceroy would not have succeeded in associating them, and through them the federal parliament, with his own action in declaring that India was at war. As it was, the declaration was treated as a matter which concerned Lord Linlithgow and his Executive Council alone: it was not submitted to the Assembly: it might almost, it seemed, have been made by Curzon or Dalhousie. This procedure was constitutionally correct, but it inevitably inflamed the wound which inequality of national status inflicts on Indian patriots' pride. The peoples of all the Dominions had been free to choose whether or not they should commit themselves to the perils and sacrifices of war. Nobody doubted that the choice of the Indian people would have been the same, but, their constitutional position being what it was, their advance to full nationhood being still incomplete, they were not asked to make it.

### *Congress Opposition*

There was never any question on which side India stood. None of her politicians had denounced the aims and methods of Nazism more vehemently than Congressmen. They knew that, whatever her blunders and shortcomings, Britain stood for freedom and that her fall would put an abrupt end to India's national aspirations. When Gandhi heard of the outbreak of hostilities and shared the general expectation of a *Blitzkrieg*, he told the Viceroy that his "own sympathies were with England and France from the purely humanitarian standpoint." "As I was picturing before him the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down."<sup>1</sup> His own first thought, he said, was that "whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally." But in this, he records, "I was sorry to find myself alone."<sup>2</sup> The majority of his fellow Congressmen refused to follow his lead. Their condemnation of Nazism was quite as wholehearted, but they set beside it the spectre, surely a rather bloodless ghost by now, of British "imperialism"; and they refused to co-operate in the war-effort unless the British Government

---

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan* (Gandhi's newspaper), September 9, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, September 23, 1939.

would agree to the immediate holding of an Indian Conference, composed of elected representatives both of British India and of the States, to draft an entirely new constitution, and would promise to abide by its results. Nor, for their part, would they be content with Dominion Status: their votes would be cast for secession from the Commonwealth. The British Government on their side, authorised the Viceroy to declare their willingness to reconsider the Act of 1935 in consultation with the representatives of all communities, parties and interests in India, as soon as possible after peace was restored. In the meantime they proposed to set up a representative consultative committee to discuss the prosecution of the war.<sup>1</sup> Lord Linlithgow personally submitted these proposals to Gandhi, who had acquiesced in the majority decision of Congress, and to the leaders of the other parties. But he failed to obtain their assent. The Congress leaders, indeed, regarded his offer as so unsatisfactory that, at the bidding of the Working Committee or party caucus, the eight Congress ministries resigned and the administration of those Provinces was taken over by their Governors. Early in 1940 the Viceroy, while deploring the rejection of his proposals which would, he claimed, have achieved in practice the unity of India, made a further concession. He proposed to invite a number of political leaders to join his Executive Council and assist it in the prosecution of the war.<sup>2</sup> But again he failed to get agreement, and in the absence of it the Congress demand still held the field. Thus the quarrel between the advance guard of Indian nationalism and a retreating British Raj was resumed just when the promising results of full provincial self-government had seemed to be bringing about a better understanding, and this at the supreme crisis in the history of the world when all that Britain and all that India cared for were equally at stake.

### *The Growth of Communal Antagonism*

The Congress decision to force the constitutional issue not only reopened the breach with the British Government: it also widened all the clefts in Indian nationalism. That it stiffened the opposition to Congress of other Hindu groups, the Liberals, the Mahasabha (which represents the conservative Hindu tradition) and the Depressed Classes, was un-

<sup>1</sup> Statement of October 17, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Speech at Bombay, January 10, 1940.

## THE GROWTH OF COMMUNAL ANTAGONISM

fortunate enough at such a time; but more unfortunate was the deepening of the structural fissure between British India and the States. Inevitably the Princes' growing dislike of any closer links with British India was sharpened by the proposal of a wholly democratic conference in which their States were to be represented by popular election. It seemed, indeed, as if the vision of an all-India federation would soon be slipping back into the mist. Yet that was not the worst of it. Congress militancy brought the old intractable religious schism to a head. It roused Hindu-Moslem antagonism to a higher pitch than it has ever reached since the establishment of British rule.

