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India's Freedom Movement

Some Notable Figures

B. Shiva Rao



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India's Freedom Movement

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Preface

This is an attempt at telling the story of India's freedom struggle through a number of sketches of various personalities—Indian and foreign—who made significant contributions at different phases of the struggle to the achievement of the ultimate objective. These sketches do not claim to be biographical except in a limited sense. The focus of attention is primarily on their main activities in relation to India's freedom movement, and even in this respect the sketches are not meant to be comprehensive.

I am keenly aware of the many gaps and omissions in this volume. The story of India's freedom is incomplete without a detailed account of the parts played by Dadabhai Naoroji, Ranade, Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, C. R. Das, Sarojini Naidu, Sardar Patel, Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Maulana Azad and a number of other distinguished men and women who lived dedicated lives in their respective spheres for India's welfare and progress. The narrative has been restricted to the sketches of those personalities with whom I either came into contact or with whose public activities I was closely acquainted.

Even with these limitations and drawbacks, it is my hope that the reader will obtain a little insight into some aspects of the freedom struggle and capture something of its atmosphere. There is a great difference between a direct narrative of this type and a systematic account based on documents, reports and memoranda relating to the events of the period. To some extent, I, too, have made use of such papers in my collection, to fill in details which could not be revealed while the story was developing, when one was bound by the code of honour that a journalist must observe in his professional work. In writing these sketches, and later in elaborating some of them for publication in this volume, I have experienced all the excitement and the drama of the freedom movement.

The inspiration of being close to many of the martyrs and champions of our liberty, the acute sense of frustration when optimism

suddenly turned to dust and ashes as India seemed poised for achievement—these can never be reproduced in full measure. I shall be satisfied if the reader can obtain an occasional whiff of the atmosphere of adventure and sacrifice that the leaders of the freedom movement created around them.

This volume, even in its present form, could not have been prepared without the generous assistance of a number of friends. The editors of *The Hindu*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *The Statesman* and *Swarajya* readily gave their permission for reproducing the articles which I had originally written for them. The utilisation of a considerable number of private papers relating to developments of the last half-a-century and more involved a considerable amount of labour and careful scrutiny which Sri P.N. Krishna Mani and Sri C. Ganesan ungrudgingly offered despite their numerous pre-occupations. No words of gratitude can be adequate for their co-operation and advice. Much of the drudgery of revising the manuscript and arranging the material was cheerfully borne by Sri M.A. Amladi.

To Shrimati Dhanvanti Rama Rau I extend my warm thanks for her careful revision of the manuscript and many valuable suggestions for the improvement of the text.

Lastly, I must express my gratitude to the Asia Foundation during the years of its functioning in New Delhi for its generous grant to cover all my stenographic and other incidental expenses incurred in preparing this compilation.

B. Shiva Rao

New Delhi, 1972

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The Freedom Movement

India's freedom movement possesses certain remarkable features which stand out as somewhat unique in a struggle for national liberation. Tension and conflict there were bound to be with the Imperial Power as India stepped up her demands from time to time; but throughout the half-a-century of the struggle there was, on the whole—considering the dimensions and complexities of the problems facing a country of the size of India—singularly little hatred for the British rulers. Gopal Krishna Gokhale and many of his early contemporaries saw a divine purpose in the British connection with India, the fortunes of a multi-racial society being linked with those of a Western democracy, so that representative institutions could develop under the conditions obtaining in India.

This approach was not a superficial pose, but the result of a genuine conviction; nor was it limited to the moderates of the first phase of the freedom movement. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, an extremist, received in 1907 a six years' term of rigorous imprisonment for sedition with the reflection uttered in the presence of the judge, "If it be the wish of Providence that I would serve my country better through my incarceration than by remaining free, I gladly make the sacrifice."

For Annie Besant, the humiliation of subjection to a foreign power was part of the necessary process of preparation for a free India to develop democratic institutions and, as her great contribution to the emergence of a new world civilization, to spread the priceless treasures of her cultural and spiritual heritage among

the materially-minded nations of the world. Gandhiji, through all the three decades of his leadership of the freedom movement, never weakened in his faith in truth and non-violence. These qualities were for him of greater significance than political freedom secured through the shortcut of a bloody revolution. Again and again, during a civil disobedience movement, he would remind his followers that hatred of British rule was not incompatible with love for the British people.

The Congress no doubt committed itself to complete independence and severance of the tie with Britain in 1927. But only four years later, at the Round Table Conference in London in 1931, Gandhiji made an earnest appeal to Britain and India alike to forget the past and march forward together as equals and partners to form 'the nucleus of a real League of Nations'. He was frequently ridiculed as 'a naked fakir' and his motives and actions were deeply suspect in certain quarters, but to the end of his days he remained committed to the principles on the basis of which he had assumed the leadership of the freedom movement in 1919. When the second world war commenced, Gandhiji's reaction was characteristically generous. The prospect of London and Paris being destroyed through bombing appalled him, and he was in no mood to take advantage of Britain's desperate plight to strike a political bargain in India's favour.

Excesses there were, no doubt, committed by excited crowds in moments of deep resentment or frustration. But the movement, surveyed in its broad aspects over the decades, reveals spiritual overtones that lent it dignity and restraint and infused it with a deep purpose not commonly associated with a national struggle for freedom.

As a natural consequence of this characteristic, the goal of the Congress did not substantially alter in half-a-century of the world's most revolutionary period which witnessed two world wars and numerous local conflicts and a remarkable shift in the balance of power. In 1906, Dadabhai Naoroji outlined India's ultimate aim as 'self-government on colonial lines'. The term Dominion Status had not at that time gained currency. In 1947, offered a choice between complete independence and association with the Commonwealth on terms of perfect equality, India deliberately chose

the latter course : and the choice was made by Jawaharlal Nehru, the spearhead of the independence section of the Congress in 1927.

It needed great courage to brush aside at the moment of decision a commitment of twenty years, but he had the vision to see the door opening to a new stage of development in the world's progress towards a structural unity. In a remarkable address to the Asian Relations Conference in April 1947, three months before the withdrawal of British authority from India, Nehru held out the hand of fellowship to Europe and America. The vital decision to remain within the Commonwealth was, in fact, entirely in keeping with the tone and outlook of India's freedom movement from its earliest phase.

Another remarkable feature of India's freedom movement is the valuable service rendered at different stages by a long line of distinguished persons of non-Indian origin who felt a deep and genuine affection for this country. Most of all we owe a debt of gratitude to the leaders of the British socialist movement, from Annie Besant to Clement Attlee, until India dropped the last symbol of her subjection in 1947.

Among those who built the Congress on sound foundations in its early years or helped it in other ways were Alan Octavian Hume, William Wedderburn, Henry Cotton, Charles Bradlaugh and some other dedicated spirits. In the early years of this century came Keir Hardie and later Ramsay MacDonald. We had a galaxy of such persons at different stages in the British Labour Party : George Lansbury and Sir Stafford Cripps, to mention only two, after the first world war. There were others, too, from Britain who materially assisted us in the fulfilment of our aspirations.

Valuable help came to us also from the U.S.A. : from President Wilson and his advisers in the middle of the first world war; and a quarter of a century later, from President Roosevelt and his two special envoys, Colonel Louis Johnson and Mr. William Phillips. Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-shek and Madame Chiang also gave powerful support to India's demand for freedom throughout a critical period of the second world war. It is a pity that, after the capture of power in China by the Communists, we quickly forgot the Chiangs' persistent efforts during the war to persuade Churchill

to settle the Indian problem on terms acceptable to Nehru and his associates and began to use harsh language against Formosa.

In the first phase of the freedom movement, beginning with the establishment of the Congress in 1885, political aspirations were limited to modest requests for administrative improvements. Soon unrest grew, and assumed serious dimensions in the first decade of this century. The first reaction of the new Viceroy, Lord Minto, was that "it would be the greatest mistake to ignore the Congress as a factor in Indian conditions". About Curzon, his immediate predecessor, Minto had no illusions. After a preliminary survey, he told Morley, the Secretary of State for India : "Few people at home know the legacy of bitterness and discontent he left for his successor."

Following a number of terrorist outrages in India, the King, greatly perturbed by the thought of a recurrence of the 1857 rising, observed in a communication to the Viceroy : "The seditious movements in India have caused me serious anxiety, and most earnestly do I trust that you and your Government will display the greatest firmness. If we are to retain our hold on the country, we must endeavour to crush the present disloyalty with a high hand, or else we may have similar troubles as we had 50 years ago."

The extremist section of the Congress was growing strong in the early years of this century under Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bepin Chandra Pal and Lajpat Rai. Minto was apologetic about the strong action that the Executive in India took against Tilak in 1907. The sentence (of six years' rigorous imprisonment in a Burmese prison for sedition) had struck Morley as being 'monstrous'.

The members of the Indian Committee functioning in the House of Commons numbering about 150—all Liberals with a handful of Labour members (Keir Hardie being particularly prominent)—were a source of great strength to the Congress as champions of India's freedom.

The question of reforms was engaging the attention of the British authorities at both ends. Gokhale had spent a good deal of his time in London, trying to influence the British Government and the House of Commons in favour of a liberal instalment of reform. How far should they go to win over the moderates, especially after the split in the Congress at its Surat session in

1907 was a question which engaged their consideration. The appointment of an Indian to the Viceroy's Executive Council was discussed at length between London and Simla, and the original suggestion of two members was later reduced to one.

Minto was attracted by the suggestion of 'a Native member' in his Executive, but he was apprehensive. He wrote to the Secretary of State: "What would British sentiment be about the native member? European feeling (in India) is not yet ripe for such an advance in Imperial Government. The possibility of an Indian in the Councils in Bombay and Madras shocked many Englishmen, to say nothing about the Viceroy's Council." Moreover, if a Native was to be appointed to the Executive in India, would not there be (asked the Viceroy) a demand for a similar appointment on the Secretary of State's Council, and how could it be resisted? Such was the official mood in the years immediately preceding the first world war.*

The King's opposition to this proposal was strong and unqualified. He told the Viceroy in a letter:

I hold very strong, and possibly old-fashioned views on the subject, which my son, who has so recently been in India, entirely shares. During the unrest in India at the present time and the intrigues of the Natives, it would, I think, be fraught with the greatest danger for the Indian Empire if a Native were to take part in the Council of the Viceroy, as so many subjects would be likely to be discussed in which it would not be desirable that a Native should take part... However clever the Native might be and however loyal you and your

* When the decision was finally limited to a single appointment, the selection was influenced by considerations of colour. The choice apparently lay between Sir S. P. Sinha (later Lord Sinha) and Justice Ashutosh Mukerjee. Minto favoured Sinha: he was able and had experience as Advocate-General. But more than merit was colour—"please (pleaded the Viceroy) do not think me terribly narrow; but Sinha is comparatively white, whilst Mukerjee is as black as my silk hat. And opposition in the official world would not be regardless of mere shades of colour."

Council might consider him to be, you never could be certain that he might not prove to be a very dangerous element in your Council.

It is necessary to realise the background, as depicted in the foregoing paragraphs, for a proper appreciation of the significance of Mrs. Besant's home rule campaign in the early stages of the first world war. Her demand was not for reforms in instalments or stages but for a position of complete equality for India with the self-governing Dominions in the reconstruction of the British Empire after the war. Her internment by the Madras Government in 1917 led to a series of developments, described later in this volume.

Fortunately for India, a military disaster at this stage of the War for Britain in Mesopotamia brought a man into high office in British public life who was keen on utilising his official position to hasten India's freedom. Edwin Samuel Montagu gave definite shape, as Secretary of State for India in the middle of the first world war, to the political aspirations of Indian nationalists.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report expressed in clear language the hope that India's connection with the British Empire would be endorsed by the wishes of her people but on a new basis. The existence of distinctive national cultures, far from weakening such a bond, could (it observed) strengthen it on the basis of a Commonwealth. Montagu visualised, in fact, India's ultimate destiny as

a sisterhood of States, self-governing in all matters of purely local or provincial interest, in some cases corresponding to existing provinces, in others perhaps modified in area according to the character and economic interests of their people. Over this congeries of States would preside a central government, increasingly representative of and responsible to the people of all of them; dealing with matters, both internal and external, of common interest to the whole of India.

Despite Montagu's affection for India, he was unable in his official capacity to go beyond the ponderous declaration of 20th August, 1917, promising "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 realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". It would be relevant to remember that in considering the introduction of a scheme of reforms into India in 1907 Lord Morley, the Secretary of State, was careful enough to say in the House of Commons that the scheme which he was proposing to introduce was not based on the principle of representative government; if that were to be the interpretation of his scheme, he would have nothing to do with it. Montagu's declaration, though worded guardedly, reflected a striking change in the British attitude towards India, all in the course of a decade. From Morley's repudiation in 1907 of the principle of representative government for India, Montagu occupying the same official position altered British policy in 1917 to a definite commitment to responsible government. Montagu neglected no opportunity of pressing forward India's claim for equality of status with the self-governing Dominions. The impact of the world war on India's aspirations had been far-reaching, and Montagu recognized it.

The first Imperial War Conference in 1917 adopted the view that the readjustment of constitutional relations of the components of the British Empire should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important portion of the same; that it should recognize the right of the Dominions and of India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and foreign relations, and provide effective arrangements for continuous consultations in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, founded on consultation, as the several Governments might determine.

Not content with these gains, substantial as they were, Montagu secured, at the peace negotiations at Versailles, full membership of the War Cabinet for India's representatives, Lord Sinha and the Maharaja of Bikaner. Again, at the Inter-Allied Conference on matters concerning Britain and the Dominions, Montagu and his two Indian colleagues were given the same rank as the Dominion delegations.

The concept of an elected Constituent Assembly for framing free

India's Constitution took roots long before Jawaharlal Nehru advocated it in 1937. As early as 1908, Gokhale, in discussing a scheme of reforms, had favoured the summoning of a National Convention to give constitutional shape to India's political aspiration for the attainment of self-government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and participation by her in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members.

Later, in 1921, came Mrs. Besant with her proposal to frame a comprehensive measure on the basis of Dominion status for India. Its genesis lay in her statement before the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill that India could not be satisfied for all time with a constitution framed for her at Westminster. It took a National Convention consisting of members of several political parties (barring the Congress) nearly three years (1922-25) to complete the draft of the Commonwealth of India Bill. It was notable as the first example of a comprehensive measure giving constitutional shape to India's political aspirations. This Bill for conferring freedom on India was introduced in the House of Commons and had its first reading in 1926. It was sponsored by George Lansbury, a member of the British Labour Party's executive, as a private member's measure.

Liberty for India became in fact one of the watchwords of the pioneers of the British Labour Party. Among the first of India's friends in the House of Commons was Charles Bradlaugh who had visited India and had agreed to pilot a Bill in the House of Commons in 1895 entitled 'The Indian Swaraj Bill'. His premature death prevented the fruition of this plan; next came Keir Hardie, a prominent and rugged but picturesque personality who had toured India in the early years of this century to gather first-hand evidence of the results of British rule.

Ramsay MacDonald was another, who had had even greater opportunities for studying India's needs and problems on the eve of the First World War, as a member of the Royal Commission on Public Services. His magnificent work for India has not had adequate appreciation, either here or in Britain. Twice Prime Minister of Britain in the twenties, but on both occasions the leader of a minority administration, he courageously outlined

in 1924 India's ultimate destiny : "Dominion status for India is the idea and the ideal of the Labour Government."

In 1925, the Labour Party, then out of office, adopted at its annual Conference a resolution recognizing 'the right of the Indian people to full self-determination'. The Conference welcomed 'the declarations of representative Indian leaders in favour of free and equal partnership with the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations'.

These official statements of the Labour Party struck a new and heartening note. The First World War had effected great changes in Britain's relations with India, and several Labour Members of the House of Commons were quick to see the need for a bold, constructive policy. In her campaign for home rule for India during the first world war, Mrs. Besant had, with great foresight, enlisted the active support of a number of her former Labour associates, like George Lansbury, through the establishment of a branch of the Home Rule League in London. For a time she persuaded Pethick-Lawrence and H. N. Brailsford to write regularly for her daily paper, *New India*, published from Madras.

Practically out of the Congress after 1919 because of her unbending opposition to Gandhiji's non-co-operation movement, Mrs. Besant continued, nevertheless, her efforts to secure India's freedom. The Commonwealth of India Bill, already referred to, was the work of a National Committee of which the guiding spirit was Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Congress leaders would not actively associate themselves with this measure; but Motilal Nehru took full advantage of its technique and procedure to produce later a constitutional scheme embodied in the All-Parties' (Nehru) Report. With consummate skill he secured a majority vote in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1925 for his resolution in favour of a "Convention, a Round Table Conference or other suitable agency adequately representative of all Indian, European and Anglo-Indian interests to frame, with due regard to the interests of minorities", a generally acceptable constitution.

Of the All Parliamentary Commission led by Sir John Simon (appointed in 1927-28 with MacDonald's consent) one of the members was Clement Attlee—almost a back-bencher at that time—who twenty years later was to create history by offering India

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complete freedom. Touring India at the same time as the Simon Commission, but as a private individual, was another Labour member, Pethick-Lawrence. Writing from Madras to his wife in London in 1929, he confessed he could see no objection to the Indian suggestion of a Round Table Conference to implement in substance Motilal Nehru's scheme.

The first steps were, of course, the most difficult to adopt. The race-complex which had gripped the British mind after 1857—from the King downwards to the district officer—began to weaken only with India's membership of the League of Nations and other symbols of equality of status with the self-governing Dominions which India acquired after the First World War. The King, who had felt compelled to administer to the Viceroy in 1911 a grave warning against the danger of admitting 'a native' into his Executive Council, had altered his attitude in a decade to such an extent as to soothe a nation's anguish (after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre) with a message sympathising with India's aspiration to 'Swaraj within my Empire'.

Ramsay MacDonald, during his second tenure as Prime Minister of Britain in the late twenties, renewed his efforts to initiate a series of progressive measures. First he authorised the Viceroy (Lord Irwin) to say on behalf of the Labour Government that "it was implicit in the declaration of August 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress as there contemplated was the attainment of Dominion status". Motilal Nehru's suggestion of a Round Table Conference was accepted in principle, but with India's representatives nominated by the British Government, not elected by a popular vote.

The first session of the Round Table Conference met in London in 1930. The Prime Minister made a policy statement at the end of the Conference, in January 1931, in the following terms :

Responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon the Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees

as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights.

In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be a primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new Constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

The prospects of success further brightened in the early stages of the Second Round Table Conference in the late summer of 1931, with Gandhiji as the sole representative of the Congress. But suddenly at this stage in India's political fortunes Britain faced a domestic crisis, necessitating a general election which proved disastrous to the Labour Party.

Undeterred by this sudden transformation in the complexion of the new Government—MacDonald continuing to be the Prime Minister but in a predominantly Conservative House of Commons—Gandhiji told a plenary session of the second Round Table Conference in September 1931 :

India, yes, can be held by the sword : I do not for one moment doubt the ability of Britain to hold India under subjection through the sword. But what will conduce to the prosperity of Great Britain, the economic freedom of Britain—an enslaved but rebellious India, or an India, an esteemed partner to share her sorrows, to take part side by side with Britain in her misfortunes? Yes, if need be, but at her own will to fight side by side with Britain—not for the exploitation of a single race or a single human being on earth, but it may be conceivably for the good of the whole world ! If I want freedom for my country, believe me, if I can possibly help it, I do not want that freedom in order that I, belonging to a nation which contains one-fifth of the human race, may exploit the individual. If I want that freedom for my country, I would not be deserving of that freedom if I did not cherish and treasure the equal right of every other race, weak or strong, to the same freedom. I would love to go away from

the shores of the British Isles with the conviction that there was to be an honourable and equal partnership between Britain and India.

By a cruel irony of fate the author of the Round Table Conference proposal, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and thousands of others were placed in detention during its first session. Motilal Nehru's leadership at this stage would probably have made a decisive difference but destiny decreed otherwise : first his detention and then his death intervened almost within sight of the fulfilment of his dreams. MacDonald had closed the first session in London, only a few days earlier, with a statement of great significance :

Finally, I hope, and I trust and I pray, that, by our labours together, India will come to possess the only thing which she now lacks to give her the status of a Dominion amongst the British Commonwealth of Nations : what she now lacks for that, the responsibilities and the cares, the burdens and difficulties, but also the pride and the honour of responsible self-government.

The loss to India in February 1931 through the death of Motilal Nehru was a tragedy of the first magnitude : on the British side was the disaster which overtook British Labour in the general elections of 1931 and MacDonald's subsequent eclipse. He continued, no doubt, as the Prime Minister of a new coalition Government, with most of his former Labour colleagues out of Parliament—a pathetic figurehead, really out of place in a Conservative House of Commons.

MacDonald's part in bringing into existence a coalition Government, sacrificing many loyal friends of a lifetime, was the subject at that time of harsh criticism. He was a sad and lonely man in his final years, conscious of the isolation to which he had been consigned in the so-called National Government. On one occasion, during the Second Round Table Conference, at lunch at 10 Downing Street with a group of Indian delegates, he said in an aside: "Do you know how it feels when you hit a man on his head to keep him quiet for a time, but find him dead?" However

open to criticism his part might have been in the defeat of the Labour Party in the 1931 elections, he had a genuine affection for India and a deep understanding. The promise of full freedom to which he twice committed his country in the twenties as Prime Minister was irrevocable, though it was delayed by sixteen years, with a devastating world war as an interlude.

How strangely sometimes can the course of history be deflected by personalities! The two men who might have mattered supremely at that fateful hour in Indo-British relationships suddenly disappeared from the scene—Motilal Nehru through death and MacDonald in a disastrous domestic situation.

There was deep disappointment in India when the original proposals of the First Round Table Conference were sought to be whittled down. Churchill maintained, as a leading member of the Conservative Party, that though India might have been promised Dominion status, 'status' was limited in its application only to rank and ceremony. The third and final session of the Round Table Conference, though promised by MacDonald for making a final review, would probably not have been held but for vigorous protests from men like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. When summoned, it was a much smaller body than its two predecessors, with Gandhiji and several other Congress leaders again in detention. MacDonald, who had played a prominent part in the two earlier conferences, was conspicuously in the background in the third and did not address the Conference even once in the course of its proceedings.

The White Paper on the Government of India Bill afforded clear evidence that the spirit of the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931 had all but vanished. The safeguards and reservations were obviously intended primarily to satisfy British economic and political interests. Even the modest improvements in the Bill suggested in a memorandum by the Aga Khan proved unacceptable to the British Government.

Gandhiji, as is evident from his statesmanlike appeal to the British Government during the Second Round Table Conference, was anxious for an honourable settlement on the basis of an Indo-British partnership. But the offer of friendship, made with genuine warmth and sincerity, was not grasped by Britain, and a great opportunity for the solution of the Indian problem was lost.

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The large-scale detentions in India during the formative period of the 1935 Constitution, the speeches made in the British⁶ Parliament by Churchill and his friends and the excessive caution that characterised many of the provisions of the Constitution led Jawaharlal Nehru and his Socialist associates in the Congress to take a gloomy view of the future.

Some significant developments which greatly changed the course of events in the subsequent years deserve mention. Mohammad Ali Jinnah had continued to be a staunch nationalist before and during the Round Table Conference. Sir Muhammad Shafi and Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan were the main spokesmen of the Muslims—not Jinnah, who retired temporarily from active politics after 1932 and set up legal practice for a couple of years in London. There was no hint at that time of any demand for a Pakistan from the Muslim leaders.

At a session of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the White Paper proposals in 1933, Sir Reginald Craddock (a retired British official from India who rose to the position of Governor of Burma) asked a Muslim deputation led by Mr. A. Yusuf Ali to comment on the scheme outlined by a Cambridge student, Rehmat Ali, for the establishment of Pakistan. Yusuf Ali's reply was that it was a student's scheme, which no responsible people had put forward. Further questioning by Craddock provoked an intervention from Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan who told his colleague, "You have already had the reply that it was a student's scheme and there was nothing in it." Yusuf Ali added: "We have considered it chimerical and impracticable."

Jinnah was not then in the picture at all, and no other Muslim leader had backed the demand for Pakistan at the time of the inauguration of the 1935 Constitution. Even after the 1937 election, Jinnah's thoughts were not cast in the direction of a separate State of Pakistan. In a public statement shortly after the elections in 1937 he declared: "Nobody will welcome an honourable settlement between the Hindus and the Muslims more than I, and nobody will be more ready to help it." And he followed this up with a public appeal to Gandhiji to tackle this question.

However, the Pakistan cult grew phenomenally in the next three years and the Indian political scene underwent a radical trans-

formation. What were the factors responsible for the change? The suffrage under the Government of India Act of 1935, while still being very limited, was wider than what it was earlier and enfranchised 14 per cent of the population as against 3 per cent. The Congress had emerged from the elections in 1937 as the largest party in seven provinces out of eleven, with a clear majority in five—Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. In Bombay, it was able to form a Ministry, being short of an absolute majority by a very small number; and also in the North West Frontier Province where it was the largest single party. In the United Provinces the unexpected success of the Congress party at the polls was due, in large measure, to the solid support of the peasantry. The forecast of the officials had given the Congress a maximum of 70 seats out of a total of 228, while Congress leaders were hoping to win 100. Actually the Congress secured 135 seats and formed a single party Ministry. Socialists and Communists, taking advantage of a Congress Ministry in office, campaigned in the rural areas, preaching radical doctrines, secure in the belief that no punitive action would be taken against them.

The performance of the Muslim League in the general elections was, by contrast with that of the Congress, modest: of 429 Muslim seats in all the Provincial Legislatures, only 109 were captured by the League's candidates. In the Punjab, many Muslim candidates preferred the platform of the Unionist party, and in Bengal the Praja Party's programme proved more attractive. In the United Provinces a number of Muslim landlords declined the offer of the Muslim League to contest the elections on behalf of the League: and the League was able to win only 26 seats out of the 64 reserved for Muslims.

The Muslims formed only 14 per cent of the population in the United Provinces but had played an important part in the political development of the region. Until the general elections in 1937, the relations between the Congress and some of the prominent Muslim leaders were cordial and even friendly. The Congress party, though confident of 'weakening the landlords' position and influence in the Provincial Government and in the Legislature, was not hopeful of securing a definite majority at the general elections.

Before the elections, the Congress party, working on the assumption that a decisive majority in the Legislature was beyond its reach, had a tacit electoral understanding with the Muslim League. But after its unexpected success in the elections, with 135 seats in a House of 228, it decided to form a purely Congress Ministry. It preferred to exercise the right of forming a single-party Ministry, because that was held to be the verdict of the electorate. A coalition, it was argued by Jawaharlal Nehru and his associates, could not 'wreck the Constitution from within'—the avowed object of a section of the Congress.

A further complicating factor was Nehru's programme to win over the Muslim masses to the Congress creed. Nehru declared immediately after the elections: "We have too long thought in terms of pacts and compromises between communal leaders and neglected the people behind them.... It is for us now to go ahead and welcome the Muslim masses and intelligentsia in our great organization and rid this country of communalism in every shape."

In pursuance of this policy the Congress initiated a 'mass contact' programme with the object of bringing the Muslim voters and the Muslim masses within the Congress fold. This programme did not, however, have appreciable success.

On the other hand, Muslim leaders in the United Provinces regarded the post-election policy of the Congress and its refusal to form a coalition with the Muslim League as a breach of faith. Many Muslims even outside the United Provinces felt that the League's existence was being threatened; and in reply to the Congress 'mass contact' programme, the League launched a vigorous counter campaign. The cry of 'Islam in danger' was raised. The Muslim League further strengthened its propaganda by spreading baseless stories about the atrocities committed by the Congress Government against the Muslim community. So effective did the propaganda prove that in by-elections in Muslim constituencies the Congress candidates were defeated. These defeats had a definite psychological effect and the stock of the Muslim League among the Muslim masses rose all over India.

Other parties, which had been defeated in the elections, saw in the Muslim League a rallying point for effective opposition to

the Congress. Landlords in particular, Hindu and Muslim alike, with misgivings about the Congress agrarian programme, turned to the League for indirect assistance and in return gave it support. The deterioration in Hindu-Muslim relations in the United Provinces attracted attention from outside. The strength of the Congress, it was felt, could be challenged with prospects of ultimate success on the communal question.

The Muslim League was not the only major factor to be considered at this stage of India's political development. Princes, even Hindu and Sikh Princes, resentful of the demand for popular reforms and the introduction of the elective principles in the States and the agitation stirred up among their people, became markedly sympathetic to the Muslim League. On one occasion the Maharaja of Nawanagar (at that time the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes) in discussing the possible alliance between the Muslim League and the Chamber for the federal elections, remarked: "Why should I not support the League? Mr. Jinnah is willing to tolerate our existence, but Mr. Nehru wants our extinction."

The thirties were tragic years for India, marking a major setback for those who hoped for a smooth transition to freedom. The country had been so near achievement of her freedom, but disunity between the two major political parties and the precipitate resignation of the Congress Ministries on the outbreak of the Second World War drove it back into agitation, large-scale detentions and the inevitable sequel of nation-wide bitterness and disillusionment. Sir Stafford Cripps came out to India on a mission towards the end of 1939 to see if there was a way out of the deadlock. Could India produce a Constitution framed by a representative body, he asked me at a private gathering in New Delhi. It did not appear to me a serious question, especially from one who was politically an orphan in the House of Commons. In any case, Cripps' sudden assignment early in 1940 as British Ambassador to Moscow temporarily froze the British initiative for a couple of years. In the early stages of the war, between 1940 and 1942, a series of attempts were made by Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan to bring about a war-time settlement between Congress leaders of the type of Mr. Rajagopalachari, Pandit Pant and Maulana Azad on the one side and that section of the Muslim League which was not happy to be

committed to the concept of a separate Pakistan advocated by Mr. Jinnah. Had these efforts succeeded, there would have been a transitional war-time National Government which could have been expanded into a full-fledged Federal Government covering the whole of India without the division of the country into India and Pakistan. In the early spring of 1942, with the War in a critical stage, it was announced that Cripps was coming out again to India, but on this occasion as a member of the Coalition Cabinet under Churchill's leadership, with an offer of a solution. It was to be transitional for the duration of the War in the first stage, followed by the establishment of a constitution-making body.

Cripps in private was apologetic about the British offer at our first meeting in New Delhi in his new role, "This is as far as we could get Churchill to go," he told me (referring to the reservation on defence in the transitional stage). He was probably not sufficiently tactful in deciding to interview Indian leaders without Linlithgow, who was then the Viceroy, being present. The Viceroy, a sensitive man on matters touching personal dignity, resented a message which I sent at the end of the unsuccessful Cripps Mission to the *Manchester Guardian* in which I had been critical of his aloofness.

Whatever might have been the underlying causes, the Cripps Mission ended in failure. The British—including Cripps—disliked open American intervention in the Indian problem through Colonel Louis Johnson. It must go on record that President Roosevelt and his advisers struggled hard and long—but in vain—to persuade Churchill to do the right thing by India. So did Chiang Kai-shek and his wife with remarkable persistence.

Never was Rajaji's wisdom and constructive statesmanship in greater evidence than at this stage of the freedom struggle. Misunderstood by many of his countrymen and even by several of his colleagues in the Congress Working Committee, Rajaji strove with all his resourcefulness to salvage the Cripps offer. When, finally, he saw in the summer of 1942 that failure was inevitable, he came to far-reaching decisions. With the Japanese fleet in control of the Bay of Bengal, he had good reasons to fear a Japanese attack on India's east coast. He was convinced that the British would not resist the Japanese and the people had not the

means for effective resistance. Only a National Government, he argued, could possibly save the country; but the British were not willing to part with power. Therefore, power had to be wrested from them. How could it be done? Only, it seemed to him, by coming to terms with Jinnah and the Muslim League. Their demand for Pakistan after the war struck him as the lesser of the two evils, since refusal might have encouraged the invasion of India by the Japanese.

After the arrests of Gandhiji and the Congress leaders in August 1942, as a sequel to the Quit India resolution, the initiative was taken by a group with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru as the leader in another effort to resolve the deadlock.

In December 1942, Sapru invited a number of prominent persons in public life to a special meeting at Allahabad. After two days of discussion he referred to a widespread anxiety apparent in the country to reach a solution of the political deadlock. He told the Conference that Gandhiji was most anxious shortly before his arrest to be co-opted in the deliberations of such a conference. Jinnah too had repeatedly declared his willingness to discuss with leaders of other parties the details of a possible solution. In order, however, to ensure the success of the Conference, Sapru and those associated with him considered it essential that the British Government should announce forthwith :

(1) the formation of a provisional Government of India endowed with full powers and authority over the administration, subject only to the position of the Commander-in-Chief being duly safeguarded in order to promote the efficient prosecution of the war; and in its relations with Britain and the Allies, enjoying the status of a Dominion and entitled to all the rights and privileges associated with such status; and

(2) the release of Gandhiji and all Congressmen to enable the representatives of the Congress to participate in the all Parties' Conference.

But no progress was possible in the absence of a positive response from the British side. Some months later, a fresh move was made to reach a settlement with Jinnah and the Muslim Lea-

gue, this time on Rajaji's initiative. In 1943, he drew up a formula to form the basis for a settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League. He consulted Gandhiji during the latter's incarceration and communicated it to Jinnah in April 1944.

Gandhiji himself was released from prison in April 1944, because the doctors took a serious view of his health and thought that he might die in goal. He did not seem optimistic about a settlement with Jinnah. In his mind the acceptance of the principle of self-determination for the Muslim areas was vitally linked up with the formation of a National Government for the interim period. Gandhiji wanted Jinnah to associate himself with the demand for (a) the immediate declaration of independence to become operative upon the termination of the war; (b) the formation of a real National Government except for reservation in regard to Defence; (c) the release of Congress leaders. He was not in favour of the two separate sovereign and independent States of Jinnah's conception. Nevertheless, in July 1944 he agreed to discuss the formula with Jinnah. In agreeing to the Rajaji formula he relied on the hope contained in the clause that "mutual agreement shall be entered into for safeguarding defence, and commerce and communications, and for other essential purposes."

Gandhiji contemplated, in fact, a treaty of separation which would provide for a common administration for these matters during the period of transition. He did not seem at all inclined to commit himself to far-reaching assurances in regard to the functions and authority of the interim National Government without securing from Jinnah a definite promise of support for complete independence after the war.

The Gandhi-Jinnah talks broke down after eighteen days of discussion. Jinnah did not want a plebiscite for the reason that, the Muslim League having claimed Pakistan on the basis of Muslims being a separate nation, such a reference was unnecessary. Moreover, according to him, there was to be no treaty of separation between India and Pakistan on the lines contemplated by Gandhiji; such matters as foreign affairs, defence, communications, customs, commerce and the like were, Jinnah maintained, the life-blood of any State and could not be delegated to any central authority or Government.

Jinnah was however prepared to make a gesture, even if he could not accept an agreement. He is known to have stated at a newspaper interview in October 1944 that Pakistan would not only have neighbourly relations with Hindustan, but also discourage any outside design or aggression on this sub-continent.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and some of his friends representing the Non-Party Conference explored afresh the possibilities of a settlement of the minorities issue. After Gandhiji's release, he had a meeting with him in August 1944. The Sapru Committee rejected the Pakistan idea on the ground that "the partition of India would be an outrage, justified neither by history nor by political expediency". Its recommendations were directed towards the formulation of an acceptable arrangement for the freedom of India and the eventual formation of a Constituent Assembly to frame her Constitution. The immediate formation of a National Government at the Centre was also recommended, either by altering the Constitution through a provision for the functioning of the Governor-General-in-Council as a body consisting of Indian members commanding the confidence of the Central Legislature (except for the Commander-in-Chief who would continue to be ex-officio a member of the Council in charge of war operations) or by bringing the federal portion of the Government of India Act of 1935 into immediate operation without the condition of the entry of Indian States and the setting up of a Federal Legislature and Federal executive in accordance with the provisions of that Act.

However, India so far as the British Government was concerned, had receded far into the background for the rest of the war. Wavell made an effort, after the German surrender in 1945, to bring the leaders together in the Simla Conference and for this purpose he released Maulana Azad and other members of the Congress Working Committee in June, 1945. But nothing came of it because Wavell gave in with surprising readiness to Jinnah's intransigence which wrecked that looked like a promising move. Churchill was adamant on not resuming negotiations and the United States reconciled itself uncasily to this unsatisfactory position. The Labour members of the British Cabinet—Attlee, Cripps and Bevin—probably adopted the same attitude. In the spring of

1945 at San Francisco I could get no indication from Attlee, then the deputy leader of the British delegation to the U. N. Conference, about Britain's post-war intentions in regard to India. *

The general elections in Britain in 1945 resulted in a Labour Government being installed in office with a definite majority in the House of Commons for the first time in the history of the party. I met Attlee again in London early in September, a few days after he had become Prime Minister. He continued to be non-committal on his Government's India policy, except for affirming in general terms the promise, implicit in the Cripps offer of a Constituent Assembly for India. It was, however, a hopeful sign that Pethick-Lawrence was given the India Office. It was an admirable choice : of all India's friends in the Labour Party, no one had a better record for first-rate ability combined with the highest integrity.

Attlee, it then became evident, was anxious to solve the Indian problem, now that he had the advantage, earlier denied to MacDonald, of a majority in the House of Commons. Cripps was a tried and experienced friend of India with intimate personal contacts; and Pethick-Lawrence with his sound judgment, his spirit of scrupulous fairness and a determination to overcome obstacles, proved a tower of strength to Attlee. It was appropriate that the final transfer of power should have been completed with such a man at the India Office.

Attlee, as the new Prime Minister, took prompt steps to make preliminary soundings regarding the resumption of negotiations with India's leaders. He had the advantage of having Nehru's views on some vital matters conveyed to him in a personal discussion with B. N. Rau.

A definite step towards the formulation of an India policy was taken by the Labour Government through a statement made in Parliament in February 1946, with the approval of the Opposition. It was announced that a special mission of Cabinet Ministers would visit India (consisting of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and Lord Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty).

Attlee made it clear that it would be for India alone to decide for herself whether to remain in the Commonwealth or not. He added :

I hope that the Indian people may elect to remain within the British Commonwealth... The British Commonwealth and Empire are not bound together by chains of external compulsion. It is a free association of free peoples. If, on the other hand, she elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so. It will be for us to help to make the transition as smooth and easy as possible.

This declaration was warmly welcomed in India. But the Congress was totally opposed to the division of the country. It was prepared to concede the maximum amount of local autonomy consistent with the maintenance of the unity of the country. The future framework of the country's Constitution, it suggested, should be based on a federal structure with a limited number of compulsory Central subjects, such as, defence, communications and foreign affairs; and the federation would consist of autonomous Provinces in which would vest all the residuary powers.

It is instructive to note the various phases through which, starting from the Cabinet Mission's proposals, the decision to partition India was reached, all in the course of a single year. In its statement of May 16, 1946, the Cabinet Mission was "convinced that there was in India an almost universal desire outside the supporters of the Muslim League for its unity". Nevertheless, the proposal of the Muslim League for partition was examined by the Mission with great care, since it was impressed by the "very genuine and acute anxiety of the Muslims lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Hindu majority rule". It rejected the claim for a separate and fully independent sovereign State of Pakistan consisting of the two areas claimed by the League, namely, the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the north-west and Bengal and Assam in the north-east. The Cabinet Mission said: "We have been forced to the conclusion that neither a larger nor a smaller sovereign State of Pakistan would provide an acceptable solution for the communal problem".

In addition to serious practical difficulties, the Cabinet Mission found "weighty administrative, economic and military considerations against any such proposal".

In a statement issued by the British Prime Minister on February 20, 1947, a definite date was set by which British power would terminate in India. The British Government expressed its desire to hand over the responsibility to authorities established by a Constitution approved by all parties in India; but in view of the Constituent Assembly's inability to function as originally intended on account of boycott by the Muslim League, and with no clear prospect of a Constitution emerging, and in view of the danger of a state of uncertainty continuing indefinitely, necessary steps would be taken to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. They offered to recommend to the British Parliament a Constitution worked out in accordance with the proposals of May 16, 1946, made by a fully representative Constituent Assembly. But, in the absence of such a Constitution, the British Government felt free to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over on the due date—whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India, or in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments, or in such other way as might seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people.

Nehru welcomed this declaration as “a wise and courageous decision, bringing reality and a certain dynamic quality to the Indian situation”. He urged the Constituent Assembly to work with greater speed, so that a new and independent India might take shape and be endowed with a Constitution worthy of her. The appeal was renewed to those who had kept aloof to be partners in this joint and historic undertaking, casting aside fear and suspicion, coupled with the assurance that the Constituent Assembly, however constituted, could only proceed with its work on a voluntary basis. There could be no compulsion, he added, except the compulsion of events.

Lord Mountbatten as the new Viceroy came to the conclusion in the spring of 1947 that it would not be possible to get the Congress and the Muslim League to work together in the Constituent Assembly and hammer out a Constitution which would have the general support of both. Alternatives had therefore to be devised. After consultations with the leaders of the Opposition

in Britain and the leaders of political parties in India, a fresh statement of policy was made by the British Government on June 3, 1947, reviewing the situation.

The British Government was willing to anticipate a date earlier than June 1948 for the handing over of power by the setting up of an independent Indian government or governments. Legislation was proposed to be introduced in the British Parliament for the transfer of power on a Dominion status basis to one or two successor authorities, according to the decision to be taken as a result of this announcement. This was without prejudice to the right of the Constituent Assembly to decide whether India would remain within the British Commonwealth or go out.

Nehru accepted the Mountbatten plan, describing it as "another historic occasion when a vital change affecting the future of India was being proposed". The partition of India into two States having become inevitable, Nehru concluded a broadcast on a note of sadness; he had no doubt in his mind that the course adopted was the right one. But he added :

For generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free and independent united India. The proposal to allow certain parts to secede, if they so will, is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one even from the larger viewpoint. The united India that we have laboured for was not one of compulsion and coercion but a free and willing association of a free people. It may be that in this way we shall reach that united India sooner than otherwise and that she will have a stronger and more secure foundation.

With the announcement of independence, all the restrictions implicit in the Cabinet Mission's plan of May 16, 1946, ceased to operate. The Constituent Assembly became a truly sovereign body, free from all external control. At last, on November 26, 1949, after twenty-eight months of sustained labour, uninterrupted by the holocaust of communal rioting which accompanied the partition of the continent, or even the great tragedy of Gandhiji's assassination, the final session of the Constituent Assembly was

able to declare on behalf of the people of India that "we do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution".

It was the achievement of an aspiration which had grown in dimension and content in the interval between the two wars. During the decade following the end of the First World War, India's leaders claimed no more than the right to frame a Constitution, subject to its ultimate ratification by the British Parliament. The demand was stepped up in the next decade to the setting up of a sovereign Constituent Assembly endowed with the exclusive responsibility of framing a Constitution for an Independent India. The forces released by the Second World War compelled the British Government to move steadily in the direction of granting the substance of the claim. But not until June 1947 was it conceded in full, resulting in the British decision to withdraw its authority over India on August 15, 1947, well before the completion of the task of the Constituent Assembly. No outside authority, after that date, could sit in judgment over the draft of a Constitution framed by the sovereign body.

Mistakes were undoubtedly made on both sides, Indian as well as British, which prevented an earlier settlement of the Indian problem on a satisfactory and enduring basis. The avoidance of these mistakes would have shortened the freedom struggle by a decade or two and spared India the agony of partition. For instance, in 1921, had Gandhiji grasped the opportunity created for him by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's initiative, he could have come to terms with Lord Reading, the new Viceroy, on the basis of almost complete provincial autonomy and the immediate introduction of the principle of responsibility at the Centre. The rejection of the compromise was later characterised by C. R. Das in a public statement as a 'Himalayan blunder'. Ten years later, if Churchill had not sabotaged Ramsay MacDonald's scheme for a Federal all-India Government, the plea made by Gandhiji in one of his interventions at the Round Table Conference for India and Britain forming 'the nucleus of a real League of Nations' might have materialised in the thirties when there was no suggestion of India's partition.

Again, at the commencement of the Second World War in 1939, if the Congress Ministries in seven provinces had continued to

remain in office and negotiated with the Viceroy for a war-time Federal Government, converting the Executive Council into a *de facto* National Government responsive, if not responsible, to the Central Legislature, a settlement might have swung into sight as the next step even during the war or, at any rate, at the end of it.

These mistakes, in judgment as well as in tactics, need not detract from the remarkable nature of the ultimate achievement of freedom in 1947, though it came about in abnormal circumstances.

At no time, from the commencement of the Congress in 1885, was it ever an exclusively national struggle; at different stages and in different ways, liberal-minded friends in Britain, China and the U.S.A. gave us valuable support. Within India, while the Congress led the movement for freedom, periodically challenging British might through mass civil disobedience under Gandhiji's leadership, much of the hard work and constructive thinking stands to the credit of eminent persons outside its ranks. In the late twenties the All-Parties' Committee which produced the Nehru report had a majority of non-Congressmen working under Pandit Motilal Nehru's skilful leadership. Again, in the establishment of the Constituent Assembly after the Second World War, Gandhiji's recommendation to the Congress Working Committee, that a number of eminent public men outside the ranks of the Congress should be elected by the various provincial legislatures, to the Assembly, was prompted by a conviction that only the best brains, regardless of party labels, were good enough to draft the Constitution. Five of the seven members of the Drafting Committee were from outside the Congress; and its Chairman, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, was a vigorous critic of the organization all his life.

The full significance of India's attainment of freedom was revealed by Jawaharlal Nehru in superb language in his memorable address to the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in April 1947. He told the delegates assembled from twenty-eight countries of Asia, a few months before India became independent :

We seek no narrow nationalism. Nationalism has a place in each country and should be fostered, but it must not be allowed

to become aggressive and come in the way of international development. Asia stretches her hand out in friendship to Europe and America as well as to our suffering brethren in Africa.

That was admirable guidance to give just when a weary world, waking from the nightmare of the Second World War, was groping its way out of the centuries-old era of colonialism.

He went on in the same expansive mood to reflect the spirit of resurgent Asia :

The freedom that we envisage is not to be confined to this section or that, or to a particular people, but must spread out to the whole human race... There is a new vitality and powerful creative impulse in all the peoples of Asia. The masses are awake and demand their heritage... Let us have faith in these great new forces and the things that are taking shape. Above all, let us have faith in the human spirit which Asia has symbolised for these long ages past.