This antagonism had been growing *pari passu* with the growth of self-government. Under the "reforms" of 1919, though a more tolerant spirit was beginning to show itself among younger members of the *intelligentsia*, the temper of the masses seemed more inflammable than ever. In the five years 1923-1927, 450 lives were lost and some 5,000 people injured in communal riots.<sup>1</sup> Under the Act of 1935 the one gravely disquieting feature in the otherwise hopeful record of the Congress Provinces was the further increase in communal tension. Again there could be no mistaking the reason. Parliamentary government means "majority rule," and in seven<sup>2</sup> Provinces that meant Hindu rule. Communal representation, on which at every stage the Moslems had insisted, left them still in a minority; and, if this seemed bad enough under Dyarchy, it seemed still worse when in 1937 the whole field of provincial government, especially the maintenance of law and order, came under Hindu control. Even more alarming was the prospect opened up by federation. In provincial administration the four Provinces with Moslem majorities could be set off, as it were, against the seven with Hindu majorities. But majority rule at the Centre would subject all India, Moslem areas as well as Hindu, to Hindu rule. It would mean the replacement of the British Raj by a Hindu Raj.

These alarms were aggravated by the Congress claim to represent all India, to be the only authentic mouthpiece of Indian nationalism. Many Moslems, it is true, are Congressmen, but not the most prominent Moslem leaders such

---

<sup>1</sup> Details in *Indian Statutory Commission*, vol. iv, part i (1930), pp. 108-20.

<sup>2</sup> The eighth "Congress" Province is the N.-W. Frontier Province whose Government adheres to the nationalist policy of Congress, but whose population is overwhelmingly Moslem.

as the Moslem members of the Government of India or the Moslem Prime Ministers of Bengal, the Punjab and Sind; and the Moslem League can fairly claim that it commands the allegiance of the great majority of Moslems. Its desire for freedom from foreign rule, moreover, is quite as ardent as that of Congress. It fiercely repudiates Congress' monopoly of nationalism. It asserts that the Congress conception of one dominant party, embracing all the patriots of the country, belongs to a totalitarian ideology.

How far the gulf had opened was revealed when the Congress ministries resigned. They must never come back, said the League: for they had shown themselves incapable of treating the Moslem minorities justly. At the end of 1939 Mr. A. K. Fuzlal Huq, the Moslem Premier of Bengal, issued to the press a long indictment recording, province by province, the "sufferings of Moslems" under Congress rule.<sup>1</sup> As for the Congress demand for a representative constitutional conference, the League refused to have anything to do with it. It ignored the promise that the minorities should be fully represented and fairly treated. Rather than work with a Congress majority it would split India into pieces. India, said its president, Mr. Jinnah, was not one nation, but two, and he claimed for Indian Moslems the right to a separate free nationhood. A seductive idea which had been played with for some time past—a Moslem "block," comprising the Punjab, Sind and the North-West Frontier Province, with its own outlet to the sea at Karachi, backed by Moslem Afghanistan and stretching a hand towards the Moslem majority in Bengal—seemed to be taking solid shape. Such a stark renunciation of the ideal of Indian unity was a tragic illustration of the degree to which the whole situation in India had deteriorated. In the summer of 1940 the prospects both of parliamentary government in the Provinces and of the federation of all India seemed far less favourable than they were before the framing of the Act of 1935. And the summer of 1940 was the time of the Battle of France and the eve of the Battle of Britain.

### *Facing the Facts*

Hindu nationalists often put the blame for the continuance of Hindu-Moslem discord on the British Raj; and in one sense, a negative sense, the charge is true. If com-

---

<sup>1</sup> Without impartial scrutiny this document cannot be accepted as proof of an anti-Moslem policy on the part of Congress ministers.

munal strife is rarer in the Indian States than in British India, it is mainly because the States are under autocratic rule. Religious freedom, within the limits of humanity (as has been observed in an earlier chapter), has always been maintained in British India. A minority community, therefore, need not fear to assert its rights, knowing they will be protected by the impartial rule of law. So far, then, as freedom has helped to keep the feud alive, the British Government has been responsible. But to assert, as some extremists do, that, at any time since the period of war and conquest, it has deliberately fomented the feud in accordance with the maxim *divide et impera* is palpably untrue. If it were true, would the leaders of the two communities at times of tension ask, as they frequently have asked, for a British district officer to be put in charge of the dangerous area, or consult him, as they frequently have done, as to how to ease the tension and prevent a riot? Is it conceivable, again, that, when Lord Irwin, for example, made his solemn appeal to responsible Hindus and Moslems to use all their influence to break down the chief obstacle that barred the way to India's freedom, he was secretly plotting to strengthen it? Is it likely that the rank and file of the I.C.S., whose devotion to the welfare of Indian countryfolk is admitted by all generous-minded Indians, cared nothing that their work should end in smoke and bloodshed if only their own position were secure? That calumny can only be believed by those who think that the British people do not intend, whatever their statesmen say and whatever their parliament does, to loosen their grip on India and that no conduct is too dastardly that will help them to retain it.