It is in the spirit of these admirably phrased sentiments that the mightiest Empire in the world outlined the procedure for the complete withdrawal of its authority over its biggest dependency. The success of that procedure encouraged other Imperial Powers to adopt in subsequent years a similar policy of renunciation of power over their respective colonial areas scattered throughout the globe.

India's freedom in 1947 thus marked the beginning of the end of the colonial system in the world.

Gokhale and the Liberals

Einstein was asked in the closing months of his life if his philosophy of life included belief in God. "Call it God, Providence or Nature," he mused in reply, "I have a faith within me, which is deeper than reason, in the Law of Righteousness that governs this universe."

It may be said of Gopal Krishna Gokhale that a similar faith sustained him throughout life. He was among the early stalwarts of the Congress which, for a decade and more after its birth, was content to ask for modest reforms in the system of administration. He owed his training and inspiration for political work to Ranade whose 'marvellous personality and profound patriotism' made a lasting impression on him. Only two men in India, in his judgment, "were utterly absorbed day and night in thoughts of their country and her welfare—Ranade and Dadabhai Naoroji". About the former, with whom his association was more intimate, he declared :

His one aspiration through life was that India should be roused from the lethargy of centuries, so that she might become a great and living nation, responsive to truth and justice and self-respect, responsive to all the claims of our higher nature, animated by lofty ideals, and undertaking great national tasks.

In 1901 Ranade's death, as he confessed in a letter to a friend, came to him as though a sudden darkness had fallen upon his

life. He recognised that it was his duty to struggle on "cherishing with love and reverence the ideals to which Ranade had given his matchless life".

After eighteen years of devoted service to the cause of education, rendered on a pittance, first as a teacher and later as the Principal of Fergusson College in Poona, Gokhale decided that the time was ripe for entering active politics in a big way in 1902. For two years, even before finally giving up his educational work in Poona, Gokhale had distinguished himself as an elected member of the Bombay Legislative Council. From 1902, when he entered all-India politics as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council in succession to another great Liberal, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, until 1915, when he died at the early age of 49, it was a record of unceasing activity.

Education at all levels, from the primary stage to the university, was one of Gokhale's passionate interests. At no time did he concern himself exclusively with political problems: for instance, in one of his earliest speeches after entering public life, he made a moving plea at a social conference for the uplift of the "present degraded conditions of the low castes", drawing a parallel between the problems of the Depressed Classes and the racial segregation measures against Indian settlers in South Africa which Gandhiji had vividly brought to the notice of the Indian public.

Almost at the threshold of his career, when he was making a mark in the Congress as one of the most promising of the coming men, came a traumatic experience in 1896 which nearly blasted his future prospects. Moved by harrowing reports he had received in private letters of the harshness of the measures adopted by some British officials in stamping out plague in Poona, Gokhale, who was then on a political mission in England, made a bitter attack on the officials responsible for such a policy in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*. It created a sensation in India and Gokhale was challenged, on his return, to substantiate his accusations. Unable to find corroborating evidence, he tendered an unqualified apology to the Governor, to the members of the Plague Committee and to the soldiers engaged in relief operations. The apology cost him a great deal, and for some years thereafter he could not even speak from the platform of the Congress.

The years that Gokhale thus spent in the political wilderness were utilised for a study in depth of current problems. He gave evidence before a Royal Commission on Indian expenditure, in London, commonly known as the Welby Commission. The warm encomiums he received on his evidence were a source of much encouragement; Sir William Wedderburn's remark, "your evidence will be much the best on our side", greatly revived his spirits.

Gokhale ventured on the formation of the Servants of India Society in 1905 to attract young men who could dedicate their lives to the country's service in a missionary spirit. This project had been in his mind for some years. He outlined the objects of the Society in a statement :

Its members frankly accept the British connection, as ordained, in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, for India's good. Self-government on the lines of English colonies is their goal. Their goal, they recognise, cannot be attained without years of earnest and patient work and sacrifices worthy of the cause.

It is well to remember, in assessing the value of Gokhale's contribution to the freedom movement, that he belonged to a generation which laboured hard, often in vain, and had to be content at the best of times with results which may seem to us today to be petty. Relevant too is it to capture something of the atmosphere of those early years as India was working up to the potentialities of her destiny. It was after prolonged parleys in the India Office in the early years of this century that Gokhale succeeded in getting Lord Morley, the Secretary of State, to consider with sympathy the appointment of Indians to the Viceroy's Executive Council though the original proposal of two members got reduced to one.

Defeat and disappointment did not deter Gokhale from the path he had set for himself. Almost at the end of his career, in his speech in the Imperial Legislative Council on the Elementary Education Bill, Gokhale remarked before the final vote :

I know that my Bill will be thrown out before the day closes.

I make no complaint. I shall not even feel depressed... I have always felt and have often said that we of the present generation in India can only hope to serve our country by our failures. The men and women who will be privileged to serve her by their successes will come later. We must be content to accept cheerfully the place that has been allotted to us in our onward march... Whatever fate awaits our labours, one thing is clear. We shall be entitled to feel that we have done our duty, and where the call of duty is clear, it is better even to labour and fail than not to labour at all.

Gokhale and many of his contemporaries were realists, sustained by a firm faith in the justice of their cause and the high destiny that would one day be India's after the achievement of freedom. Their generation did not have to wait long for the release of the forces that bore India along the course of a progressive movement. In 1910 India had been considered fit, as a measure of gracious patronage, for a single seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council. In 1921 the number was increased to three, and the Royal proclamation conceded that the Morley scheme was "the beginning of Swaraj within my Empire". At the end of the First World War India was made a member of the League of Nations, thus in external status becoming an equal to the self-governing Dominions.

Pandit Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das were influenced in the formation and tactics of the Swaraj party in 1924 by the creditable performances of the Liberal Ministries in the provinces and the record of the first Central Legislative Assembly. They agreed with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who first sounded the warning in the early twenties that even full provincial autonomy without an element of responsibility at the Centre, would prove illusory. The appointment of the Muddiman Reforms Committee in 1924 was hastened by the evidence of the abundant constructive talent in the ranks of the Liberals. In the previous year the Central Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution with the acquiescence of the Government of India commending the constructive work of the Ministries in the various provinces under the Montagu scheme and supporting the plea for hastening the pace of

reforms both in the provinces and in the Centre. The minority report of the Muddiman Committee was the handiwork of the Liberals, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar, Mr. Jinnah and Dr. Paranjpye (Mr. Jinnah was really a Liberal in his outlook, though technically not a member of the party). It was a radical document produced by men who had worked on the Montagu Scheme of Reforms and believed in constitutional methods in all circumstances.

In fact, Pandit Motilal would have been a member of the Muddiman Committee (and for a brief period a little later was actually a member of the Army Indianisation Committee) but for the pressure of his son Jawaharlal to which he yielded against his better judgment. All through the twenties, his policy was moulded and directed by the principles of the Liberals. "Non-co-operators as we are", he told the British Government in the Legislative Assembly on a famous occasion in 1926, "we offer you our full co-operation", on the condition that they "convened a Round Table Conference of representative Indians to evolve a Constitution for India", citing the precedent of Australia. He quoted with approval Joseph Chamberlain's remark in the House of Commons in introducing the Commonwealth of Australia Bill in 1900 that there should be no alteration, not even of a word or a comma, in a measure carefully drafted by the leading Australian statesmen of the period.

The Nehru (all-Parties) Report claimed full Dominion Status for India as embodying the greatest possible measure of agreement among the various political parties. To some extent, Pandit Motilal Nehru was influenced (as was C. R. Das in his famous Faridpur speech in 1926 giving Dominion Status greater significance than complete independence) by the new concept of autonomous nations in the Commonwealth which was outlined in the resolutions of the Imperial Conference held in the same year. In evolving the basic principles of the Nehru Report, there was valuable guidance in the Commonwealth of India Bill prepared under the sponsorship of Mrs. Besant and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. After the completion of the Report, Pandit Motilal Nehru sought her advice on securing competent legal draftsmen in London to give the scheme a shape that would be in accord with the procedural formalities of the House of Commons.

Pandit Motilal Nehru died at a moment which was critical for India's destiny. Having met him at Allahabad on the eve of the first Round Table Conference, I have no doubt that Ramsay MacDonald's far-reaching statement at the end of the Conference would have brought him into the later sessions, and there might have been a final settlement of the Indian problem by mutual consent in the early thirties. Death denied India the services of a great statesman when she needed them most. All through his life, and even after becoming the leader of the Swaraj Party, Pandit Motilal Nehru was a Liberal in Congress garb.

The States People's Conference under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Balwant Rai Mehta, Sheikh Abdullah and others did much, in the formative stages of the Round Table Conferences, to underline the importance of the elective principle in the representation of the princely States at the Federal Centre. But the pioneer in this field was Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar. In a series of lectures at the Madras University in 1928, he referred in a masterly survey to the establishment of proper relations between Indian provinces and the princely States as an essential preliminary to the creation of an all-India federation. Included in the list of conditions to be fulfilled by the princely States to qualify themselves for accession was the observance of the elective principle. In many respects Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar was a radical in his thinking and outlook.

Another figure who deserves greater recognition for his work in the twenties than he has received is V. S. Srinivasa Sastri. In his own sphere—the exposition of India's claim to equality of status with the Dominions of the Commonwealth—he was unrivalled. Through his superb utterances in all the Dominions and at the sessions of the Imperial Conference and of the League of Nations, he established beyond challenge in a subtle but definite manner India's right to equality with the free nations of the world. Ill-health crippled his activities after the Round Table Conferences; though he influenced the course of events in the background for at least a decade thereafter, and was for Gandhiji a voice to be listened to with respect even if it did not often compel acquiescence.

In fact, all through Gandhiji's career, the two men who, in his view, could give him disinterested and independent advice in

complex situations were Sapru and Sastri. The popular belief that Gandhiji was a revolutionary whose aims were concealed in a creed of non-violence is a one-sided interpretation that ignores the fact that, after the first non-co-operation movement and its setback at Chauri Chaura, he was in his own way greatly influenced by the Gokhale tradition. At the second Round Table Conference his passionate plea for a partnership between Britain and India on a basis of equality might have opened the door to immediate freedom but for Churchill's unwise and blind opposition. Even after the inauguration of the 1935 Constitution, Gandhiji did not endorse the 'wrecking the Constitution from within' slogan evolved by Jawaharlal Nehru and the Socialists. He preferred the policy of working the Constitution, with all its limitations, to implement more effectively the constructive programme of the Congress.

Between Gokhale and Gandhiji there was a bond of mutual affection and deep respect which endured to the end of their lives. I recall an incident in Bhangi colony in New Delhi in 1946 where Gandhiji was residing at the time of the British Cabinet Mission's visit. On the eve of the elections of members of the Constituent Assembly, I asked for an interview with the Mahatma which he granted late that evening. I told him I was approaching him with a strange request : he had taught Congressmen to break laws and go to prison, but did they not need the help of others to frame a Constitution ? This somewhat irreverent remark evoked a ready response from him : "Yes, I have not succeeded in persuading Congressmen to follow Gokhale's example of making a deep study of public problems before speaking on them." This brief conversation led to his blessing a list of 16 eminent non-Congress leaders (most of them Liberals like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru) for election to the Constituent Assembly.

A re-evaluation of the forces that resulted in India's freedom is necessary today because our public life after Independence is the poorer for the disappearance of the Liberal creed and all it stood for. Respect for constitutional methods of agitation, which Gandhiji sometimes rejected in favour of civil disobedience of the authority of an alien ruler, deserves today not only the highest priority but an unreserved loyalty. Many current forms of agitation—gheraos, mass demonstrations, hunger-strikes, etc.—

are seriously undermining the foundations of the Constitution which are secure only in a wide-spread respect for the rule of law.

Of equal importance in a democracy based on adult suffrage are the high standards of personal integrity set by Liberal leaders. Sapru, Sivaswamy Aiyar, Sastri and a number of other Liberal statesmen earned credit for themselves and gave a healthy tone to our public life through records of personal purity and uncompromising adherence to convictions which have become all too rare in the years of our independence.

Mrs. Annie Besant

Independent India has hardly any conception of the magnitude or the significance of Mrs. Annie Besant's contribution to the country's all-round progress during her forty years of unceasing activity in almost every sphere of life. She wrote her autobiography before her first arrival in India in 1893. It is an exquisite piece of writing, dealing with her many experiences in the early phases of her life : Christianity, Atheism, Fabian Socialism and, finally Theosophy. Through every one of these phases she fought uncompromisingly for the great causes that inspired her through each phase and for the vindication of the principles she considered vital. It meant, as she wrote on one occasion :

Here, as at other times in my life, I dare not purchase peace with a lie. An imperious necessity forces me to speak the truth as I see it, whether the speech please or displease, whether it brings praise or blame. That one loyalty to Truth I must keep stainless, whatever friendships fail me or human ties be broken. She may lead me to the wilderness, yet I must follow her; she may strip me of all love, yet I must pursue her; though she slay me, yet will I trust in her; and I ask for no other epitaph on my tomb but

'SHE TRIED TO FOLLOW TRUTH.'

It was in this spirit that she moved from one field of activity

to another, experimenting with life from different points of view but always in the spirit of ennobling adventure.

As early as 1879, long before her arrival in India and even before the birth of the Indian National Congress, Mrs. Besant had used her powerful pen for a condemnation of British rule in India. In a volume entitled *England, India and Afghanistan*, she wrote :

We exploited Hindustan not for her benefit, but for the benefit of our younger sons, our restless adventurers, our quarrelsome and ne'er-do-well surplus population. At least for the sake of common honesty, let us drop our hypocritical mask and acknowledge that we seized India from lust of conquest, from greed of gain, from the lowest and paltriest of desires.

Mrs. Besant regarded the 1857 rising as "the natural nemesis treading on the heels of the crimes of Clive, Hastings, Wellesley, Cornwallis and Dalhousie. Few records of conquest show stains as foul as the story of the subjugation of Hindustan by this originally merchant association." Liberty for India was Mrs. Besant's remedy, who clearly outlined the steps to be taken for its achievement :

We cannot now simply try to throw off our vast responsibility; we cannot, having seized India, now fling it aside. What is our duty to this great land and how may we best remedy our crimes in the past? The answer comes in one word : 'Liberty'. Train India for freedom; educate India for self-government. Do not only proclaim that Indians shall be eligible for the high places of the State : place them there.

This suggestion, in fact, became the programme of the freedom campaign, as will be clear from the account given later in this chapter.

On her arrival in India in 1893, Mrs. Besant found that there was a general degradation because of the loss of faith among Hindus in their own religion. The regeneration could only take place, she insisted in all her utterances:

When once more in every Indian household are heard the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads; when once more in every Indian household is understood the true meaning of the hymns and of the worship of the Supreme—then India will begin to wake from the sleep of centuries, and once more hold up her head amongst the nations of the world.

India's spiritual knowledge she considered to be of vital importance to the future of the world : "If religion perish here, it will perish everywhere; and in India's hand is laid the sacred charge of keeping alight the torch of the spirit amid the fogs and storms of increasing materialism. . . India, bereft of spirituality, will have no future, but will pass on into the darkness, as Greece and Rome have passed."

But never through her long career in this country did she falter once in her faith in India as "the land whose great religion was the origin of all religions, the mother of spirituality and the cradle of civilisation".

Hinduism meant more to her than any other faith : "The glory of ancient Hinduism is its all-embracing character, its holding up of the perfect ideal, and yet its generous inclusion of all shades of thought. Under that wide tolerance, philosophies and religious sects grew up and lived in amity side by side, and all phases of thought are found represented in the different Indian schools and numerous Indian sects. This gives to Hinduism a unique position among the religions of the world."

Though Mrs. Besant's interest in India was first roused long before her arrival in this country, she kept aloof from politics in the ordinary sense of the term for nearly two decades. During that period she concentrated on a revival of the Hindu faith through the establishment of the Central Hindu College in Banaras and the publication of a number of books to popularise the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*.

Two years after her arrival, in 1895, she spoke in general terms of the place of politics in the life of a nation. India had proclaimed through the ages the ideal of a system essentially founded on duty; because of the changes through which she had passed, she was a strange compound of divergent theories, of conflicting

ideas, a strange compound of an ancient nation ruled politically by a modern people. India's strong bond was the old idea of duty, while that of Britain was democracy and institutions based on it. As one who was deeply dedicated to the ideal of ancient India, Mrs. Besant felt that India, pushed into Western methods, should adopt her own methods to meet the new conditions and the new ways of thought.

From the 12th century, as she interpreted the historical process, India had no history of her own : she was sleeping, taking on many of the customs of her conquerors and the veneer of a Western materialistic civilisation. Her degradation came with the rejection of the teachings of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. But in the hearts of a few amongst her people, after several centuries of slumber, the hope of revival was at last stirring. And so, observed Mrs. Besant in 1895:

Looking forward and hoping, we see her awaking from the sleep of centuries, taking up again her ancient faith, taking up again her ancient religion, her ancient philosophy, her ancient literature; taking up again her place as evolver of the inner man, as teacher of the possibilities of the human soul, as leader of the way towards union with the higher nature, and, therefore, towards the higher and grander race that in days to come shall tread upon our earth. . . . That is the mission of India to the world, that teaching is the claim of India to the love and to the homage of mankind.

The work before India is to undo the evil that has been done, so that the nation as a whole can rise. That is the work that lies before us. That is the work in which I ask you to take me as your helper; for the life which came from India is given back to India for service, and I sacrifice it to the helping of our race.

The ideal for her was of an Indian nation built on the encouragement of national feeling, the maintenance of the traditional dress and ways of living, the promotion of Indian arts and manufactures by giving preference to Indian products over those imported from abroad. For twenty years, until the commencement of the

First World War, Mrs. Besant devoted all her energies and resources to the Central Hindu College at Banaras, which later became the nucleus of the Banaras Hindu University. In collaboration with a distinguished Indian philosopher, Dr. Bhagavan Das, she translated the *Bhagavad Gita* into English, so as to make this priceless treasure accessible to millions in India and outside ignorant of Sanskrit. During this part of her Indian career, she did more than any Indian to revive respect for the ancient teachings of Hinduism and the other great faiths which have their followers in this country. Primarily for use in the Central Hindu College, she supervised the preparation of a text-book on Hindu religion and morals. In later years she made a similar attempt, and with equal success, to bring together the main teachings of all the great religions of the world in a universal text-book of religion and morals.

On the eve of the First World War she felt that the time was at last ripe for her entry into active politics. On 11th June, 1914, she made a vigorous plea in London on behalf of India. She concluded a lengthy statement in the following terms :

India asks only that she shall be recognised as a nation, shall be given self-government, and shall form an integral part of the Empire, composed of self-governing communities. She asks no more than this.

It is clear, however, that with the growth of the West the old civilisations of the East could not have remained unmodified, and India, like other nations, would in any case have been obliged to pass into a new condition of things. Many of us believe that in the wider issues the coming of British rule into India will prove ultimately to be for the good of both nations and of the world at large. English education forced the ablest of the Indian people to imbibe the modern spirit, and a new love of liberty began to stir in their hearts and inspire their minds. They eagerly drank the milk of the new spirit at England's breast and there was a moment when, had England grasped the opportunity, the gratitude of India would have enshrined her in India's heart.

To build up a vigorous movement for home rule, she started a daily paper in Madras, *New India*, in July 1914. I had the privilege of working on this newspaper. On 22nd May, 1916, the acting Chief Presidency Magistrate, Madras, demanded under Section 3 (1) of the Act 1 of 1910 the deposit of a security of Rs. 2,000 before him within 14 days from the date of the notice. She promptly deposited the security under protest. Subsequently, on August 25, by an order of the Governor-in-Council, the security was forfeited and all copies of *New India* were also ordered to be forfeited to His Majesty. (This latter order, however, was not actually carried out.)

Thereupon, Mrs. Besant filed a petition in the High Court of Madras against the orders of the Presidency Magistrate and the Local Government, meanwhile paying the Rs. 10,000 enhanced security that was demanded, so as to go on with the publication of the daily. She knew that sections of the Press Act were so sweeping that she was bound to lose the case. All the same, her previous experience in Britain had told her that constitutional battles should be fought out with persistence to the end to rouse public opinion, with a view to changing obnoxious laws which placed restraints on the freedom of the individual or of the press.

It was from this standpoint that Mrs. Besant preferred her petition to the High Court. The case was heard by a special tribunal of three judges. She conducted her own case, while the Advocate-General (Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar) appeared on behalf of the Government. The case concluded on October 2, lasting three days and a half. The Advocate-General, in answer to a question from the Bench, stated that the Government did not object to Mrs. Besant's advocacy of home rule but only to the methods of her advocacy.

The judges delivered separate but concurring judgments on Mrs. Besant's application, refusing redressal. She had contended that the Act imposed a serious disability on persons desiring to keep printing presses. It was bound to have the effect of hampering not only a perfectly legitimate business, but one which played an important part, namely the diffusion of knowledge and the progress of civilisation. The judges however, declined to intervene on

the ground that it was not open to them to set aside the order of the Chief Presidency Magistrate.

As for the order of forfeiture of security, the judges said that the Act debarred the Court from interfering except on one ground, namely, that the extracts (from articles in *New India*) in question were not of the nature described in the Act. The Chief Justice said that he would acquit Mrs. Besant of any wilful attempt to disseminate disaffection or hatred against any class of His Majesty's subjects; but he was unable to hold that some of the extracts from the articles in *New India* cited before the court might not have such a tendency. Her revision petition against the Chief Presidency Magistrate's order was dismissed since all the duties vested in the Magistrate under the Press Act had the attributes of an executive character, not judicial. The Legislature, in delegating to the Magistrate powers under the Act, had made him an administrative officer, and in that view the order was not liable to be revised by a writ of *certiorari* or a revisional order.

Mrs. Besant then went to the Privy Council. Petitions were filed in the latter part of June 1917 before the Privy Council, Sir John Simon appearing for the petitioner. Lord Dunedin (President), Lord Shaw, Lord Sumner, Sir John Edge and Mr. Ameer Ali heard the appeal against the decision of the Madras High Court.

The facts having been submitted to the Committee, Sir John Simon explained that it was Mrs. Besant's desire to raise various issues, apart from those which were personally and financially important to her, in relation to the interpretation and administration of the law in India. Their Lordships came to an immediate decision with Lord Dunedin stating that it was unnecessary to argue the petition. "We will grant your petition," he said, and the proceedings thereupon ended.

Mrs. Besant did not long enjoy this triumph over executive arbitrariness. Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, publicly warned her at the end of May 1917 :

Let us endeavour honestly and candidly to measure the situation. If, as stated far and wide, home rule means nothing less than, at a very early date, the placing of the Executive Govern-

ment in all its departments under the direct and full control of legislative Councils, containing a large majority of elected members, I feel sure that among Indians acquainted with public affairs, nobody having any true sense of responsibility considers it, or will declare it, within the range of practical politics.

There were persistent reports of impending action against her and two of her lieutenants in the Home Rule League, B. P. Wadia and George Arundale. At last, in the middle of June 1917, the Governor decided to come down to Madras from Ootacamund for a final attempt to persuade her into abandoning the Home Rule campaign.

"I have come down," he told her personally, "in order to show my great consideration for you and to speak to you myself and give you an opportunity of consideration." She was puzzled. "What am I to consider?" she asked him. He had no positive answer. "That is for you to decide," he replied, "but you might like to consult your friends." Mrs. Besant did not think there was anything to consult her friends about. She then asked him, "Am I to be interned?" He declined to discuss the matter. "In the Supreme Legislative Council," she told him, "Sir Reginald Craddock (the Home Member) had stated that no one was to be interned without a full statement of the offence for which he was to be interned and without being given a full opportunity for explanation or defence. I did not think at the time that it was true, because some of my own friends had no such opportunity. But I am very grateful to Your Excellency for proving it to be false.'