The same reasoning applies when the feud is carried from the field of religious practice into politics. When tempers run high, the lot of the would-be impartial arbiter is not a happy one. British statesmen do not want to quarrel with the Hindu majority; they share its desire for the full enfranchisement of India. But they maintain that the Moslem minority, no less freedom-loving, also has its rights; and they cannot promise to impose on it against its will a constitution shaped by majority votes. That attitude is denounced by Congress as an encouragement of Moslem "intransigence." But what is the alternative? To force the Moslems to submit would entail the use of British troops. Would any thoughtful Indian patriot wish them to be used to stamp out freedom of opinion anywhere in India?

The crisis, in fact, has forced everyone concerned to face up to uncomfortable questions. Was Morley right? Can parliamentary government work in India? Is Indian society still too disparate to bear "majority rule?" Those questions cannot be evaded, but they should not be hastily answered. Indians, after all, have only just begun to translate the textbooks into practice. Parliamentary government need not, indeed it cannot, operate in India precisely as it operates in Britain. Is communal representation the only method of safeguarding minority rights? Might not something be achieved by altering political boundaries, by devolving more power on small and relatively homogeneous units of government, even by the drastic process of shifting populations in areas in which the rival communities are not too closely intertwined, by modifying the character of electoral constituencies, by treating religious questions by other than parliamentary methods? Would the tension be eased if the executive were chosen separately, as in the United States, and were not responsible from day to day to the legislature? And, if such devices still run too much on western lines, is there nothing in Indian tradition that will help to solve this intrinsically Indian problem? But, whatever experiments may be tried, the cold fact will remain that a majority is a majority and a minority a minority and that Indian nationhood cannot be a political reality unless all Indians, whatever their loyalties may be in other fields of life, put India first in Indian politics.

### *India and the War*

Distracting and disheartening as it is, the political controversy has not prevented India from playing her part in the mortal struggle with Nazism. The peacetime strength of the Indian Army has been tripled by a steady flow of voluntary recruits. A contingent of it served in Europe before the collapse of France, and some of its historic regiments have won new laurels in Libya and East Africa. The personnel of the Royal Indian Navy has been likewise tripled, and the Indian Air Force will soon be four times what it was when the war began. As in the last war, moreover, despite increased taxation, the gifts of individual Indians for war purposes have been on a generous scale. At the outset of 1941 the Viceroy's Fund had reached a total of nearly £2½ million, and large sums had been disbursed from it to aid the war effort and to succour the victims of the *Luftwaffe* in British cities. But India's most important contribution

to the war has been in the economic field. Her young industrial system has enabled her not only to provide nine-tenths of the military supplies she needs at home but also to equip the Imperial forces in Africa and the Middle East with a large part of their war materials and stores. The strategic importance of India as a source of supply, especially when shipping is short, has thus become self-evident, and in the autumn of 1940 it was emphasised by the gathering at Delhi of a conference at which representatives of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and all the other British territories that are washed by the Indian Ocean discussed with the Government of India how to expand and co-ordinate their productive resources with a view to conserving British shipping and reducing the dependence of the Imperial forces in the East on supplies from Britain and North America.

But, while so many Indians—on the battlefields, in government offices, in business houses, in the factories—have been doing their utmost to aid the common war effort, the political controversy has gone on smouldering in the background, threatening from time to time to burst into angry flame. There has been no violent or widespread agitation. Among educated Indians it is only Congressmen who have advocated "non-co-operation" in the fight with Nazism. Nevertheless India's great war effort would have been greater still if the strongest political organisation in India could have been induced to back it, and in the summer of 1940 the British Government made one more bid for peace. The Viceroy's persistent efforts to obtain an agreement having failed, they decided to act without it. On August 8 a joint announcement was made by Mr. Amery (Secretary of State in the Churchill Government) in the House of Commons and by Lord Linlithgow in India that the plan of enlarging the Executive Council and setting up an Advisory Council (as the consultative body was now called) would now be put into effect. As regards the constitution, the old assurance was repeated that the goal of British policy was "the attainment by India of full and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth"; but a new note was sounded as to the way in which the last step to that goal might be taken. No reference was made to the Act of 1935. The conference to be held as soon as possible after the war would be charged with working out "a *new* constitutional scheme," and one that could not be regarded as cut by British hands from



British cloth. For, provided that it did not prevent "the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connexion with India had imposed on her," the framing of the scheme "should be *primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves*, and should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic and political structure of Indian life."<sup>1</sup>