Again he declined to be drawn into a discussion of the matter. She then told him, "I can only act according to my conscience and leave the rest to God. I have nothing to regret in anything I have written or anything that I have said; and unless Your Excellency tells me what you wish me to consider, I am at a loss to know what to suggest."

Mrs. Besant then raised another point: was it true that he wished to deport her to England? He promptly replied, "Only for the period of the war", adding the assurance, "I will give you a safe conduct to England to take you through." She declined the offer.

Lord Pentland made it clear that if she did not abandon her

Home Rule campaign, he would have to stop all her activities including those of a non-political character because he could not discriminate between one form of activity and another. Since there seemed to be no meeting ground at all, Mrs. Besant finally told him: "You have all the power and I am helpless : and you must do what you like. There is just one thing I should like to say to Your Excellency, and that is that I believe you are striking the deadliest blow against the British Empire in India."

Punitive action after this interview with the Governor was not long in coming.* I can vividly recall a hot afternoon in June, 1917, when a British police officer visited *New India* office, just as the final proofs of the day's issue (it was an evening paper) were going down to the press room. He produced the order interning her, B.P. Wadia and G. S. Arundale at Ootacamund.

Thus it happened that in the middle of the First World War in 1917, Mrs. Besant challenged the British Government with the cry of home rule for India at the end of the war as an equal partner with Britain in the Commonwealth. Incredible as it may seem today, the British Government decided to intern her without a trial for daring to preach the doctrine of India's equality with the other units of the Commonwealth. Her internment only led to a national agitation in all parts of the country for home rule. The campaign resulted, as Gandhiji put it, in home rule for India becoming "a *mantram* in every village".

Few among those alive today are aware of the fact that at the time of the inauguration of the freedom movement in 1917, many eminent Indians, including for a time Gandhiji himself, were uneasy about such a radical demand being made of the British Government for immediate realisation. Among India's servants in the pre-independence era, there is perhaps not another who engaged in the same range of activities as Mrs. Besant or could lay claim to such a variety of achievements. She was gifted with a colossal intellect, an organisational capacity of a high order, courage of conviction which defied every penalty and obstacle,

* On the eve of the internment, Mrs Besant left behind a parting message which is reproduced in Appendix I.

and a warm and generous heart. All these were placed without stint or hesitation at India's disposal.

During a critical decade and more *New India* went through almost bewildering vicissitudes. Its fearless advocacy of India's freedom brought Mrs. Besant and the paper more than once into sharp conflict with the Executive. With an abounding faith in the Power that rules the destiny of the world, she went forward with her campaign, winning the doubters and the waverers to her side. *New India* stood throughout its meteoric career for certain principles, and cheerfully paid the price for their vindication. She had the satisfaction of securing for India, in external relations atleast, equality of position in the British Commonwealth with the other units. She laboured hard for the concept of India framing her own Constitution, in spite of the initial lack of support from the Congress.

With the same vision and courage that Mrs. Besant displayed in challenging British Imperialism, she stood out at the end of the First World War against what she regarded as the dangers of a movement like Gandhiji's non-co-operation, with its four-fold boycotts. In 1919 she felt it necessary to sacrifice her immense popularity with the Indian people through opposition to certain manifestations of national discontent, particularly the boycott of law courts and of schools and colleges. The harshness of martial law administration in the Punjab at the end of the First World War, culminating in the massacre of several hundred unarmed peasants who had gathered at Amritsar for the celebration of the Hindu new year, had angered the whole nation to a dangerous pitch. Mrs. Besant, however, took the view that brutally cruel as was the episode, the movement for India's freedom should proceed without being marred by excesses of any sort. She strove with all her might and influence to encourage general respect for law and order as the essence of organised, civilised life. *New India* often wrote, with a sharpness that hurt many, that general disrespect for law and order and indiscipline among the young would dangerously weaken the fabric of civilized society. Her objections to mass non-cooperation she cogently stated in the course of an article in her paper :

Is the British yoke so intolerable as to justify revolution, whether by force of arms or by non-co-operation? I deny it. . . I do not think most people recognise the immense change of spirit which has come over the administration; their minds are so full of the Punjab cruelties that they do not see the present area of liberty, and in their righteous indignation with the malefactors of 1919, they do not recognise the honest efforts of the Government of 1920. The continuance of Punjab misrule and its spread over India would have justified revolution; the change in the Punjab and the large changes in India would make revolution a crime.

I say "would have justified revolution", but must add, "if possible and beneficial". As things are, revolution would mean anarchy, and would result in a new foreign rule infinitely worse than the old. For India has no army, no navy. . . . Britain has sinned against India. . . . But Britain has also great virtues, and co-operation with her will bring India more swiftly to full responsible government than any other line of action. . . . Non-cooperation is a big gamble, with anarchy as one stake and utter futility as the other.

. . . Revolution by violence is inexpedient and impossible. Revolution by non-violence, non-co-operation, leads either to anarchy or futility.

We see that where one man pits his conscience against the law of his day, he appeals really to a moral and spiritual force; he suffers but he does not rend in twain the social bonds; these continue though he may die; his sufferings appeal; they touch the heart; they arouse the mind; if he is inspired by God and is striking a really higher note, he, or his successors, conquer and society is lifted higher. But if thousands of men follow this same course, they conquer by numbers, not by a moral or spiritual appeal. The one is a martyr: the thousands are revolutionaries.

The paper's circulation went down as quickly as it had mounted, and Mrs. Besant's voice in her closing years appeared to be a lone one. Such was *New India*—a fearless fighter for all great causes, with no room for opportunism or expediency in its outlook and

policy. It died as it lived—fighting all the way through a stormy existence.

Another great service Mrs. Besant rendered to the cause of India's political progress deserves mention, particularly because it has so far received scant recognition. The Congress had split at its Surat session in 1907 into Moderates and Extremists with the organisation passing for nearly a decade under the control of the former. Mrs. Besant said clearly that the demand for home rule would have no chance of being taken seriously without the backing of a unified national movement. She sought Lokamanya Tilak's cooperation, shortly after his service of a six years' term of rigorous imprisonment for sedition, and the two worked with perseverance and skill for unity which was achieved at the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1916.

Another aspect of her activity was insistence on an understanding with the Muslim League. In this sphere Jinnah played a key role. He had become the President of the Home Rule League in Bombay and was keen that the Muslim League should be in the charge of progressive and independent-minded Muslims like himself. At Lucknow, the Congress appealed to the Muslim League to draft a charter of demands that would command the support of both organisations. The Congress-League scheme was the concrete result of this effort.

Mrs. Besant was not content with merely proclaiming the goal of home rule for India as a unit in the British Commonwealth. At the end of the First World War she declared in London before the Joint Parliamentary Committee which considered the Bill embodying the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme of reforms (afterwards the Government of India Act of 1919) that India could not accept for all time a Constitution framed for her by the British Government in London. Working on this concept of India framing her own Constitution, she proceeded, with the task of framing a Bill for the future governance of India, which would have the broadbased support of all political parties. She attended the Belgaum Congress almost immediately after the first session of the National Convention and attempted, though without success, to have the doors of the Congress opened to all parties. In January 1925, when the All-Parties Conference assembled in Delhi,

she placed her report on the Bill before the Swaraj sub-committee of the Conference; and though the report as a whole was not accepted by the Conference many of the changes introduced subsequently in the Bill owed their origin to that report.

After the Bill had been finally reshaped in India at the National Convention at Kanpur in April 1926, Mrs. Besant attended a meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress in Calcutta at the end of May 1925 at Gandhiji's suggestion. Unfortunately, there was no quorum at the meeting; and Gandhiji apologising to her for having caused her unnecessary trouble, offered to circulate copies of the Bill to members of the Working Committee with a request for their opinion. As Mr. C. R. Das was at that time too unwell to come down to Calcutta, she went to Darjeeling to obtain his approval for the Bill. In February 1926 she attended a private conference of about 40 members of the Central Legislature in Delhi for considering the Bill. There were present at the meeting Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and many leading members of the Swaraj Party.

The measure, described later as 'the Commonwealth of India Bill', was supported by several leading Indian statesmen including Mr. Jinnah. After it had gone through its first reading in the House of Commons, Mrs. Besant made vigorous efforts to secure for it general support through a National Convention. Its final session was held in April 1926 on the basis of an influentially signed manifesto in the following terms :

We, the signatories to the present proposals, remain in our respective political organisations, but unite in a common effort to obtain Indian freedom. We define Swaraj as full Dominion status as claimed by the resolution of the National Congress of 1914. We accept responsive co-operation wherever useful for advancing the interests of the country, and all forms of constitutional agitation against proposals inimical to these. We support the Commonwealth of India Bill, now on the official list of the Labour Party in the British Parliament, and recommend that any amendments thought desirable by the Council of the coalition of political parties, to be formed in consequence of the manifesto, should be sent to the Secre-

tary of the Parliamentary Executive Committee of the Labour Party, to be moved when the Bill is in Committee of the House.*

In form and structure, it was broadly similar to the Constitution of a Dominion, a vital difference being the pyramidal electorates for representative institutions at different levels : from adult suffrage for Village Panchayats the electorates narrowed down on the basis of knowledge and experience, and were indirect for provincial (or State) legislatures and the Central Parliament.

The private bill did not get beyond the first reading in the House of Commons. Ideas, however, do not die. The work on the Commonwealth of India Bill was of great help to the Nehru (all-Parties) Committee in its subsequent report which embodied a commonly acceptable scheme for attaining Dominion status.

* The following were the signatories:

Dr. Annie Besant, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, K.C.S.I., the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, M.L.C., M. R. Jayakar, J. C. Kelkar, Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachari, M.L.A., Dewan Bahadur M. Ramachandrarao, M.L.A., Jannadas Dwarkadas, Kanji Dwarkadas, the Hon'ble Mr. Ratansi Moraji, Bipin Chandra Pal, M.L.A., Delhi, Hirendra Nath Datta, Hon. Lala Ram Saran Das, Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni, M.L.C., Hasan Imam, Iswar Saran, D. V. Gokhale, Sir H. S. Goun, L.L.D., M.L.A., the Hon. G. S. Khaparde, B. Rallia Ram, Sir Dinshah Petit, Jamshed N. R. Mehta, Jethmal Parasram, I. N. Guntur, B. Shiva Rao, P. K. Telang, A. Ranganatha Mudaliar, M.L.A., the Hon. Raja Rampal Singh, Dewan Bahadur M. Krishnan Nair, M.L.C., Rai Sahab Chandrika Prasad (Chairman, All-India Trade Union Congress), Sir Daya Kishen Kaul, K.B.E., C.I.E., D.B.L.B. Bhopatkar, M.L.C. (leader of the Opposition, Bombay Council), Chumilal M. Gandhi, Sir P. C. Ray, I. B. Sen, B. K. Lahiri, J. Chaudhuri, D. P. Khaitan, M.L.C., D. C. Ghose, Arun Chandra Sinha, the Hon. Mr. T. Desikachari, Dorothy Jinarajadas (Vice-President, Women's Indian Association), Margaret Cousins (Hony. Secretary, Women's Indian Association), D. K. Telang (Hon. General Secretary, N.H.R.L.) Govinda Doss, B. Ramachandra Reddi, M.L.C., Guruswami, M.L.C. (subject to safeguarding the interests of the Depressed Classes), T. Mallesappa, M.L.C., J. A. Saldanha, M.L.C., Rev. Dr. J. R. Chittambar, Dewan Bahadur P. Kesava Pillai, M.L.C., Vice-President of the Legislative Council, Dr. P. Subbarayan, M.L.C., K. Prabhakaran Thampian, M.L.C., P. S. Rajappa Tevar, M.L.C.

Though the scheme was named after Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Chairman of the All-Parties' Conference, its main author was Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, whose vast constitutional knowledge had been enriched by his experience in guiding the National Conference of which Mrs. Besant and he were the joint sponsors.

The Nehru Scheme was a significant document. In point of time, it preceded the report of the Simon Commission, thus greatly reducing the latter's political importance. It accepted the goal of full Dominion Status for India as the largest measure of agreement attainable between different political parties. For the first time in India, the proposal to integrate British governed Provinces and Indian Princely States in a single structure was seriously put forward in a document by an All-Parties' Conference.

I have often pondered through all the years since Mrs. Besant's passing away over the source of her power and vision. How could one, with comparatively little knowledge of the details of our political problems, choose with such admirable precision the right moment for making a claim on India's behalf which even many of her Indian colleagues regarded at the time as too radical? Later, how could she evolve a procedure for drawing up a Constitution for India which substantially anticipated the creation of a Constituent Assembly in 1946?

From some of us, her intimate followers, she did not conceal her profound faith in the wisdom of the Rishis who, she was certain, were guiding the destinies of the world. One of them, specially concerned with India's welfare, had warned her that it would be better for this country to progress more slowly than risk the freedom movement being stained by excesses. It was this faith which sustained her through a period of unpopularity bordering on isolation.

Mrs. Besant's daily life was full of many acts of kindness and help. It might be a poor boy unable to pay his school fees; or a bright young man keen on going abroad for higher education; or a man in sorrow over the death of his wife or child seeking comfort and help. Whoever it might be and whatever the form of help that was sought, Mrs. Besant never refused it. Countless people all over the world still remember her with warm gratitude.

Mrs. Besant did not realize her most cherished dream of seeing India free before her death. But many of the things she had urged, with all her love for India—and for some of which she suffered misunderstanding and obloquy—are being learnt the hard way by the Government of free India : the dangers implicit in indiscipline, for instance, and the resort to civil disobedience as a form of mass protest.

Mrs. Besant's place among the builders of modern India is one that time will only brighten.

M. K. Gandhi

My first contact with Gandhiji was early in 1916, at the inaugural function of the Banaras Hindu University; and my last tragic glimpse of him was at Birla House on the morning of 31st January, 1948, when his earthly remains were taken for cremation to Raj-ghat, close to Delhi's Red Fort. During those thirty-two years it was my privilege to come into intimate touch with him on several occasions in different situations. He was unique as an individual, often unpredictable in his reactions to problems, baffling to his colleagues and followers—but always, whether in triumph or in defeat, the embodiment of serenity and poise.

My first impression of him at the University function in Banaras early in 1916, was, I must confess, not favourable. After Mrs. Besant had addressed the gathering, consisting mainly of students, holding out in moving language the glorious prospect of successive generations of young men being trained for service in a free India, there rose an odd-looking man in a Kathiawari turban warning the audience against being misled by her eloquence into believing that India was ready for home rule. Moreover, he thought, such a movement in the midst of a war that was taxing all the energies of the British Government was questionable from a moral standpoint. The speech, which contained other similar out-of-the-normal sentiments, struck me as singularly inappropriate. Mrs. Besant, listening with increasing impatience, finally burst out that it was dangerous to speak to immature young men in the strain that he had done. The sympathies of the audience

were obviously far more with him than with her. When the excitement created by her intervention had finally subsided, calmly and absolutely unperturbed, he rose to defend Mrs. Besant, pointing out that she had only spoken out of her love of India and that her motive should not be misunderstood.

Gandhiji's approach to India's political freedom was very different from that of the rest of his contemporaries. It was first in South Africa, in the early decades of this century, that he raised his voice against racial discrimination as practised by the then Government of that country on settlers of Indian origin. On a limited scale he fashioned the instrument of passive resistance against injustice, oppression and wrong. A new concept of heroic self-sacrifice came into vogue under his guidance, enabling thousands of common men and women in South Africa to suffer in dignified protest all the consequences of defiance of racially discriminatory legislation and practices.

South Africa gave Gandhiji the first opportunity to test the validity of his techniques. Success in a restricted sphere opened up for him the possibilities of its application on a far wider scale to the termination of India's subjection to British rule.

Gandhiji's technique, whether it was for the achievement of India's freedom or for the uplift of the untouchables in this country, was unique. To him India's freedom signified little without the rehabilitation of the less favoured sections of the Indian people who had endured for centuries a number of social disabilities and humiliations. Thus his mission was fundamentally one of protest against discrimination in all its forms and manifestations.

The dead hand of custom in India had relegated an appreciable section of the community to a way of life which approximated to a denial of human rights and equal opportunities. Political leaders before Gandhiji had fixed their gaze on India's progress towards freedom exclusively in terms of constitutional reforms. The disabilities of the untouchables—social, economic and cultural—numbering at that time over 60 million, had, indeed, attracted the notice of reformers from the second half of the nineteenth century. The pioneers of the movement had dared much in a great cause, enduring social obloquy, even ostracism, humiliation and persecution from the orthodox sections of society.

But until Gandhiji's appearance on the scene—periodically at first and permanently after the middle of the First World War—the two streams of progress had remained distinct and separate.

Fresh from South Africa and keenly alive to the inhumanity of racial arrogance and all its ugly implications, Gandhiji saw in India, as in a flash, the vital link between the removal of untouchability and national freedom. In 1917, at the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta presided over by Mrs. Besant, the first concrete step was taken to forge such a link. In a resolution adopted on Gandhiji's initiative, the Congress "urged upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience".

On assuming the leadership of the freedom movement two years later Gandhiji formulated a constructive programme for all workers in the movement, giving the complete eradication of untouchability and all the evils it had bred in India's social and economic life the topmost priority. He declared on one occasion that he would not sacrifice the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning India's freedom. He said, "I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived." In his weekly paper *Young India* he repeatedly justified this radical stand.

In 1921 he wrote in the course of an article: "Untouchability cannot be given a secondary place on the programme. Without the removal of the taint Swaraj (self-government) is a meaningless term. Workers should welcome social boycott and even public execration in the prosecution of their work. I consider the removal of untouchability as a most powerful factor in the process of the attainment of Swaraj."

Despite all the preoccupations of an active political career, involving periodical defiance of British authority, first described as non-cooperation and later as civil disobedience, Gandhiji never grudged time, energy or resources in the nation-wide fight against untouchability. For the untouchables he coined a new name, 'Harijans' meaning the children of God. The denial to them of entry into Hindu temples, he saw, lay at the root of all their eco-

conomic and social disabilities. Temple entry for Harijans became with him a primary article of faith. Gandhiji's inspiring leadership produced profoundly promising results in two fields—freedom from foreign rule and the emancipation of the economically and socially backward sections of the population.

In the political sphere, Gandhiji, whose sympathies in the first phase of his career were with the Moderates, was inclined to view immediate home rule for India as impracticable. It is not generally known that on arrival in India in the middle of the First World War, Gandhiji threw himself into a recruitment campaign for enlisting soldiers to fight for Britain in the various theatres of war. He defended this on the ground that his own philosophy of non-violence should not stand in the way of India's active support for Britain as an argument in favour of political freedom.

He was a critic of the home rule movement when it was first inaugurated. Nevertheless in the following year (1917) when Mrs. Besant was interned for her home rule activities, he seriously suggested a mass march to her place of detention at Ootacamund to enforce her liberation. Dr. Subramania Aiyar, to whom the suggestion was first made, was, with his long training as a judge, startled by the novel suggestion; and Lokamanya Tilak and Mr. Jinnah, whose advice was sought, regarded it with such sharp disapproval that it was quietly abandoned. But so far as Gandhiji was concerned, the process of conversion to the home rule idea, thus begun, was completed at the end of the war by the martial law regime in the Punjab, culminating in the massacre in Jallianwalla Bagh of several hundred unarmed peasants.

From that moment, until the achievement of freedom in 1947, Gandhiji was the unchallenged leader of the national movement. Several times, in this period of rapidly changing circumstances, he clashed with old and experienced colleagues: but such was his hold on the masses that on every occasion those who differed from him went out of the movement. Ironically the Liberals, with whom his links were intimate, disassociated themselves from the Congress under his leadership.

Non-cooperation on a scale never before attempted in India was his first response to the insolence of British might. This

technique he had forged earlier on a limited scale in South Africa in demanding citizenship rights for the Indian settlers in that country.

To appreciate the full significance of Gandhiji's leadership one must recall the circumstances under which he assumed the leadership of the movement at the end of the First World War. Terrorism, born of impotent hatred of the British, had raised its head in the first two decades of this century, when the tempo of political activity was definitely rising in the country. Gandhiji stepped into undisputed leadership in 1919 as a sequel to the Amritsar massacre. Only he could effectively control the wave of deep indignation that swept over the country as the grim details of this tragedy came fully to light.

The end of the world war resulted in the swift demobilisation of lakhs of trained soldiers who had faced hardships and perils and had covered themselves with glory. In such an atmosphere Gandhiji's experiment with non-violent non-cooperation involved considerable risks. But the impact of his personality on the masses was such that deviations from that path were few and of a minor nature.

Almost a decade later, Gandhiji conceived the plan of resisting the salt tax in India. It was a master-stroke of political strategy; no one in the country, not even the poorest, was exempt from payment of the duty on salt. The famous march to Dandi for defying the salt law, like the American gesture of throwing tea-chests into Boston harbour in the eighteenth century, was symbolic of the historically established principle of "no taxation without representation". The Dandi march reflected the resistance of an entire nation to the denial of freedom. Its sequel was the declaration of the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, at the end of the first Round Table Conference in London in 1930 that the status of a self-governing Dominion would be conferred on India.

I saw a good deal of Gandhiji beginning with the Round Table Conference in London." One memorable scene lingers in my memory. At midnight in St. James Place (the venue of the conference) after many delegates had spoken—Sapru, Jinnah, Sastri, Zafarullah Khan, etc.—came Gandhiji with a spontaneous and

earnest appeal to the British Government to bury the past and accept India as an equal partner. The weary delegates sat up, moved by this lofty vision.

Politically the early thirties were filled with bitterness and frustration. I busied myself in Madras with an organisation known as the 'Buy Indian League', with the generous cooperation of *The Hindu* which published all my statements on the progress of the movement. For about a year or two the movement grew vigorously in South India, while Congress leaders were in prison for one of their periodical movements of defiance of authority.

Suddenly, one day when I was temporarily out of Madras on work, came a postcard from Gandhiji (then recently released from prison), written in his own hand: "I missed you during my stay in Madras," he said, and then followed a couple of sentences warmly appreciative of my work and commending, in particular, my stress on village and rural industries. This brief note was followed some months later by a letter, also in his own hand, from Sevagram. Would I go to Wardha, he asked me, and help in the building up of a Village Industries Association? I gladly accepted the invitation and spent two busy days with him and his lieutenants discussing details; but I was not prepared for the sequel—an offer of a place on the executive of the new Association. It meant whole-time work with my headquarters at Sevagram with no other activity—and certainly no politics. Just about that time I had been offered by *The Hindu* an assignment in New Delhi as its special correspondent, with the likelihood of a similar connection with the *Manchester Guardian*.

Journalism had always had a strong attraction for me after my experience on the staff of Mrs. Besant's *New India*. Reluctantly I turned down Gandhiji's offer and went to New Delhi for the start of my new career. Little did I realise at the time that this association with two great papers, one Indian and the other British, would bring me unique opportunities of working from behind the scenes for Indo-British conciliation.