This announcement was warmly approved in both Houses of Parliament. It was welcomed also by the moderate Hindu press. But the spokesmen of both Congress and the Moslem League refused to accept it as a basis of agreement. Their reasons were contradictory, for the Moslems feared that the enlarged Executive Council would commit them to the principle of a central government controlled by a Hindu majority, whereas Congress complained that the scheme proposed did not in fact and at once apply that very principle. So once more the negotiations came to nothing, and this time Congress was not prepared passively to acquiesce in what they regarded as an obstinate refusal to accept the logic of democracy. At an earlier stage of the war the majority of Congressmen had resisted Gandhi's plea that even Nazi aggression should not be met by force, but now they yielded to it, and, while Gandhi still affirmed his desire "to refrain from embarrassing the British Government in their war effort" and refused to launch any mass-movement of "civil disobedience," it was decided that individual Congressmen should preach the doctrine of *Ahimsa*. In a frank and friendly discussion the Viceroy told Gandhi that anyone was as free in India as in Britain to advocate his pacifist beliefs, but he rejected the further claim that "the Indian conscientious objector to all war as such or to the participation of India in the present war should be untrammelled in the expression of his views."<sup>2</sup> To this ruling Congress refused to submit, and in due course some of its ablest leaders, having made public speeches against the war, were arrested, tried and imprisoned. At the time of writing (February, 1941) this unhappy deadlock still persists.

### Conclusion

However the situation may develop in the immediate future, it is hard to believe that the story told in these pages

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, ser. V, cccxlv (1940), 404.

<sup>2</sup> The letters exchanged between the Viceroy and Gandhi were published on September 30, 1940: see *The Times*, October 1.

## CONCLUSION

is doomed to a tragic ending, provided that it lies with Britain and India and not with Germany to end it. There are solid grounds for a reasonable optimism.

First, the story, all in all, has been a good story. With all their failings and mistakes the British people since Burke's day have genuinely tried to fulfil their trust for the welfare of the Indian people and, during the last twenty years, to bring it to a smooth and safe conclusion; and "plain good intention," as Burke said, "is of no mean force in the government of mankind." It is all too easy in the short run to kindle the fires of national jealousy and hate, and easier still when race-feeling fans the flame. But a really bitter and lasting quarrel must be fed with facts. And in the long run, the individual Indian, re-reading the record of the past in the light of his own experience of the present, will know that the charge that the people of Britain have enslaved and exploited the people of India is untrue. *Magna est veritas et praevalerebit.*

Secondly, while there are many good reasons why the old association of Britain and India should endure, transformed into "a free and equal partnership"—the common cause of peace and liberty, the common hope of linking Europe and Asia in one world society—there is no good reason for their separation, still less for their estrangement. India, on her side, wants freedom, but, as the fate of other nations shows, the forms of freedom are illusory without security; and in what other partnership can India find as much security without abandoning one jot of freedom as in the British Commonwealth? Surely, then, she will choose to accept that partnership once she is convinced that the old embittering facts of conquest and subordination have faded into the past and that within measurable time she will be equipped, as Munro long ago foretold, "to govern and protect" herself, as much the mistress of her destiny as any nation in the world.

Britain, for her part, has certain "interests" in India, material and moral, but none of these conflict with Indian interests.

On the material side it is a British political interest that India should remain a link in the strategic chain that holds the Commonwealth together and should be able to defend herself from foreign occupation. And it is a British economic interest that British capital invested in India should be as safe, and British commerce with India as free, as in and

with any other civilised country. British business men have not always reckoned right, but they know now that all they can reasonably or profitably ask of India is fair and friendly economic intercourse. Roe's old rule of "quiet trade" still holds.

On the moral side there are those immediate obligations to which the announcement of August 8 alluded. In the course of India's attaining her full nationhood, Britain must continue to give such help as India needs for her protection on the North-West Frontier and at sea and to do her part in upholding law and order within the country. She must honour her old-standing treaties with the Princes. She must not assent to, still less assist in, the coercion of minorities. Those are, so to speak, the trustee's deathbed duties, the moral prerequisites of abdication. And no wise Indian can wish that they should not be fulfilled.

But there is more than that in Britain's moral interest in India. It is not merely negative. It is not only a question of maintaining peace, of keeping faith, of refusing to do injustice, while India is achieving freedom. That achievement itself is Britain's greatest moral interest. She is proud of the work she has already done in India. There are one or two black pages in the record, but, taken as a whole, she regards it as one of the finest chapters in the story of her island race. But the work is not yet quite finished. A century ago the "greatness" of Britain's role in India was founded on Indian "happiness." The test of it now is Indian freedom. But, though the British people wholeheartedly desire the Indian people to be free, they cannot make them free by their own act alone. In India as elsewhere national freedom cannot be attained without national unity, and the final withdrawal of the British Raj would not leave India free in any real meaning of the word if it left her as disunited as it found her long ago. All that Britain can do, then, is to seek by all possible means to promote agreement among Indians as to the form of government under which they will take their place in the fellowship of free nations. The rest must be India's doing.