As the New Delhi Correspondent of *The Hindu* and *Manchester Guardian* (now the *Guardian*), before and during World War II, I was one of a band of journalists in the pre-independence era to be accorded the privilege of interviews with the Viceroy. My

first one, soon after joining the staff of *The Hindu* in 1935, was with Lord Willingdon, then in the last year of his term of office. He had been Governor of Madras in the early twenties and knew that I represented a Madras paper. It was safe for him (he must have thought) to assume that he had seen me in Madras.

"Ah, my dear fellow," said the Viceroy, in his characteristically breezy way, "after how many years do we meet again?" It was a friendly remark, and I would have been guilty of gross indiscretion if I had said in reply, "Sir, you are making a mistake; surely you are thinking of someone else." Summoning all the tact at my command, I said, "Sir, Madras seems a long way back in the past, doesn't it?"

"Of course, of course," he replied, adding almost nostalgically, "Madras was such a delightful place."

That interview was brief and inconsequential. Lord Willingdon had a deep, ill-concealed prejudice against Gandhiji and was convinced that the only way to deal with him was to keep him at arm's length and be firm. He would never meet him, because (he thought) he was so subtle in argument that he could "tie you up in knots".

Then came Lord Linlithgow, a very different type of man. His background was the Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture in the late twenties (of which he had been the Chairman) and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Government of India Bill, also as its Chairman, which resulted in the 1935 Constitution.

Lord Linlithgow had not met Gandhiji before coming to India; but what he had heard about him from his predecessor and his senior official advisers could not have made a favourable impression on the new Viceroy. Nevertheless, it was known that he was willing to make a direct contact with Gandhiji without making it apparent that he was breaking away, so soon after assuming office, from Willingdon's practice. More considerations were piled up in Simla against an early interview. An interview granted to Gandhiji would enhance his prestige and that of the Congress. The general elections, under the new 1935 Constitution, were scheduled for some time in the following year, and an impression might be created that the ground was being prepared for a Linlithgow-Gandhi Pact, similar to the Irwin-Gandhi Pact

of 1931. What would the Muslims think of such a development? And the Princes : one had to think of them too, lest they should be frightened away from federation. Linlithgow thus spent a year and more of his Vicerealty, wondering, vacillating, and perhaps apprehensive, about meeting Gandhi.

The general elections which came in the early months of 1937, were a great shock to the Viceroy's official advisers, who had hoped for, and even predicted, a victory for the groups fighting the Congress. Unprepared mentally for the prospects of the Congress assuming office in the Provinces where they had secured majorities, the Viceroy's advisers suggested the inevitability of a show-down (in the form of civil disobedience) and the ultimate suspension of the new Constitution. A deadlock arose because of the party's refusal to accept office in the seven Provinces without certain assurances from the Governors about the exercise of the special powers vested in them by the Constitution. Left-wingers made no secret of their determination in any case to wreck the Constitution from within even if the Congress were called upon to form Ministries. In this difficult situation, the Viceroy was groping his way towards a solution.

Meanwhile, Rajagopalachari had worked out a formula which I put out in the two newspapers I represented from New Delhi (*The Hindu* and the *Manchester Guardian*) with a hint that its acceptance by the British Government might lead to a friendly settlement.

One morning in the middle of April 1937 my telephone rang. It was Mr. (later Sir Gilbert) Laithwaite, the Viceroy's Private Secretary, at the other end. "Can you come over if you are not busy," he said. My wife and I had arranged to leave that night for a month's holiday in Kashmir. I left the packing to be completed by her and went to the Viceroy's House with a premonition that something significant would happen. Mr. Laithwaite ushered me into the Viceroy's room without any explanation.

I had not met Lord Linlithgow before, except at one or two formal functions. "Do you know Mr. Gandhi well?", the Viceroy asked me quietly. "Yes, Sir," I said, "I have known him for twenty years."

"I have not yet met him, though I would like to do so,"

was his next remark. The Viceroy then produced a press clipping from a drawer in front of him. "Here is a message from you," he said, "in the *Manchester Guardian*. It has attracted the Secretary of State's notice. What is your authority for saying that the Congress party may reconsider its attitude if the British Government accepts your formula as a basis for negotiations?"

I explained that my message in the *Guardian* (practically identical with the one which had appeared simultaneously in *The Hindu*) was drafted after a detailed discussion with Rajagopalachari; and he certainly knew Gandhiji's mind better than any other Congress leader. If Gandhiji was satisfied, the Congress Working Committee would, I was confident, accept his lead.

"This certainly makes a difference," commented the Viceroy. But he wanted a number of points clarified in the formula before he could advise the Secretary of State. He mentioned in particular four points on which he wanted further elucidation and wondered how it could be done, without bringing him or the Secretary of State into the picture.

For the first time, he showed a desire to know how Gandhiji's mind was working: would he support the Congress policy of wrecking the Constitution, as declared in the election campaign, or play a constructive role, limiting the Governors' role to intervention only in cases of proved necessity, and giving the Congress Ministries an opportunity to utilise their powers for constructive purposes? I was confident, I told him (on an assurance I had from Rajagopalachari a few days earlier), that Gandhiji was in a constructive mood.

"Do you think Mr. Gandhi can keep a secret?" was the Viceroy's next question. I could not help smiling as I replied that there was no man in India with a stricter code of conduct. Here was my opportunity: "I wish you would meet him," I added, "and you will be convinced." "That will have to happen some time," he conceded.

I reflected for a brief while and told the Viceroy that I saw a way out. I would go to Gandhiji (who was at that time in a village in Hudli in Belgaum District for a meeting of the Village Industries Association) and get an interview from him on these four points as a newspaper man.

"I will be frank with you, Sir", I added : "I must tell him privately that these points have been raised by you and the Secretary of State, and that if his replies are acceptable to you, there may be a settlement."

The Viceroy seemed agreeable to my suggestion, without committing himself to subsequent developments. He was anxious that my interview with Gandhiji should rouse no suspicion in the public mind about negotiations being started with him. He appeared uneasy and apprehensive lest any indiscretion should give him away. I assured him that his fears were groundless; but I added that, if he really wanted the errand on which I was about to go to Gandhiji to succeed, my name should not appear in the Court Circular the following morning. He appreciated the point and readily agreed to keep my name out.

I explained to my wife on returning home that our Kashmir holiday was off, and that I was going South that night to a village in Belgaum District instead, to see Gandhiji. In a mood of restrained optimism I went to him in Hudli, with some questions, really from Zetland who was then at the India Office and Linlithgow, but outwardly on behalf of *The Hindu* and the *Manchester Guardian*.

Arriving at the village where Gandhiji was camping (it was a Monday afternoon, the day of his silence), I wrote on a piece of paper : "I have some questions for you from the Viceroy and the Secretary of State; and if your replies are acceptable to them, the political deadlock may be broken." He wrote on the same paper : "Come tomorrow and be prepared to spend the day with me." I wrote again : "I will come, but tomorrow I will not mention the Viceroy or the Secretary of State; I will ask the questions as though they are from the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Hindu*."

The whole of Tuesday and Wednesday we spent over the questions. Gandhiji dictated the answers in the presence of Dr. Rajendra Prasad and some other lieutenants, but would not permit me to go until he had seen the message I would send to these two papers. He was not satisfied with his replies, even after two days of concentrated and patient effort. "Why don't you come to Poona with me tonight," he finally said, "I will rewrite the statement and let you have it by midday tomorrow." He must have

worked at it in the train, because when I called at 'Parna Kuti' in Poona (his residence) at the appointed hour on the following day, he handed it over to me.

"I think I am a better journalist than you are," he added with a smile, as I received the document. I conceded his claim. "But you have had previous training in journalism," I remarked, "when you were in South Africa." He told me that he did not want a fight with the British unless it was forced on him. "I have only to be coaxed," he added, discussing the reluctance of the Governors to give the sort of assurance that he was demanding as a preliminary to Congress acceptance of office. I conveyed to him that I had assured British officials in New Delhi that he had no intention of throwing the British out of India; his real object was to promote a big constructive movement in the country. "You were quite right," he said.

The interview with Gandhiji was promptly published in *The Hindu* and the *Manchester Guardian* and with it were editorials in both papers supporting Gandhiji's point of view. Both in Simla and in London, however, officials were slow in utilizing the opportunity he had created for direct negotiations. Nevertheless, the story had a happy ending and Congress Ministries assumed office in the Provinces of Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar, Orissa and the North West Frontier Provinces. In an interview with the Viceroy, I also ventured to indicate the desirability of an early meeting with India's foremost leader. But how was this to be done? The Viceroy's mind was set on the new Constitution and to make it work; he was in no mood to discuss with any one, the liberalisation of the Constitution. I therefore spoke to him about Gandhiji's Village Industries Association which, I explained, had some features of interest for the Viceroy, who was considering at the time the formation of an All India Rural Development Board. I mentioned some other points, all non-political, which could fruitfully afford a meeting ground between the two without embarrassment to the Viceroy. Problems of nutrition, for instance, and adequate milk supply in the country, public health, cottage industries, in regard to which Gandhiji's Association (I said) was doing useful and active work.

Lord Linlithgow seemed interested in all these topics: but

on making a direct contact with Gandhiji, there was no commitment, not even a comment. His immediate advisers were willing to discuss with me such a possibility, but only (as I discovered later) to point out to me the hurdles that had to be crossed. Would Gandhiji write his name in the Viceroy's book? I did not think he would. And, of course, he would have to apply in writing (they said) for a formal interview with His Excellency, and agree to his name appearing in the Court Circular, on the day following the event. I was quite certain, I told them, that he would not observe such formalities: And then they asked what clothes would Gandhiji wear if he were to be granted an interview? My answer was simple: the same as those he wore when he met the King in London during the Round Table Conference.

The rigidity of the bureaucracy prevailed. Not until early August of that year was it possible for the Viceroy to grasp the initiative and invite Gandhiji for an interview, some time after the Congress ministries had been installed in office. The Viceroy's official advisers consistently took the line all through that summer that the Congress, by rejecting office after the general elections, had committed a tactical blunder and was anxious to find a way out. An interview granted to Gandhiji would thus provide an escape, and it was not the Viceroy's business to make it easy for the Congress to retrace its steps.

On the other hand, from a powerful section of the party came the demand in 1937 for the wrecking of the Constitution from within and the creation of a new one by representatives of the Indian people through an elected Constituent Assembly. It was not easy to resist such pressure: but Gandhiji preferred a constructive approach and was singularly free from bitterness. He told me at the end of an interview in the summer of that year: "The British are a decent people; it should be easy to make a deal with them." For him the new Constitution that the British had given India represented "an attempt, however limited it might be, to replace the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority". He told the British a little later that there was no need for them to leave India. On the other hand, he said, "India is a vast country. You and your people can stay comfortably, provided you accommodate yourselves to our conditions here."

On the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, Gandhiji, with characteristic magnanimity, called for India's unconditional support for Britain against Germany. He was moved to his depths by the prospect of cities like London and Paris being bombed out of existence. What, he asked, would be the worth of India's freedom at such a cost? He had gone far in his outlook from that in 1917 when he was prepared to set aside his personal belief in non-violence in order to find recruits in India's villages for the British army. But his basic concept that one should not seek personal advantage from an opponent's embarrassment had remained unaffected. Consistently with his basic philosophy of non-violence, his support would have been moral, not in men and resources.

After years of experimentation and many failures, Gandhiji was at that time definitely seeking a lasting settlement with the British on negotiated terms. On another occasion, in July 1939, it was again my good fortune to go on behalf of the Government of India to Abbottabad where Gandhiji was spending the summer, this time with an appeal to him to co-operate in preventing the situation in South Africa from deteriorating further. The plight of Indian settlers in South Africa was causing the Government of India much concern: the Government had before it a suggestion to recall its Agent as a gesture of protest against South Africa's racial policy. Some of the leaders of the Indian community in Durban, driven to desperation, had announced their intention to resort to *Satyagraha*. India's Agent (Shri B. Rama Rau) considered that such a move might prove disastrous from the Indian point of view: even a Liberal Minister like Hofmeyer, he feared, might be compelled to declare that the challenge must be met by the South African Government.

Sir Jagdish Prasad (then member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in charge of the problems of Indians overseas) made a suggestion to me: could I go at once to see Gandhiji, with a message from the Government of India that he should exert all his influence with the Indian leaders in Durban to abandon their proposal? Gandhiji promptly replied in the affirmative to my enquiry by telegram whether I could see him on an important matter concerning South Africa. Armed with files of the Govern-

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ment marked 'secret', I left Simla for Abbottabad and had my interview with Gandhiji. Here is a passage from my diary written on return to Simla :

I saw Gandhiji and had over an hour with him. He did most of the talking and spoke of practically nothing else but South Africa. He fully realises the dangers of passive resistance, in the Transvaal particularly, as there are no leaders worth the name to guide the movement. But it is his view that having pointed out the dangers, he cannot ask them to revise their decision, since the people concerned took it with their eyes open. He has sent two private cables to General Smuts and also to the Premier imploring them to see that the Indian minority is not crushed out of existence. He did not want to give this for publication. I communicated this fact, however (with Gandhiji's approval), to Sir Jagdish whom I saw this morning. Gandhiji's view is that a *satyagraha* campaign should not be influenced by prudential considerations. "There is no such thing as success or defeat," he said.

Gandhiji told me, however, "Unless the Government of India can produce something concrete from the Union Government, what can I put forward as a justification for the withdrawal of the movement?"

A week later, I was invited by the Viceroy for a talk. The substance of our discussion I recorded in my diary :

I went into the Viceroy's room immediately after he had received the happy news that Gandhiji had cabled last night to the leaders of the passive resistance movement in South Africa to postpone action until further instructions. He had received a very encouraging reply from Smuts.

These behind-the-scenes activities of Gandhiji's helped to build up a relationship of mutual regard between him and Linlithgow strong enough to withstand for a couple of years the strain of the difficult political negotiations during the early stages of the

Second World War over India's demand of immediate and complete freedom.

At the time of the outbreak of the war, the Congress, had it accepted Gandhiji's advice, would have offered unconditional cooperation, though without active material support, in the prosecution of the war. A sharp division of opinion on this vital issue inside the Working Committee led to the adoption of a course of action which was not in accordance with Gandhiji's views.

In the first two years of the war, he personally initiated or encouraged a number of moves for a war-time settlement with the British with the progressive elements among the princes and that section of the Muslim League which looked to Sir Sikander Hyat Khan for guidance. Every move was unfortunately thwarted by the British Government. Churchill said on one occasion : "I have not become the King's first Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." But Gandhiji had an undying faith in the efficacy of his own principles.

It was the country's misfortune that, all through the war years, Gandhiji and leading members of the Working Committee were unable to agree on a common line of action and policy. He was opposed to the Cripps offer of 1942, though Nehru and Rajaji were in favour of its acceptance; and he retired to Sevagram at an early stage of the negotiations with a sense of failure.

A question that was much discussed after 1942 was Gandhiji's attitude towards Japan in the event of India (or parts of the country) being occupied by Japanese forces. He was grossly misunderstood by the authorities in India, and American opinion was misled on the issue. His real position was clarified by him in a letter to his English disciple Miraben (Miss Madeline Slade) who gave him a detailed account of conditions in Orissa, which seemed particularly vulnerable to Japanese attack. Gandhiji's attitude as contained in this letter is worth quoting : "Remember that our attitude is that of complete non-cooperation with the Japanese army, therefore, we may not hold them in any way, nor may we profit by any dealings with them. Therefore we cannot sell anything to them. If people are not able to face the Japanese army, they will do as armed soldiers do, i.e., retire when they are over-whelmed.

And if they do so the question of having any dealings with Japanese does not and should not arise. If, however, the people have not the courage to resist Japanese unto death and not the courage and capacity to evacuate the portion invaded by the Japanese, they will do the best they can in the light of instructions. One thing they should never do—to yield willing submission to the Japanese. That will be a cowardly act, and unworthy of freedom-loving people. They must not escape from one fire only to fall into another and probably more terrible. Their attitude therefore must always be of resistance to the Japanese. No question, therefore, arises of accepting Japanese currency notes or Japanese coins. They will handle nothing from Japanese hands.” In August came the ‘Quit India’ Resolution and the mass imprisonment of Gandhiji, Azad and all prominent Congressmen. But Gandhiji respected opposition which sprang from honest conviction, and their personal relations remained unshaken to the end of their lives.

I remember a dark night at Sevagram in 1944. Gandhiji, with all his Congress colleagues still in prison, had in a mood of anxiety summoned Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru to his hut to ascertain from him whether a certain formula, which he intended later to discuss with Jinnah in Bombay, implied the creation of Pakistan. Bhulabhai Desai was another invitee—with me sitting behind them, a silent but eager listener. Gandhiji was distressed that Sir Tej Bahadur’s interpretation of the formula was that it would imply support for Jinnah’s demand for India’s division. Fortunately for Gandhiji, after a series of futile discussions in Bombay, the negotiations ended abruptly with no commitments on either side.

In a letter to Jinnah on 25th September, 1944, Gandhiji had told him that in accepting the principle of partition based on the wishes of the adult population of the areas proposed for the demarcation, he had clearly visualised a treaty between the two States : “There shall be a treaty of separation which should also provide for the efficient and satisfactory administration of foreign affairs, defence, internal communications, customs, commerce and the like which must necessarily continue to be matters of common interest between the contracting parties. The treaty shall also contain terms for safeguarding the rights of minorities in the two States.”

Gandhiji repeated this suggestion in an interview to the London *News Chronicle* on 29th September, 1944. He told its correspondent in New Delhi: "It was my suggestion that provided there was the safeguard of a plebiscite there would be sovereignty for the predominantly Muslim areas; but it should be accompanied by bonds of alliance between Hindustan and Pakistan. There should be a common policy and a working arrangement on foreign affairs, defence and communications and similar matters. It is manifestly vital to the welfare of both parts of India."

Jinnah, in response, told a newspaper correspondent on 5th October, 1944: "Certainly, Pakistan will have neighbourly relations with Hindustan like any other independent national State. We will say 'hands off India' to all outsiders. Pakistan will not tolerate any outside design or aggression on this sub-continent. We will observe something like the Monroe doctrine." But he was unwilling to go further and agree to a treaty as suggested by Gandhiji.

When the British Cabinet Mission visited New Delhi in the summer of 1946, one of the persons whom the British Ministers wished to consult was Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru (who was my honoured guest), then desperately ill and too weak to go to the Viceroy's House for the interview. I conveyed the news to Sir Stafford Cripps who immediately had all the arrangements altered to suit Sir Tej Bahadur's convenience. The interview took place in my house the following day under elaborate police precautions. Gandhiji, to whom this incident was reported, sent me a message that night that he was coming the next morning to enquire personally after Sir Tej Bahadur's health. That proved to be their last meeting.

A few weeks later when all arrangements were complete for the election of members of the Constituent Assembly, I sought an interview late one evening with Gandhiji at the Bhangi Colony in New Delhi. "What is it about?" he asked me with a smile as I met him in front of his hut. I explained that it was the composition of the Constituent Assembly I was interested in: Congress leaders who had been to prison several times could not be expected to have specialised in Constitution-making. There were fifteen persons outside the Congress, I took the liberty of adding, who could contribute materially towards carrying out such a task.

Gandhiji readily agreed and referred with warm admiration to Gokhale's habit of a thorough study of all public questions. "But have you a list of such persons?" he asked. I promptly pulled out a sheet of paper on which I had drawn up such a list for him and said, "Here it is." At the top of the list were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. N. Gopalaswami Iyengar, Dr. M. R. Jayakar and Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar. "They are all good names," Gandhiji said, "but show the list to Maulana Azad who is the President of the Congress and to Jawaharlalji. You may tell them it has my approval."

The list went through the Working Committee, with one or two changes. Had Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru been in good health, I have no doubt in my mind that he would have been Gandhiji's first choice for the Presidentship of the Constituent Assembly.

That was my last interview with Gandhiji. I sought one again towards the end of January 1948. The reply came that I might see him early in February, if he was still in Delhi. But 30th January intervened—the day of his tragic assassination. A graphic account of Gandhiji's last thirty days was written by a grand-daughter of his, Manuben, seventeen years old at the time. Completely unconscious of the significance either of the events or of her own record of them, she omitted no detail, however trivial: the food that Gandhiji ate, the number of hours he slept, his conversations with various political associates and representatives of different communities, etc.

We see in these notes (the names frequently omitted lest they should cause embarrassment to some who might still be alive) Gandhiji moving from one tense situation to another. The treatment accorded to Muslims in India after independence and partition was frequently a source of anguish to him. The reports of atrocities on Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan shocked him, but never into a mood of reprisal. Mr. Gopalaswami Iyengar once saw him to convey the details of the Kashmir dispute, then fresh before the U.N. Security Council. He was told plainly by Gandhiji, "My line of action is different from yours. . . You may carry on the administration either according to your own plan, or in the light of perfect truth and non-violence. A middle course will be of no avail."

Reports of the sufferings of refugees were reaching Gandhiji every day. On one occasion he exclaimed, "Many refugees came to me during the day. With a heavy heart they related the tortures they had to suffer. They also complained that I was unmindful of their lot. But this is not true. I am staying here (in Delhi) to watch over their welfare. Otherwise, what is my object in staying here?" In an outburst of despair, he exclaimed, "Who listens to me today? There was a time when people immediately carried out whatever escaped from my lips. Truly I was then the commander of a non-violent army. But today mine is a cry in the wilderness... Those who run the Government today are my friends, but this does not mean that they must carry out whatever I bid them. Why should they?"

The deterioration in the Congress even at that stage had begun to cause Gandhiji anxiety. At a prayer meeting he declared (quoting from a letter from a follower in Andhra): "The Congress and the general public made tremendous sacrifices to win freedom. But in consequence of it, why has the Congress degenerated to this extent? Whoever has been to jail even for a day, or wears Khadi, strains every nerve to become a leader somehow or other. M.L.A.s and M.L.C.s who are members of legislative bodies are engaged in spreading corruption everywhere. How long will it go on?" At the same meeting, Gandhiji said: "To me Pakistan is not a foreign country at all... In Andhra there are Communists as well as Socialists. They want to disrupt the Congress by fair means or foul... These times are so critical that we shall fall into a perilous state again if we create fresh dissensions one after another while we are flying at the throats of each other by labelling ourselves Hindus and Muslims."

On 12th January, Gandhiji decided to go on a fast to prevent, if possible, the mass killings in different parts of the country. He felt a sense of impotence whenever Muslims asked him, "What are we to do now?" Gandhiji had no solution to offer and felt that his helplessness was eating into his vitals and would end as soon as he started the fast. With a sense of humiliation, he confessed: "Today India has fallen in the estimation of all nations. The glory of India is disappearing from the heart of Asia

and through it from the heart of the world. It will be restored if this fast opens our eyes. I have the temerity to believe that if India loses its soul, the tempest-tossed and famished world will be deprived of its last ray of hope."

It was the fifteenth and last fast in Gandhiji's life. He made a personal appeal to Muslims, because the fast had been started for their sake: "Those who wish to remain in the Union must pledge their loyalty to the Union." He could not believe that Sardar Patel had little sympathy with the Muslims. He said: "At times Sardar would use harsh or bitter language, but I know there is no harshness or bitterness in his heart. He neither fears nor fails to speak the truth. He does not trust the Muslim League."

Gandhiji had no illusions about Pakistan though he considered her to be a friend. At another prayer meeting he said, "The Muslims of Pakistan are guilty of heinous crimes and murders are still being committed there. Thousands of Hindus and Sikhs are being looted and now the loss is beyond computation... If this goes on in Pakistan how long will India tolerate it?... I see with shame that today we in India are imitating the evil ways of Pakistan."

Apart from the killings, Gandhiji was deeply worried by reports from friends who complained: "Taking advantage of their contacts they (many members of the Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils) are making money for themselves and hampering the even course of justice by influencing the magistrates in their courts... Many old veterans who were bitter opponents of our struggle are now siding with such people to serve their own selfish ends. People are losing their faith in the Congress."

On 20th January came the first warning about the danger to Gandhiji's life, through a bomb thrown by Madanlal. In a strangely prophetic vein he told Lady Mountbatten (who congratulated him on his escape): "On this occasion I have shown no bravery. If somebody fired at me point-blank and I faced his bullet with a smile, repeating the name of 'Ram' in my heart, I should indeed be deserving all the congratulations."

Three days before his assassination, Gandhiji dictated a lengthy note on the position of the Congress in the course of which he

observed: "The Congress can only die with the nation. A living organism either grows or it dies. The Congress has won political freedom, but it is yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom... It has inevitably created rotten boroughs leading to corruption and the creation of institutions popular or democratic only in name. How to get out of the weedy and unwieldy growth?... Let the Congress now proclaim to itself and the world that it is only God's servant—nothing more, nothing less... I talk of going to Wardha on 2nd February, but I do not myself feel that I would be able to go there at all. Who knows what is going to happen tomorrow?"

In reply to a question, "Was there any noise at your prayer meeting today?", Gandhiji replied, "No. But does that question mean that you are worrying about me? If I am to die by the bullet of a mad man I must do so smilingly. There must be no anger within me. God must be in my heart and on my lips. And if anything happens, you should not shed a single tear."

Only a day before the end, Gandhiji drafted a memorandum for the guidance of the Congress, in which he said: "The Congress in its present shape and form has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven lakhs villages as distinguished from its cities and towns... The All-India Congress Committee should resolve to disband the existing Congress organisation and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh."

To appreciate the full significance of Gandhiji's leadership one must recall the circumstances under which he assumed the leadership of the movement at the end of the First World War. Terrorism, born of impotent hatred of the British ruling class had raised its head in the first two decades of the century, when the tempo of political activity was rising. Gandhiji stepped into undisputed leadership in 1919 as a sequel to the Amritsar massacre, and controlled the wave of deep indignation that swept over the entire country.

His programme for achieving freedom was revolutionary in a unique sense. Political leaders before him had conceived India's freedom in terms of constitutional reforms. The social, economic and cultural disabilities of the Untouchables had, indeed, attracted

the notice of reformers from the second half of the nineteenth century. But until Gandhiji inaugurated the movement the two lines of progress—political and social—had remained distinct and separate.

On Gandhiji's tragic assassination on 30th January, 1948, before the Constituent Assembly was even half-way through its task, a grief-stricken nation decided that the most practical tribute to his campaign for the emancipation of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes would be to include in the Constitution a number of provisions for their advancement and welfare. These—proposed by the representatives of the people directly concerned—were comprehensive in scope and left no aspect of the problem out of account.

In two vital spheres Gandhiji lit the way for all mankind : the achievement of freedom from foreign control through non-violence and the elimination of all forms of social, economic and racial discrimination. In these respects he anticipated the U. N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

There was, however, a third great cause which was dear to him, as he indicated briefly to the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 :

The West is today pining for wisdom. It is despairing of the multiplication of atom bombs because such multiplication must destroy, not merely all the West but the whole world. It is up to you to deliver the whole world and not merely Asia from wickedness and sin. That is the precious heritage which your teachers and my teachers have left for us.

The movement for complete disarmament he did not live to lead. But the passage quoted above should be a constant reminder to free India that she has yet to make a worthy contribution to disarmament in this war-weary world.

Dr. S. Subramania Aiyar

Dr. Subramania Aiyar had played an active part in establishing the Indian National Congress in 1885 and was associated with the movement for over a decade until he was appointed a judge of the Madras High Court. He had a distinguished record in that capacity, with the reputation that not a single judgment of his had been reversed in appeal by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Blindness in old age compelled him to withdraw from all activities, though he accepted the position of Vice-President of the Theosophical Society after Mrs. Besant's election as its President in 1907.

For almost a decade thereafter, he led a retired life, assuming the saffron robes of a Hindu *sanyasin*. He would probably have continued to lead a life of contemplation, had not Mrs. Besant's internment in 1917 for her political activities—and in particular, the home rule campaign—drawn him out of his retirement into active politics. He proved a tower of strength to those who were left in charge of Mrs. Besant's daily paper *New India*, giving advice on difficult points and sometimes even dictating editorials for the paper.

A few days after Mrs. Besant's internment in June 1917, it was suggested to him by friends that he should send through an American friend of India who was returning to the U.S.A., a personal letter to President Wilson, seeking American intervention for India's freedom at the end of the First World War. The suggestion arose from the false propaganda that had been set in mo-

tion in the U.S.A. immediately after her internment. American papers were informed that the internment had become inevitable because of Mrs. Besant "heading a revolt against British authorities"—this, in spite of the fact that she had said from the beginning of the World War in 1914 that she wanted the Allies to triumph, since in her view success for Germany would be the setting back of evolution, the triumph of evil over good. At the same time she was convinced that victory for the Allied Powers would be delayed by Britain's adherence to autocratic rule in India.

Dr. Subramania Aiyar dictated the message for President Wilson* to a stenographer at the Theosophical Society's headquarters at Adyar; and rather than wait for it to be typed, he signed on a blank sheet of paper and returned home. The appeal was taken to Washington and reached the President, and ultimately found its way to the British Cabinet in London.

Mrs. Besant's friends in America made contacts with important newspapers and Government officials, including Roosevelt, later President of America, and other members of President Wilson's Cabinet. Subramania Aiyar's letter, which was carried by Mr. and Mrs. Hotchner to Washington, was given the widest publicity. Mr. Morgenthau, a former American Ambassador to Turkey and the financial director of two of Mr. Wilson's presidential campaigns, was deeply interested in India's demand for home rule. A copy of the letter was also passed on to Col. House, President Wilson's confidential representative and his adviser on international affairs. It is significant that Col. House went to Britain immediately after Mrs. Besant's internment to seek a better co-ordination of the resources of the Allied Powers and to secure a re-statement of the Allies' war aims to conform to President Wilson's ideal of the right of nations to self-government. An important part of his task was to collect and classify the facts regarding all subject-nations so as to promote the cause of an enduring world peace. This information was to be made available to President Wilson to be used by him for his plan for a League of Nations based on world liberation through self-government and democracy.

* The text of the letter to President Wilson is reproduced in Appendix II.

There were reports current to suggest that Col. House, when he left Washington for London, carried with him the facts in regard to the latest developments in India. He had instructions to take up India's cause with the British Prime Minister and to enquire why steps could not be taken to grant home rule, so that more of India's man-power could be utilised in the war, especially in Mesopotamia. He was also to enquire into the extent of Britain's commitment to the war aims of the Allies and to promote a policy of liberation of the world through self-government. He was to point out that Britain's renunciation of India as a subject-nation and as a source of economic profiteering would go far towards bringing the war to an end.

Subramania Aiyar's letter was circulated to all the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Copies were also given to the Secretary of State, Mr. Lansing, to the head of the American Federation of Labour, Mr. Gompers, and to Roosevelt who showed a deep interest in the developments in India. Roosevelt, on being told that the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had reached an agreement at Lucknow in 1916, expressed confidence that "India must certainly participate in the world's advance towards democracy, which is another way of saying the right of well-behaved people to self-government."

The agitation for home rule in India, which had gained a new momentum as a result of Mrs. Besant's internment, led to a re-statement of British policy in India in the House of Commons in August 1917. This statement was followed by a personal visit to India by Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State, who toured the country during the winter of that year with Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy. In the course of their stay in Madras towards the end of that year, they granted an interview to Subramania Aiyar. It was unpleasant from the start : they were sharply critical of his conduct in making such an appeal to President Wilson. Subramania Aiyar defended his action with characteristic vigour.

At the same time, he suffered in dignified silence a kind of ostracism at the hands of some of the moderate leaders in Madras who disapproved of his letter to President Wilson almost as strongly as Montagu had done.

Subsequently, in the House of Commons, Montagu used strong words to condemn Subramania Aiyar's action :

The impropriety of this disgraceful letter is all the more inexcusable owing to the position of the writer. The assertions in the letter are too wild and baseless to require or receive notice from any responsible authority. No action has as yet been taken regarding the matter and I am communicating with the Viceroy.

No action, however, was taken officially, though the suggestion was made in some British-edited newspapers in India that he should be deprived of his title (K.C.I.E.) and even his pension.

In a statement to the Press, Subramania Aiyar described in detail the circumstances under which he met the Viceroy and the Secretary of State :

Most people are aware that I was among those that sought and obtained an interview with the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. At the time appointed, I presented myself at Government House, and, on taking my seat, the interview was begun by the Viceroy in a spirit and with a warmth which absolutely startled me. In referring to what was said by the august personages and my humble self in connection with the letter in question at the interview, it is scarcely necessary to say... I am not violating any confidence. The interview was neither expressly nor by implication understood to involve any secrecy.

The very first words, addressed to me in a tone which I most respectfully venture to describe as plainly exhibiting much temper, were in regard to the letter (to President Wilson). I felt I was being... treated harshly and not fairly, for I was there to discuss political reforms and not to answer to a charge of misconduct in addressing the President of the United States ...

I told His Excellency our position was this : Of the four chief officials of the Home Rule League, three of them, namely, Mrs. Besant, the President, Messrs. Arundale and Wadia, the

Secretary and the Treasurer, had been interned in the course of that very week; and the fourth official (myself, as Honorary President) every moment expected to be dealt with by the local Government in a similar fashion. I urged, with all deference, that it was hardly otherwise than natural and fair that I should avail myself of the opportunity afforded by the visit just intended to be made by Mr. and Mrs. Hotchner to America, where I knew they had influential friends who could and would interest themselves in the welfare of India and her people, and in particular, exert themselves towards the release of Mrs. Besant, well-known throughout the continent and held in high estimation by many thousands among the citizens of that free American nation. I added that if it were necessary I could substantiate every important allegation in the letter as regards the defects of the rule in this country by unimpeachable evidence and offered to submit to his Excellency, if permitted, copies of certain letters then in my possession as regards the inhuman treatment to which the interned in Bengal were systematically subjected as a proof in support of one of the points urged in the letter with special reference to which His Excellency had expressed his strong condemnation.

Referring to the action that was expected to be taken against him, Subramania Aiyar said :

“It is superfluous to say that the case involves nothing personal, and that my cause is the cause of the whole country. In furtherance of that cause, all that is mine—my name, my liberty and everything else—must be sacrificed and willingly sacrificed. Internment or externment, deportation and the like, have no terror for me; and, at this time of my life, with no earthly expectations to realise, I feel I can have no more glorious fate to meet in pursuance of gaining Home Rule for India, than to become an object of official tyranny. . .

I doubt whether even half-a-dozen among my friends or enemies now know the history of my knighthood. Needless to say it was not a reward for any liberal use of wealth which is the royal road to such distinctions, for the simple reason

that I have never had money enough to make such use or shows of it. Nor was it the reward for any special service, public or private, but due to a mere accident, if I may put it so. Having acted as Chief Justice for a month and a half about August 1899, on the retirement of Sir Arthur Collins, the announcement of the honour in my case followed on the 1st of January next as a simple matter of official routine, it being the practice to make every Indian High Court Judge that officiates as a Chief Justice, for however short a time, a knight, as compensation, I take it, for the disability of such Judges to be permanent Chief Justices.

One cannot help observing that among Western inventions none operates more seductively and to the detriment of public interests than these titles. They will verily be a delusion and a snare to be sedulously avoided by every honest man, if by accepting them he is to be debarred from the legitimate exercise of his civic rights.

Next, if what the Secretary of State had in mind with reference to my position was the receipt of a pension by me, my answer is equally strong and clear. In the first place, the payment is made to me out of the revenues of the land of my birth and not from any foreign sources. In the next place, neither the original grant of it nor its continuance depended or depends on the goodwill and pleasure of any individual or any executive body. The right to the pension accrued under the authority of a statute of the Imperial Parliament and none can deprive me of it save by legislation of that same Parliament.

Lastly I say that I would more readily lose my pension than deprive myself, by reason of my continuing to draw it, of any right of my citizenship. And I say to writers in the Anglo-Indian journals who throw taunts at me with reference to my pension, that I do not mind in the least if they succeed in depriving me of the wages, which I am enjoying as the fruit of the most laborious and conscientious discharge of my duties as a Judge in the highest Court in the land and leaving me to find my own food and raiment. Let them know that these I shall get from that association of *Sanyasins* with whom I stand related, which entitle me to their care and protection,

and therefore no pretended humane sentiments need deter my detractors from depriving me of my life-provision by the State.

Gandhiji called on Subramania Aiyar shortly after Mrs. Besant's internment and made a proposal which struck him as startlingly novel. He would walk to Octacamund, he told the retired judge, with a crowd of volunteers which would swell *en route* to enormous proportions and quietly ask her to break the internment order. Subramania Aiyar suggested to some of us who met him almost daily that consultations with Lokamanya Tilak and Jinnah, the latter at that time the president of the Home Rule League in Bombay, would be desirable, since his own reactions were not in favour of Gandhiji's proposal. Two of us went to Bombay to discuss the proposal with Jinnah and for the first time I had a glimpse of Lokamanya Tilak at close quarters. There were present in Jinnah's house (apart from Tilak) Horniman, Syud Hosain, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Kanji Dwarkadas, Omer Sobhani and Shankarlal Banker. Tilak considered Gandhiji's suggestion impracticable, and Jinnah agreed with the general view of the others present that a mass movement of the kind Gandhiji had in mind could not possibly succeed.

With Mrs. Besant's release from internment a few months later, it was unnecessary for Subramania Aiyar to continue his active association with the Home Rule League. He went back into retirement, with the satisfaction of having made, during a brief intervention, a significant contribution to the freedom movement. The letter to President Wilson produced a chain reaction that no one could have expected and led Britain—as did President Roosevelt's action a quarter of a century later—to move forward in quickening India's march towards freedom.

Edwin Montagu

On few men in British public life was India's spell cast so overpoweringly as on Edwin Samuel Montagu, whose contribution to this country's progress towards freedom in five controversial years in the House of Commons during and after the First World War entitles him to an honoured place in history. Brilliantly resourceful but highly individualistic, Montagu had clear notions from the start of his career on the right policy for Britain to pursue in India. "We cannot drift on for ever without stating a policy," he told a Cambridge audience as Under-Secretary for India (when he was only thirty-two).

A six months' tour of India before assuming office had given him a valuable insight into the country's problems. The primary need, it seemed to him, was a sympathetic understanding of the people's needs by district officers. With youthful candour he wrote to the Prime Minister in 1915, suggesting his own appointment as India's Viceroy in succession to Hardinge. "India's problems," he confessed, "attract me with an intensity which I can find for no other problems. I have no other ambition save to go to India and I have had no other since I entered public life."

The Viceroy, he argued, had to be "an energetic administrator", rising above "mock royalty surrounded by out-of-date and rather tawdry pomp". Curzon was not older when he was sent out as Viceroy, and his own public record (he claimed) was better. As for being a Jew, had not such representative Indians as the Aga

Khan, Bikaner, Alwar, Sir Krishna Gupta and Pandit Malaviya recommended his appointment?

Asquith's response was only partial, and Montagu had to be content with a place in the Cabinet, but unconnected with India. His opportunity, however, came shortly after Asquith's fall. He told Lloyd George, the new Prime Minister, that his heart was in India, "whose people wanted a goal to look to". It could only be "some form of self-government, with complete representative institutions".

The India Office had little attraction for him. A Viceroy could sometimes have things his own way (in the last resort) through threats of resignation; but what could the Secretary of State do, "tied, swaddled, swathed, manacled by legislation, by the existence of the Council of India, by the rights of its majority"? An opening seemed to offer itself in 1917, after a stormy debate in the House of Commons on British reverses in Mesopotamia in the First World War. For Montagu, the result of his scathing attack on the glaring defects in the Indian administration was an offer after all only of the India Office, not of the Viceroyalty. He took it, determined to do things in a big way, not offer something to India, 'a niggling, miserly, grudging safeguard, fiddling with the existing order of things'. She was 'a vast continent', he told the Prime Minister, "whose history is our glory, and whose hopes and aspirations, fears and tribulations it is pathetic to see."

Mrs. Besant's internment by Pentland for her home rule campaign in 1917 gave Montagu cause for immediate intervention. He toured that winter all over India with the Viceroy, Chelmsford, a man without 'Hardinge's dignity', and without 'Curzon's pomposity', yet 'unfortunately cold, aloof and reserved'. Montagu's reactions to Mrs. Besant and Gandhiji are interesting. Starting with a prejudice against her, he was overcome by her personality and recorded: "In her white and gold embroidered Indian clothes, with her short white hair, and the most beautiful voice I have ever heard (she) was very impressive and read (the memorandum) magnificently—Gandhi is a social reformer with a real desire to find grievances and to cure them, not for any reasons of self-advertisement, but to improve the conditions of fellow men. All he wants is that we should get India on our side."

Mrs. Besant implored Montagu to attend the Calcutta session of the Congress over which she presided in 1917 and even to address it. He lamented (because of official obstruction in India): "Oh, if only Lloyd George were in charge of this thing; he would of course dash down to the Congress and make them a great oration. I am prevented from doing this. It might save the whole situation."

The more Montagu saw of India and her officials, the greater grew his sense of despair. The depth was reached at Madras—"the most lovely thing you can imagine", in contrast to which stood the official world: "Here, if anywhere, officials administer and do not govern; here, if anywhere, they do not explain themselves and hold themselves aloof. Here, if anywhere, they misuse powers, either their Press Act or their powers to disallow resolutions and Bills." Pentland, the Governor, "looked what he is—an early Victorian Governor of post-war India".

The strain of the Indian tour told on him heavily in the later stages, especially the obstinacy of the I.C.S. He poured out his woes in a letter to his wife: "I cannot describe the weariness of my flesh. I am tired of conciliating, cajoling, persuading, lobbying, interviewing, accommodating, often spoiling my own plans to quell opposition." Sir John Marris was to draft the report, but confessed he had no heart in doing it, unless he could express his own views freely. Montagu's comment was sharp but decisive: "I never heard such nonsense. I told him he was a hack and had to express only our views."

The I.C.S. did not easily acknowledge defeat. The crisis came at Simla, when Chelmsford and his Executive Council conveyed to Montagu certain proposals of theirs on which they had 'decided'. Never at a loss for a pungent word, he told them that these proposals struck him as 'absurd and inadequate'.

On his return to London, Montagu faced even more formidable opposition. For Curzon, a member of Lloyd George's War Cabinet, the Montagu-Chelmsford report was "a confused document, difficult to follow and complicated in its recommendations". Austen Chamberlain proved, on the other hand, 'a tower of strength'.

To add to Montagu's worries came the Rowlatt Report on sedi-

tion in India. He told the Viceroy, "I loathe the suggestion at first sight of preserving the Defence of India Act in peace time to such an extent as Rowlatt and his friends think necessary". The Report, he thought, "would only give the Pentlands of this world and the O'Dwyers the chance of locking up a man without trial".

A debate in the House of Lords did not improve the situation, all the old-timers speaking in a manner (as Montagu observed in a letter) as though "the world had not moved at all during the past twenty years and the Government of India was something which was intended for all time without any change or modification".

An amusing interlude was Asquith's effort to win Churchill over to his side on the Indian issue. At breakfast one morning, with only Montagu and Churchill present, the Prime Minister turned to a combative Churchill to ask whether he would join the Cabinet. The reaction, according to Montagu, was prompt: "the sullen look disappeared, smiles wreathed the hungry face, the fish was landed."

In Paris, in 1919, at the Peace Conference, a delicate issue arose : could Montagu, as a delegate for India, express in public views independent of, and opposed to, those of the British Cabinet? He thought he could, and that proved his ultimate undoing. Ever on the alert to advance India's claims to equality of status, he thought of sending Sir S. P. Sinha to the House of Lords, so that an Indian could defend the Indian Government in Parliament. But he could not be a peer without giving an assurance that he had only one wife. Sinha had a fine sense of humour; he said with a smile that he had always found one wife enough. It shocked Curzon to think of an Indian in the House of Lords without a previous warning to him, but Sinha abundantly justified his selection.

Reflecting on the implications of these steps, Montagu exclaimed in a letter to Chelmsford: "How profound, irretraceable changes have been made in the constitution of the British Empire with the admission of the Dominions and of India to the Peace Conference !"

About extremists in India, Montagu held unorthodox views. There were extremists with no particular political vision or train-

ing or knowledge. But the other kind of extremist (such as the young terrorist), he thought, was "a real social reformer, desirous of a genuine self-governing India, believing in a sort of exaggerated doctrine of individual liberty, anxious to elevate the depressed classes, to do social education—a real intellectual". In his judgment they were often fine young boys whose talents and courage could be used—but not through police methods.

The Amritsar tragedy made Montagu realise the need for quicker and more radical reforms. On the 1919 Bill he implored the House of Commons "to show to India today that Parliament is receptive of her case for self-government and only seeks an opportunity for completing it by the demonstrable realisation of the success of its stages". The enquiry into the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy gave him the opportunity to express freely in Parliament "a word about Dwyer". "It was the savage and inappropriate folly of the order which rouses my anger... Don't let us make the mistake of defending O'Dwyerism, right or wrong."

He was severe in his criticism of the I.C.S. attitude towards the new reforms. "The Services," he told the Governor of Bombay, "were wholly against us in trying to transfer India from an estate which they manage into a living entity. This has got to be. They have to grin and bear it."

He had not a good word for Chelmsford's administration: "The treaty with Afghanistan was misguided; the Punjab riots were badly mishandled; no enthusiasm was shown for the reforms." The remedy? "The real need in India is a Viceroy capable of running a hard-worked office quickly, a man of Cabinet experience, a man with no interests to serve." His personal ambition had again been roused by a letter from Mrs. Besant who urged him to become Viceroy.

After some weeks' rest in a nursing home, he wrote in a frank letter to the Prime Minister, "Let me go to India as Viceroy for three years." Among the reasons he cited was that "now there does not exist among the Indian services a man of political instinct, and I have no hope that the (1919) Act will be properly worked unless somebody who thoroughly believes in it is at the head of affairs." He had been in the India Office for six years and knew the problem in all its aspects. He did not think much of the

opposition to him of the British community and its press in India. He was aware, too, of Curzon's opposition, but Curzon "had no sympathy with what other people thought" and "no interest in the nationalism and patriotism of the proud and educated Indian people". Lloyd George's response was negative. Since Chamberlain did not care for the post, Montagu suggested others, including Churchill, commenting (on the last name); "It might result in a great failure. It might be a great success. Whichever it was, it would be great."

The Hunter Report on martial law administration in the Punjab evoked a fresh outburst from Montagu: "Either we must govern India as O'Dwyer governed the Punjab or we can govern it in another way. The truth is that I do not believe that you will be able to go on governing it in that way without the most frightful troubles and difficulties." He repeated these sentiments in the House of Commons. "Are you", Montagu asked the House, "going to keep a hold on India by terrorism, racial humiliation and subordination and frightfulness; or are you going to rest it upon the goodwill and the growing goodwill of the people of your Indian Empire?"

He justified his outlook: "The crawling order was frightfulness; and the shooting to produce moral effect was terrorism; and in the atmosphere of the debate there was nothing to be gained and much to be lost by not saying so. I do not regret in the least having called a spade a spade."

The situation in India was deteriorating, and Montagu was worrying about the lengths to which Gandhiji and his colleagues might go. He had hoped that the non-cooperation movement would fizzle out. He recorded after a Cabinet meeting: "Whether to intervene or not was a complicated issue which was giving us all (in the Cabinet) a devil of a trouble."

Montagu's dismissal came ostensibly over his handling of the Treaty of Sevres with Turkey. His indiscretion as a member of the Cabinet in the premature publication of a top-secret document cost him his place. The opportunity was too good to be lost by India's opponents in Parliament and outside to curse the scheme of reforms which he had inaugurated. Out of office, he told a Cambridge audience with withering scorn that the

official reason for his dismissal was that he had not followed the doctrine of collective Cabinet responsibility. Such an accusation "from Lloyd George of all people", he commented, was "laughable and grotesque".

His unceremonious exit from the India Office was a shattering blow to his health and spirits from which he never recovered. His health was so far gone that he was compelled to give up his plan to visit India as a private individual. Frustrated and bitter, he died in obscurity at the early age of forty-five, with a sense of acute failure clouding his last days. Posterity, however, will pass a different verdict on the vision, the courage and the sound political instinct with which he threw all his ebullient talent and energy into the cause of India's freedom.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru

In many ways I regard Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru as the most remarkable Indian personality it has been my privilege to know in my public life. For at least twenty-five years, until he died in 1950, I was thrown into close association with him as one of his lieutenants and learnt a great deal from him in different spheres : in the Mudiman Reforms Committee in 1924, at the Round Table Conferences in London in 1930 and 1931 and through all the years of the Second World War. Few men in India of this century had his breadth of vision; and certainly no one was endowed with his warm-hearted generosity, his absolute integrity and the complete freedom from pettiness and malice which characterised his public and personal life.

My earliest recollection of him pertains to December 1921 at Kanpur, where he arrived suddenly one morning for a consultation with Sir Ibrahim Rahimtulla, at that time the Chairman of the Fiscal Commission. Sir Tej Bahadur was then Law Member in Lord Reading's Government, after the introduction of the Montagu Reforms. The situation was tense. C.R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and many others were in prison (Gandhiji alone being free), and the boycott of the Prince of Wales' (the present Duke of Windsor) visit to India was likely to prove effective. Lord Reading, the Viceroy, was uneasy and anxious for a quick settlement to avoid the embarrassment of such a boycott. Sir Tej Bahadur suggested a way out : the transfer of practically all subjects in the provinces to popular control and hastening the

pace of progress towards responsibility at the Centre; and, in return, the withdrawal of the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit.

The Viceroy seemed willing, Sir Malcolm Hailey and Sir William Vincent ('the strong men' in the Executive Council) were not averse, and Sir Tej Bahadur had ascertained that C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal would favour negotiations for a settlement on such a basis. Gandhiji, however, after some initial parleys, held out, insisting upon the immediate release of the Ali Brothers. That for some reason was considered too heavy a price by the European members of the Executive Council, and the discussions ended in abrupt failure.

The situation drifted quickly from bad to worse as the boycott of the Prince of Wales was intensified by Gandhiji. His six years' imprisonment came not long after, preceded a little earlier by Mr. Montagu's resignation from the Lloyd George Cabinet. Sir Tej Bahadur resisted, from inside the Government, Gandhiji's trial and imprisonment as a step in the wrong direction; and finally, after Mr. Montagu's resignation, he decided to quit the Viceroy's Executive Council.

But the two years or so during which he had known the functioning of the Central Government from within had given him an invaluable knowledge of the administration. He was convinced that emphasis was essential on immediate responsibility at the Centre even more than in the provinces. Sir Tej Bahadur was the first man in India to point out that the India Office in London was the real citadel of reaction, and until the Government of India was freed from the stranglehold of the control, progress in constitutional reform would be without real significance.

Even before his formal withdrawal from office, Sir Tej Bahadur and Mrs. Besant had got together in Simla to work out the procedure for a National All-Parties' Convention to draft India's Constitution. Much constructive work was done in spite of Congress abstention, and the Commonwealth of India Bill on the basis of Dominion Status (which the late Mr. George Lansbury sponsored in the House of Commons in 1926) was the result. At the time it seemed a futile effort, foredoomed to failure. But the experience proved instructive. The report of the Nehru Committee in 1928—a reply to the challenge of the Simon Commission—

was in considerable measure, both in conception and execution, the result of Sir Tej Bahadur's efforts, enriched by his earlier experience, on the Commonwealth of India Bill.

Pandit Motilal Nehru, as the President of the Calcutta Congress in December 1928, made a valiant effort to secure the support of the Congress for the Nehru report. Left-wing opposition, however, led by the champions of immediate independence—Jawaharlal Nehru, S. Srinivasa Iyengar and Subhash Chandra Bose—proved formidable and the final decision was deferred, as a compromise, for another year. Undeterred by this setback, Sir Tej Bahadur brought some of the Congress leaders (including Pandit Motilal) into direct contact with Lord Irwin who had, meanwhile, made a hopeful declaration of British policy under instructions from the new Labour Government. The negotiations with the Viceroy ended suddenly, with the Lahore Congress favouring complete independence and a severance of the British connection with India.

At the Round Table Conferences in London in the following two years, Sir Tej Bahadur was easily the most outstanding delegate. His close contacts with many of the Indian princes and their faith in his integrity and soundness of judgment enabled him to place before the British (Labour) Government a scheme, with the support of the princes, for an All-India federation. Some other delegates even at the Conference table (like Mr. Srinivasa Sastri) were inclined to question its immediate practicability, and certainly the suggestion of the separation of Burma from India (to which Sir Tej Bahadur seemed to have more or less committed himself) was an error of judgment. But the Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald) was persuaded to close the first Conference with a promise of Dominion Status as the outcome of its deliberations.

With a settlement on Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's terms, India would have been a Dominion in 1935, instead of twelve years later, without the second and far more serious partition—that of Burma being the first—as the price of freedom that we paid in 1947. But the fates were against us. Pandit Motilal Nehru's death early in 1931 and Mr. MacDonald's virtual disappearance after the general elections in Britain later in the same year created a new situation.

The tide turned strongly against us. Gandhiji seemed, at a later stage of the Second Round Table Conference, surprisingly to be in favour of progress by instalments : full provincial autonomy he was willing to accept as a first step, the structure at the Centre to be moulded later in consultation with the new provincial governments. It was, I think, more of a tactical move than a compromise. But Sir Tej Bahadur led a resolute—and successful—opposition to such a proposal.

The ultimate result was distressing for everyone. An All-India federation of a sort was given concrete shape under the 1935 Constitution, loaded with reservations, while the Congress leaders languished in prison. Sir Tej Bahadur was almost alone among its Indian sponsors in holding the view that such reservations could not for long remain obstacles in the way of our achieving complete freedom. How the federal structure at the Centre would have developed had not the Second World War brought about a complete change in the situation in 1939 remains in the realm of speculation.

In the closing week of 1940 Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and a number of other prominent leaders not belonging to the Congress issued a joint appeal* addressed to the major parties in India as well as to the British Prime Minister, pleading for a friendly settlement which would preserve the country's unity and be "consistent with her dignity and honour".

For ten years thereafter, in rapidly failing health and as a somewhat lone figure in Indian politics, Sir Tej Bahadur strove to make his contribution towards a post-war solution. He was content to give advice and guidance whenever they were sought. At a difficult point in the unsuccessful Cripps negotiations of 1942, with the help of Sir B. N. Rau and Mr. Rajagopalachari, he produced a formula for transitional arrangements in regard to defence which might have overcome that particular difficulty. When a deadlock over defence seemed inevitable, he and Dr. Jayakar made a joint statement in the following terms :

It would be a tragedy if Sir Stafford Cripps' mission failed, for

* The text of the appeal is given in Appendix III.

it would produce a keen sense of disappointment and frustration and provoke antagonisms which, in our opinion, would be disastrous in this hour of crisis. The terms of the Draft Declaration by His Majesty's Government make it clear that after the war India will not have to struggle for the recognition of its constitutional and international status.

We regret that more emphasis has been laid on the Constitution of the future than on the immediate needs. We think, therefore, that if a satisfactory formula could be devised in respect of the defence portfolio, the mission of Sir Stafford Cripps might still succeed. It is not probably realised in England and the Allied countries that Indian opinion cannot look upon any transfer of power as real unless the Government of India is so constituted as to give an effective share to the country in the management of its defence, and thus to increase immensely, and without delay, the military strength of the country to defeat the threatened aggression. We would, therefore, urge that immediate attention be concentrated on this question.

After the arrests of Gandhiji and the Congress leaders in August 1942 the initiative for resolving the deadlock was taken up by a group of men led by Sapru. In October 1942, with Sapru's approval, I circulated a memorandum to a number of distinguished Indians on possible improvements in the Cripps plan.

In December 1942 Sapru invited a number of prominent persons in public life who had organised a non-party leaders' conference to a special meeting at Allahabad. There were present one or two members of the Congress like Mr. Rajagopalachari (who had not subscribed to the Quit India resolution and were, therefore, out of prison), and representatives of the Hindu Maha Sabha, the Christian Conference, the Trade Union Congress, the Liberal Federation, the Communist Party, the Akali Party and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce.

These persons met in their individual capacities on 12th and 13th December 1942 to consider the situation. No formal resolution was adopted since the primary object was to explore the possibilities of holding an All Parties Conference, and the members had earlier made it clear that they had no mandate from their

respective organisations to commit themselves to any definite course or policy.

After the two-day discussions, Sapru declared that there was both a widespread anxiety to reach a solution of the political deadlock and a basis of agreement likely to prove generally acceptable. The details of such an agreement could not assume final shape until those present at the Conference had an opportunity of discussing them with their respective organisations. Therefore, at that stage, he could only say that an early summoning of an All Parties Conference including therein the two major parties in the country, namely, the Congress and the Muslim League, seemed to be imperative for reaching a settlement.

Sapru also revealed to the Conference that Gandhiji was earnestly anxious shortly before his arrest to be co-opted for the deliberations of such a Conference. Jinnah too had repeatedly declared his willingness to discuss with leaders of other parties the details of a possible solution.

In order, however, to ensure the success of such a Conference, Sapru and those associated with him considered it essential that the British Government should announce forthwith :

- (1) that the provisional Government of India, to be formed as a result of a general agreement, would be endowed with full powers and authority over the administration, subject only to the position of the Commander-in-Chief being duly safeguarded in order to promote the efficient prosecution of the war; and in its relations with Britain and the Allies, enjoying the status of a Dominion and entitled to all the rights and privileges associated with such status;
- (2) the release of Mahatma Gandhi and all Congressmen to enable the representatives of the Congress to participate in the All Parties Conference.

These two steps were essential for the creation of a proper atmosphere in which the Conference could conduct its deliberations and reach a successful conclusion. The tragic chapter of events of the previous four months, in particular the decision of the Congress to launch a civil disobedience movement, no less

than methods adopted by the Government to suppress the disturbances in several parts of the country, must be ended without delay (it was urged) if bitterness and resentment were to be prevented from assuming dangerous proportions.

Sapru concluded the statement in the following terms :

As men anxious to see India throw all her resources into the war effort we ask the British Government to make this positive contribution towards the success of the All Parties Conference.

Sapru, on his personal responsibility, sent an appeal, on behalf of those who were associated with him in the preliminary Allaha-bad Conference, to the Prime Minister, Churchill, pleading for a fresh effort. The appeal read as follows :

The gravity of the international situation compels some of us who have spent long years in the public life of India to make this appeal to you, Prime Minister, to realise the urgent necessity for transforming the entire spirit and outlook of the administration in India. Detailed discussions of the question of the permanent Constitution may well wait for more propitious times, until after victory has been achieved in this titanic struggle against the forces which threaten civilisation.

But some stroke of courageous statesmanship is called for without delay in India, at this hour of growing danger to her safety, to enlist her wholehearted and active co-operation in intensifying the war effort. Millions of men and women are required for the adoption of effective measures designed to protect the civilian population. The heart of India must be touched, to rouse her on a nation-wide scale to the call for service, undistracted by internal and domestic differences.

Is it not possible for you to declare at this juncture that India will no longer be treated as a Dependency to be ruled from Whitehall, and henceforth her constitutional position and powers will be identical with those of other units in the British Commonwealth? Such a declaration should, we suggest, be accompanied by concrete measures calculated to impress

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the people that in co-operating with the war effort they are safeguarding their own freedom. The measures are :

- (1) the conversion and expansion of the Central Executive Council into a truly National Government, consisting entirely of non-officials of all recognised parties and communities, and in charge of all portfolios, subject only to the responsibility to the Crown;
- (2) the restoration, in provinces now ruled autocratically by Governors in accordance with section 93 of the Government of India Act, of popular governments broad-based on the confidence of different classes and communities; failing this, the establishment of non-official Executive Councils;
- (3) the recognition of India's right to direct representation through men chosen by the National Government in the Imperial War Cabinet (should such a body be set up), in all Allied War Councils, wherever established, and at the Peace Conference;
- (4) consultation with the National Government, precisely on the same footing and to the same extent as His Majesty's Government consult the Dominion Governments, in all matters affecting the Commonwealth as a whole and India in particular.

These are war measures whose adoption need in no way prejudice the claims or demands of different parties in regard to India's permanent Constitution. But knowing intimately the feelings and aspirations of our countrymen as we do, we must express our conviction that nothing less than the inauguration of this policy can resolve the crisis in India. The urgency of immediate action cannot be over-emphasized. We appeal to you, in all sincerity but with the greatest emphasis, to act while there is still time for such action, so that India may line up with the other anti-Axis Powers on a footing of absolute equality with them in a common struggle for the freedom of humanity.

In 1946, when the Cabinet Mission visited New Delhi, the members insisted on calling on Sapru at my house, because of his

feeble health. Lord Wavell, Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Alexander spent nearly an hour with him, discussing the details of a settlement. Gandhiji, not to be outdone in graciousness, followed their example the following morning by paying him a personal visit.

When the Constituent Assembly was formed, he was Gandhiji's first choice for membership of that body; and he would probably have been its President, if ill-health had not prevented him from active participation. His advice was valued and sought especially in framing the provisions relating to the judiciary.

No one has yet attempted an assessment of his many-sided contribution to our progress. When I look back through all the years that I was privileged to know him, I cannot think of any other Indian who had the vision to see the solutions of so many of our political problems and the courage to stand by them. The like of him India will not see for many years.

Ramsay MacDonald

Two men stand out in British public life whose careers a strange destiny seemed to link closely with the problem of India.

One of these outstanding men was Edwin Montagu, with an attachment to India almost amounting to a passion. In a short, brilliant but stormy career, Montagu had the satisfaction of planting India firmly on the road to responsible government in the middle of the First World War. He had the vision of a unified and free India, with provinces and princely States, welded together into a federal structure.

The other was Ramsay MacDonald, who came on the political scene soon after Montagu's eclipse, with the advantage of an intimate knowledge of India's administrative needs and her political limitations. As a member of the Royal Commission on Public Services (with Gokhale as a colleague), he had learnt much that later proved to be of value. He was able, as Prime Minister in the first British Labour Government in 1924, despite its minority position, to make a bold declaration on India's ultimate destiny in the Commonwealth.

His Government's tenure in 1924 as a minority administration was precarious and brief, less than ten months. But in that short period MacDonald committed the Government to a far-reaching policy statement on India. "Dominion Status for India", he declared, "is the idea and the ideal of the Labour Government." In the following year, the Labour Party, by that time out of office, was more explicit in the resolution adopted at its annual Conference,

recognizing "the right of the Indian people to full self-determination".

The Conference welcomed "the declarations of representative Indian leaders in favour of free and equal partnership with the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations". This was only eight years after Lord Pentland had sent Mrs. Besant into detention for preaching the same doctrine.

The significance of the resolution of the Labour Conference was somewhat obscured in the following four years by MacDonald's nomination of Mr. (later Lord) Attlee as the Party's representative on the Simon Commission. The boycott of the Commission by practically all political groups of any importance in India represented only one phase of the national movement.

Almost unnoticed at the time, much constructive thinking had gone into the framing of the Commonwealth of India Bill—the product of three years' sustained labours in committees and conferences—before its formal first reading in the House of Commons in 1926. But it was a private member's Bill, introduced by George Lansbury, a large-hearted, genuine friend of India. Mrs. Besant had striven hard but without success to persuade MacDonald to let it be an official Labour Party measure. He was unwilling to commit the party to all its provisions: possibly he was influenced to some extent by criticism from some of the left-wingers of the graded franchise in the Bill, universal for village panchayats but increasingly restrictive for the legislatures.

Another consideration that seemed to have weighed with MacDonald was the absence of positive Congress support for the Commonwealth of India Bill. C. R. Das, whom Mrs. Besant went to see at Darjeeling a few days before his death in 1926, was prepared to support it if on her side she would agree to civil disobedience in the event of its rejection by the British Government. Mrs. Besant, however, with her strong convictions against civil disobedience as a movement which was bound to weaken the general respect for law and order and, therefore, dangerous to the very structure of the State, did not find it possible to accept the proposal. Gandhiji had taken the line in an article in his weekly, *Young India*, in 1922 long before the publication of the final draft of the measure:

Swaraj means undoubtedly India's ability to declare her independence, if she wishes. Swaraj, therefore, will not be a free gift of the British Parliament. It will be a declaration of India's full self-expression. That it will be expressed through an Act of Parliament is true. But it will be merely a courteous ratification of the declared wish of the people of India, even as it was in the case of the Union of South Africa. Not an unnecessary adverb in the Union scheme could be altered by the House of Commons. The ratification in our case will be by a treaty to which the British will be a party.

MacDonald agreed, as a compromise with Mrs. Besant, to the Commonwealth of India Bill being sponsored by a prominent member of the Labour Party's executive, George Lansbury. The first reading in the Commons was as far as it went. Its failure to make further progress seemed, however, to matter little: Pandit Motilal Nehru utilized the experience for the completion of the report associated with his name. One of his most valued collaborators in this task was Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the main architect of the Commonwealth of India Bill.

The Nehru report, pointing definitely to Dominion Status for India in her external relations and an all-India federal structure including the princely States, had an obvious impact on MacDonald on the eve of his assumption of office for a second time in 1929 as Prime Minister.

He had declared in the previous year at the Commonwealth Labour Conference that India's attainment of Dominion Status was imminent. MacDonald's reference was in the following terms:

I hope that within a period of months rather than years, there would be a new Dominion added to the Commonwealth of our nations, a Dominion of another race, a Dominion that will find self-respect as an equal within the British Commonwealth; I refer to India.

One of the first steps taken by the Labour Government on its assumption of office for a second time was to invite the Viceroy Lord Irwin (later Lord Halifax) to London for a discussion of the

policy to be pursued in regard to India. Irwin was authorised to say on his return to India that in the judgement of the British Government, the natural issue of India's constitutional progress was the attainment of Dominion Status.

It was not the Nehru report alone that provided him with guidelines for action as the head of the new Labour Government, though again as a minority administration. The concept of a Round Table Conference was Motilal Nehru's practical suggestion for solving the Indian problem, reiterated in his speeches in 1924-25 in the Central Legislative Assembly. His argument in favour of such a settlement on the basis of the procedure first adopted by Australia and later copied by South Africa in the first decade of this century—with a scheme prepared by a National Convention and only formally ratified by the British Parliament—had moved Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Government of India's main spokesman in the debates, to raise points that appeared to indicate an open mind. Hailey had posed certain questions which carried with them important implications. (1) Was Dominion self-government to be confined to British India only or was it to be extended to the Indian States; and under what terms were they to come in? (2) Were they to be dependent on the Crown or to accept the control of the new Government responsible only to the Indian Legislature, instead of to a Government responsible to the British Parliament?

MacDonald's first instinct, as Britain's Prime Minister, appeared to be in the direction urged by Motilal Nehru. He vacillated at times in his Indian policy (because of the minority position of his Government) and was not always firm or consistent in his declarations.

But one must bear in mind, in judging his record, the perils he faced at the hands of the Tory Party, formidable in numbers and in debating power in the House of Commons. It was no small risk he took in authorizing the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to declare, even before the first session of the Round Table Conference, that "it was implicit in the declaration of August, 1917, that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress as there contemplated was the attainment of Dominion status".

The Prime Minister improved on it in inaugurating the ple-

nary session of the first session of the Round Table Conference in London with the following assurance :

The attendance of representatives of the Dominion Governments is an earnest of the interest and goodwill with which the sister States in the Commonwealth of Nations will follow our labours. Nor is it without significance that we, who though not of India, also seek India's honour, are drawn from all three parties in this Parliament.

With an eye on Gandhiji and the Congress leaders then in detention, but hopeful of their active participation in the subsequent proceedings of the Conference, MacDonald went somewhat further in his elaboration of that assurance in his concluding speech at the end of the first session of the Conference :

The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon the Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other, special circumstances, and also with such special guarantees as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights. In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be a primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserve powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new Constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

MacDonald coupled it with a personal assurance which went even further :

Finally, I hope and trust and I pray that by our labours together, India will come to possess the only thing which she now lacks to give her the status of a Dominion amongst the British Commonwealth of Nations—the responsibilities and the cares, the burdens and the difficulties, but the pride and the honour of responsible self-government.

The immediate reaction in India to this statement was a strengthening of the impression that India would be endowed with a Constitution that would mean, except for a few reservations of a temporary character in regard to defence and foreign affairs, full responsible government, and that the removal of even these reservations would rest with the Indian Federal Government of the future.

At no point in India's freedom campaign did success appear so near as immediately after the termination of the first Round Table Conference early in 1931. MacDonald's declaration to the final meeting was obviously intended to conciliate Gandhiji and his colleagues and bring the main section of the Congress into the subsequent deliberations of the Round Table Conference. Negotiations were opened in India between the Viceroy and Gandhiji, resulting in the famous Irwin-Gandhi pact of 1931, of which two cardinal features were : (1) civil disobedience to be called off by the Congress; (2) the Congress to participate in the second session of the Round Table Conference. There was also a clear understanding of the basis on which discussions were to take place.

As regards constitutional questions, the scope of future discussion is stated, with the assent of His Majesty's Government, to be with the object of considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme there outlined federation is an essential part; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India, for such matters as, for instance, defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India and the discharge of obligations. (The reference here was to the imposition of such conditions as would ensure the fulfilment of the obligations incurred under the authority of the Secretary of State.)

A general election in Britain during the Second Round Table Conference resulted in a disaster for the Labour Party. MacDonald continued to be the Prime Minister at the head of a National Government but it was now a predominantly Conservative House of Commons.

Nevertheless, at the end of the Conference, despite Conservative members occupying key positions in the new Government, MacDonald was able to repeat the pledge he had earlier given on behalf of the Labour Government at the end of the first session.

Subsequent events, however, gave rise to the fear that in effect the British proposals would be whittled down. Immediately on the termination of the Conference, there was a debate on India in the House of Commons on December 2nd and 3rd, 1931, in which not only the Prime Minister but Samuel Hoare, John Simon, Stanley Baldwin, Winston Churchill and other leading members took part. Churchill sought to add three general reservations to the Government's motion endorsing its India policy: (a) nothing in the policy would commit the House to the establishment in India of a Dominion Constitution as defined by the Statute of Westminster; (b) the policy would effectively safeguard British trade in and with India from adverse or prejudicial discrimination; and (c) no extension of self-government in India at that juncture would impair the ultimate responsibility of Parliament for the peace, order and good government of the Indian Empire.

In his speech in the Commons debate, Churchill maintained that though India might have been promised Dominion status, 'status' applied only to rank, honour and ceremony.

In a vain effort to conciliate Churchill, the Prime Minister gave the assurance that the Government's policy would not bring India under the Statute of Westminster unless a specific amendment was made to the Statute in Parliament adding India to the list. It was embarrassing for the Prime Minister later in the same debate to have to shift his position to the other side under pressure from his former colleagues in the Labour Government. He assured Clement Attlee (in order to neutralize the effect of his concession to Churchill): "Obviously, the Round Table Conference will remain and, in the end, we shall have to meet again for a final review."

The third and final session of the Round Table Conference, though promised by MacDonald for a final review, might never have been held but for vigorous protests from Tej Bahadur Sapru. It was a much smaller body than its two predecessors, with Gandhiji and several other Congress leaders again in detention.

It met in an atmosphere of increasing suspicion on the Indian side that the promises made at the first and second sessions might not be fulfilled. MacDonald, who had played a prominent part in the two earlier conferences, was conspicuously in the background in the third and did not address the Conference even once in the course of its proceedings.

It was India's tragic misfortune that Motilal Nehru did not live to participate in the later stages of the Round Table Conference. Gandhiji was, no doubt, the soul of responsiveness as the Congress representative at the second session in 1931. Nevertheless, it is my conviction that Motilal Nehru's presence would have made a considerable difference to the final shape of the Government of India Bill.

A vivid recollection of a conversation at 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's official residence in London, comes to my mind, which throws light on MacDonald's mood after the Labour Party's crushing defeat in the general elections of 1931. Many of his erstwhile colleagues had found it hard to forgive him for negotiating with the Tory leaders, without their knowledge, the terms of a coalition to tide over the country's financial worries. I was an invitee to one of the lunch parties given by the Prime Minister at his official residence to delegates to the Round Table Conference. As we gathered round MacDonald, the Maharaja of Nawanagar (Ranji of immortal fame) made a casual reference to the fate that had overtaken the Labour Party in the general elections. In a tone betraying deep sadness MacDonald remarked: "Do you know how it feels when you want to keep a man quiet and hit him on the head but find him dead?"

That remark explains a great deal. MacDonald was never again the confident head of the Government that he was at the first session of the Conference. It is to his credit that at the end of the second session he was able, despite the heavy odds against him, to repeat the assurance given to India a year earlier. But the spirit of the first session had departed from St. James' Palace. In the Tory Party, returned to Westminster in a massive majority, were men like Churchill, ready to pour contempt on the new Prime Minister, whom he described, in a Commons debate on India, in an outburst of devastating criticism as "a boneless wonder".

MacDonald had, perhaps, wandered somewhat far in the thirties from the robust idealism of his earlier years. But it would be uncharitable to suggest that the glitter of office blinded him to the requirements of loyalty, to the principles that had brought him and the other members of the British Socialist movement together in tackling the many problems thrown up by the First World War—India easily one of the most urgent amongst them.

It must have been painful and humiliating to him, isolated as he was from his former colleagues, to watch the Tories convert the decisions of the Round Table Conference into legislative proposals, whittling down in the process much that he had stood for. The safeguards “in the mutual interests of India and Britain” (the words of the Irwin-Gandhi Pact) had finally emerged, in Neville Chamberlain’s description, as “all that the wit of man could devise” to protect British financial and economic interests.

MacDonald died at sea, a lonely figure, before the final passage of the Government of India Act of 1935. But whatever blemishes in his record contemporary criticism may have found, India cannot forget—and history will certainly not overlook—MacDonald’s great vision and courage in chalking a course which, with all its turns and pitfalls, led finally to her freedom. That course might have been shorter and more direct if mistaken tactics had been avoided by both sides, Britain as well as India.

Pandit Motilal Nehru

An unusual incident in the early years of my journalistic career brought me into close personal relationship with Pandit Motilal Nehru. The Swaraj Party of which he was the leader had entered the Central Legislative Assembly for the first time in 1924. In the summer of that year Pandit Motilal was the guest of honour at a dinner at the Cecil Hotel in Simla given by a foreign delegation. In a speech full of delightful sallies, Pandit Motilal, who had the gift of being able to laugh at himself, referred to the drinks served during the meal and justified his partaking of them by quoting a Persian couplet: translated, it meant that when wine was served free, even a Qazi might drink. Reports of the speech appeared in many papers and Gandhiji was distressed that the leader of the Swaraj Party should have deviated on that occasion from the path of puritanical virtue.

I was among the few correspondents who had not commented on that part of Pandit Motilal's speech and he had noticed my omission. Meeting me on the Mall at Simla about a fortnight after the function, he said: "What sort of a correspondent are you that you should have missed the best point in my speech?" I explained that Mrs. Besant had trained me for journalism and she would not have approved of my making political capital out of a social function. This incident resulted in a privilege for me which I greatly valued during all the years that Pandit Motilal was active in politics. I could discuss with him in the privacy of his room with

complete frankness any point on which I wanted his personal reactions on important political topics.

Pandit Motilal's active political life was compressed into about fifteen years of work. The enquiry into the martial law administration in the Punjab immediately after the First World War over which he presided must have given him a more vivid glimpse into its horrors than were available from reports in the Press. By temperament a hard-headed statesman, he was not easily swayed in his decisions by emotional pressures. Of the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme of reforms—Britain's niggardly response to India's claim to equality of status with the Dominions—he was a severe critic as the President of the Congress; but his initial advice was essentially on Lokamanya Tilak's principle of taking what was offered in order to fight more effectively for the rest.

When Gandhi's call for sacrifice came in the first non-co-operation movement, Pandit Motilal was one of the earliest to join, throwing away an enormous practice at the Bar. In detention in a Calcutta prison, he and Desabandhu C. R. Das were eager to accept in 1921 a compromise solution offered by Lord Reading (India's Viceroy at the time) through Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's mediation. Virtual autonomy in the field of provincial administration with the door opening towards a measure of Central responsibility was the price that the Viceroy was willing to pay for the withdrawal of the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit to India.

Acceptance of such a settlement might have shortened the struggle for complete freedom. It is futile to discuss after an interval of some decades the consequences of Gandhiji's reaction to Lord Reading's terms. C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal were not willing to continue the boycott of the new Legislatures; after a strenuous fight within the Congress, Pandit Motilal led the Swaraj Party in the Central Legislature after the second elections in 1924. Gandhiji, wise in compromise, reconciled himself to the Swaraj Party being the Legislature wing of the Congress.

Motilal Nehru, who was essentially a constructive statesman, watched the fortunes of the Commonwealth of India Bill with keen interest. Ramsay MacDonald's bold declaration in 1924 on the right of the Indian people to self-government and self-

determination encouraged him to demand radical changes in the Indian Constitution. He moved a resolution in the Legislative Assembly to reiterate an earlier demand urging the Government of India to constitute, "in consultation with the Central Legislative Assembly, a Convention, a Round Table Conference or other suitable agency, adequately representative of all Indian, European and Anglo-Indian interests, to frame, with due regard to the interest of minorities, a detailed scheme for the prior approval of the Legislative Assembly before submission to the British Parliament for adoption as a statute".

The dissolution of the Central Legislature was (under his plan) to follow the preparation of such a Constitution, so that a newly-elected Legislature might give its approval before the submission of the scheme to the British Parliament for its sanction. The very basis of the Government of India Act was, in Motilal Nehru's view, open to the challenge that the British Parliament and its agent, the Government of India, were entitled to satisfaction before recommending a further advance. The problem of the Indian States coming into the structure of an All-India government was contingent on the results of negotiations with them. Motilal Nehru observed in the course of the debate :

We have come here to offer our co-operation, non-co-operators as we are, if you will care to co-operate with us. That is why we are here. If you agree to have it, we are your men; if you do not, we shall like men stand upon our rights and continue to be non-co-operators.

There was little common ground on the fundamental basis of the positions as expounded respectively by the spokesmen of the two sides. The Indian leader's assertion of India's right to make her own constitution without reference to the British Parliament was a view which the British Government declined to accept, because of its clear implication that the function of the latter would only be to ratify India's wishes. Hailey, in his reply on behalf of the Government, said that nothing either in political equity or in the history of the Dominions could justify such a claim without any other reference to the British Parliament than that it should be ratified. He added :

If it is really intended that this Conference should not be one to find a remedy for the problems which beset our future but should only ratify the demands of himself (Motilal Nehru) and his friends for immediate self-government, then I say it is not a Conference in which any representative of the British Crown could or would take part.

Actually, as was clear during the debate, the procedure adopted in 1900 in the case of Australia and somewhat later in South Africa, had influenced the Swaraj Party's leader in formulating his policy. He specifically referred to Joseph Chamberlain's speech in 1900 on Australia's example. The Secretary of State for the Colonies had said on the occasion of introducing the Commonwealth of Australia Bill in the House of Commons :

On the one hand, we have accepted without demur, and we shall ask the House of Commons to accept, every point in this Bill, every word, every line, every clause, which deals exclusively with the interests of Australia. . . . Wherever the Bill touches the interests of the Empire as a whole, or Her Majesty's possessions outside Australia, the Imperial Parliament occupies a position of trust which it is not the desire of the Empire, and which I do not believe for a moment it is the desire of Australia, that we should fulfil it in any perfunctory or formal manner.

Motilal Nehru's proposal was carried by 76 votes to 48; but the opponents consisted only of the entire *bloc* of 26 official members, the representatives of British commerce and a small number of members nominated by the Government.

A strong supporter in the Central Legislative Assembly of Pandit Motilal's proposal, interestingly, was Mr. Jinnah.

I can still recall the vigour and skill with which Pandit Motilal marshalled his forces inside the Assembly. By temperament and training legalistic in his approach, he was, nevertheless, a sound debater. He was fortunate in having in his team a number of talented men on whom he could rely for presenting the Opposition case in all its strength. His own contribution often represented

little more than a lucid summing-up of a problem the features of which had already been dealt with by his lieutenants. But his presentation had a quality which attracted the attention of the Government's spokesmen. He could hit hard in a debate without bitterness and thus retain the esteem and goodwill of the British officials called upon to play the novel role of Parliamentarians.

The opportunities for quickening the country's progress towards full freedom were limited in the twenties. In such circumstances Pandit Motilal neglected no opportunity of moving into a position of comparatively greater advantage of strength. He nearly accepted a place on the Muddiman Reforms Committee in 1924 which considered the question of a swifter advance in the provinces and at the Centre. He served for a brief term as a member of another Committee a little later dealing with the problem of Indianising a number of army units.

I have no doubt that Pandit Motilal was essentially a parliamentarian, at his best in a legislature rather than in an agitational movement. He did not limit his activity to the Central Legislature. The Congress at its Madras Session of 1927 had condemned the appointment of the Simon Commission and recommended all possible measures for boycotting it. In the same session, the Congress, in answer to Lord Birkenhead's challenge to India to produce a generally acceptable Constitution, authorized its Working Committee to confer with other similar committees appointed by organizations, political, labour, commercial and communal, to draft a Swaraj Constitution for India. The proposal to adopt the formula of full responsible government was accepted by the Committee of which Pandit Motilal Nehru was the Chairman, with a clear understanding that those who believed in independence would have full liberty to work for it.

The Motilal Nehru Committee strongly objected to the maintenance of separate or communal electorates as a hindrance to the minority concerned. It favoured the reservation of seats for minority communities in some Provinces under a system of mixed or joint electorates, as an inevitable compromise for a period of ten years.

The Committee dealt at length with the relations between British

India and the Indian States. At that time the problem of Indian States was being examined in all its aspects by an official committee presided over by Sir Harcourt Butler. The Motilal Nehru Committee had before it the suggestion of an All-India federation. Though the attitude of the Princes was still in some doubt, it adopted the line that

It would be a most one-sided arrangement if the Indian States desire to join the federation, so as to influence by their votes and otherwise the policy and legislation of the Indian Legislature, without submitting themselves to common legislation passed by it. It would be a travesty of the federal idea. If the Indian States would be willing to join such a federation, after realizing the full implications of the federal idea, we shall heartily welcome their decision and do all that lies in our power to secure to them the full enjoyment of their rights and privileges. But it must be clearly borne in mind that it would necessitate, perhaps in varying degrees, a modification of the system of government and administration prevailing within their territories.

The most significant conclusion of the Butler Committee that 'paramountcy must remain paramount', had not officially emerged during the deliberations of the Motilal Nehru Committee. But enough was known of the trend of official opinion to justify the assumption that neither the British Government nor its agent, the Government of India, would countenance the idea that the subject of relations with Indian States would be handed over to a responsible government at the Centre.

The Nehru Committee (as the All Parties Committee was called) laid down that in regard to the Indian States,

the fact ought not to be overlooked that the Government of India as a Dominion will be as much the King's Government as the present Government of India is, and there is no constitutional objection to the Dominion Government of India stepping into the shoes of the present Government of India.

In producing a generally acceptable Constitution Pandit Motilal, as the Chairman, had the benefit of the assistance of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru as one of its most active members. The Nehru Report, as the document produced by the Conference was called, was in many respects an improvement on the Commonwealth of India Bill. It was based on Dominion Status as a compromise measure of maximum agreement among the constituent parties and brought into focus for the first time the ideal of a federal union between the Provinces and the Princely States. It was a great achievement against formidable odds. In failing health he successfully fought for support for the report in the Calcutta Congress of 1928 against the champions of complete independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Bose and S. Srinivasa Aiyangar.

There were other complications which prevented the adoption of the Nehru Report by the different political groups outside the Congress. At a Conference of leaders which met at Dr. Ansari's house in Delhi for the purpose, Mr. Jinnah (who seemed to have had some prior understanding with Mr. Srinivasa Aiyangar) wanted reservation of seats for the Muslims in all the Legislatures, Provincial and Central. Pandit Motilal was prepared for such a concession in Provinces in which the Muslims were in a minority; but not in Bengal and the Punjab where they formed a majority of the population. Mr. Jinnah walked out of the Conference in protest, and the general boycott of the Simon Commission would have been seriously weakened by Mr. Jinnah's changed attitude.

It was a perplexing situation and Pandit Motilal turned to Mrs. Sarojini Naidu for help. "Persuade Jinnah to come back to the Conference," he told her, and as she left to make the effort, Srinivasa Aiyangar alone looked unconcerned: rightly or wrongly, Pandit Motilal felt he had given Jinnah encouragement to make such an extravagant demand. These two leaders were temperamentally and otherwise cast in different moulds, and their differences often simmered to the surface at meetings of the Swaraj Party. "Srinivasa," said Pandit Motilal with biting sarcasm, "I can convert you to Dominion Status in five minutes." "How, Panditji, how?" asked the other, intrigued by the suggestion. "I will call a public meeting this evening," said Pandit Motilal, "and declare that after much deliberation I have seen wisdom in

the ideal of complete independence. Five minutes later you are bound to tell the meeting that you have been won over to Dominion Status."

With the advent of a Labour Government in Britain in 1929, hopes rose again of a negotiated settlement. Lord Irwin's declaration, after consultations with the new Cabinet, that the goal of British policy in India was Dominion Status, coupled with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's categorical statement on the same lines but in stronger terms, created a hopeful atmosphere. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru took the initiative (with Pandit Motilal's knowledge and with his concurrence) in bringing the Viceroy and Pandit Motilal and a few other leaders together for direct talks. But a considerable section of the Congress had meanwhile moved further away from a solution on an agreed basis. That was the period during which the Congress had become affiliated to the League against Imperialism and altered its goal to complete independence.

The first session of the Round Table Conference met in London in 1930. Ramsay MacDonald (Prime Minister for a second time) made an official policy statement at the end of the Conference on January 19, 1931 (quoted earlier) offering that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon the Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with provisions to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations to minorities to protect their political liberties and rights. But he hastened to give the assurance that it would be a primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers were so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new Constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

It is my conviction that Pandit Motilal's death prevented India from reaching a final settlement with Britain after the Second Round Table Conference in London. No one can tell how India's destiny and the course of world events might have been influenced if freedom had come to us then, fifteen years earlier than it did.

It is given only to a fortunate few to serve a cause and to achieve final success. Others have to be content with fighting a combi-

nation of adverse circumstances, sustained by an unflinching faith in the ultimate triumph of justice. Among those who laboured in this spirit Pandit Motilal will always have an eminent place. He had courage of a type which is rare in India—courage not only to fight the British, but courage also to differ from Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru wherever his own convictions so impelled him, and to steer an independent course.

Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar

I have had, as a journalist, direct knowledge of the working of India's Central Legislature from the time of the inauguration of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms at the end of the First World War. Madras could well be proud of her representatives during these four decades. In the twenties there were stalwarts of the calibre of Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar, the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, T. Rangachariar and T. V. Seshagiri Aiyar; after the Swaraj Party's decision in 1924 to enter the Legislatures, came A. Rangaswami Aiyangar, S. Srinivasa Iyengar and R. K. Shanmukham Chetty; to a still later period belong S. Satyamurti, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar and Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar and finally, of course, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari.

Where, one may ask, would Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar be placed in a galaxy of such talent and parliamentary ability and experience? He was not gifted with Mr. Sastri's remarkable eloquence; nor with the flair for quick-witted repartee which Satyamurti and Shanmukham Chetty possessed in abundant measure. On the other hand, Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar's handicaps in a legislative forum were almost painfully obvious: a husky voice that could be heard only with some difficulty except by those near him, a halting delivery and a temperamental incapacity to touch the emotional chords of his audience.

Nevertheless, in all these decades, I can think of no parliamentarian with higher standards of performance than Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar. His speeches, whatever the theme, were models of closely

reasoned argument based on a careful study of all the facts of a case. The Government spokesmen, during the period Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar functioned as a member of the Central Legislature, were an exceptionally able team, including Sir Malcolm (later Lord) Hailey, Sir William Vincent, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Charles Innes. But official replies to his criticism, which was all the more effective because of the studied restraint and moderation of his language, seemed poor and unconvincing in comparison.

I recall an incident in the Budget Session of the Central Legislative Assembly in 1922, when Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar subjected the Government's expenditure proposals, both on civil administration and on defence, to a searching analysis to draw the irresistible conclusion that there was large-scale extravagance. The sequel was unusual and seldom witnessed in a legislative chamber : Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Finance Member, before replying to the debate, walked across the floor to Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar's seat and asked for a copy of his speech. The Government had, of course, no suitable reply to give, beyond a promise (implemented later) that all the points in the speech would be closely examined by a Retrenchment Committee. On another occasion, he startled the Government with a speech on the need for a progressive policy of reforms in the North West Frontier Province. He argued the case on the basis of such an array of irrefutable facts that there was no official, even with personal experience of that region, who could adequately meet his arguments.

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar entered the Central Legislative Assembly after having served a term of office as an Executive Councillor in Madras during a period of acute controversy in the First World War. He thus knew from personal experience in Madras the technique of administration under the Minto-Morley scheme. It was my privilege to be in intimate contact with him through all the years that he was in the Central Assembly and to win his friendship—if such an expression is permissible to describe a relationship between two men, one at the peak of the career and the other a young and inexperienced journalist. It took me some time to break through his reserve and persuade him to speak of his earlier official life in Madras; only then did I realise, when he referred to episodes like Mrs. Besant's internment for her home

rule campaign in 1917, how cruelly many of us had misjudged him and his attitude as a member of Lord Pentland's Executive Council.

Strange as it may sound, Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar, for all the appearance he gave of being a Moderate, was not hesitant in drawing conclusions, however radical they might be, to which his well-ordered, capacious mind led him. All his life he was a distinguished member of the Liberal party, never deviating from the strict path of its programme and principles. But I doubt if among his colleagues there was another whose convictions in regard to many things were so refreshingly progressive in the fullest sense of the term. A voracious reader, he retained to the end of his life a receptive mind, open always to new ideas and influences.

During the sittings of the Muddiman Reforms Committee in 1924, I had opportunities, as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's secretary, of discussing some points (contained in the minority report) with Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar who was also a member of the Committee. Illness had prevented him from participating in the detailed discussion of the draft of the minute of dissent of the minority, the other three being Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye and Mr. Jinnah. I was authorised to give him the substance of the draft and obtain his reactions. The clarity of his mind and the precision with which he outlined his views made a deep impression on his three colleagues.

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar was associated with the National Convention which framed the Commonwealth of India Bill. In one or two important matters he did not agree with its provisions. He was not in favour of including a list of fundamental rights in India's Constitution on the ground that the rule of law was so firmly established in English Jurisprudence (applicable to India) that the danger of encroachment by the executive authority on the rights of individual citizens was hardly existent. Moreover, in his view, such declarations were not beyond the reach of the ordinary legislature. Therefore, he took the view that "the inclusion of a declaration of rights in a constitution must be held to be unnecessary, unscientific, misleading and either legally ineffective or harmful".

The rich experience of his long and distinguished public life

Sir Sivaswami Aiyar summed up in his Krishaswamy Aiyar Memorial lectures before the Madras University in the late twenties. The terms which he prescribed for a satisfactory evolution of an all-India federation, to include British provinces and the Princely States—at that time a topic of vital interest—would have done credit to the most advanced thinker of that generation.

The relations between the Paramount Power and the States were laid down clearly and authoritatively by Lord Reading in his official reply to the Nizam of Hyderabad in the controversy of the retrocession of Berar. The principles laid down by the Viceroy were: (1) The sovereignty of the Crown being supreme in India no ruler of a State could justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing. Such supremacy was based not only on treaties and engagements but existed independently and quite apart from the Crown's prerogative in matters relating to foreign powers and policies. (2) It was the right and the duty of the British Government, while scrupulously respecting all treaties and engagements with the States, to preserve peace and order throughout India. From this latter principle certain corollaries were drawn namely: (a) no succession to the *Musnud* would be valid unless it was recognised by the King and the British Government was the only arbiter in cases of succession; (b) the right of the British Government to intervene in the internal affairs of the Princely States, of course only for grave reasons of internal and external security, flowed from the protecting power of the British Government.

After the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1921 the Chamber of Princes came into being as a consultative body to enable the Princes to express their views on problems affecting their order as a class, or relations between the States and British India. The more important Princes (such as Hyderabad, Mysore and Indore) kept out of the Chamber. The question came to the fore, however, as a result of the British declaration after the First World War of the ultimate goal for British India and of the voice to be given to the Princely States in the determination of questions of common concern. With the introduction of responsible government at the Centre, however distant might be the prospect, it would become necessary to distinguish between

the Viceroy as the representative of the British Crown and the Governor-General as the executive head of the government of British India.

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar questioned the validity of the contention that the treaties were entered into with the Crown irrespective of the sovereignty of British India. The Crown acted not as sovereign of England but as ruler of British India. He refused to accept the view that the treaties were a mere personal right or obligation; they imposed, according to him, obligations on the rulers for the time being of the States, in favour of the authorities, again for the time being in charge of the Government of India. He pointed out :

It would be an unthinkable constitutional absurdity that the right to enforce the treaties should vest not in the authorities for the time being charged with the administration of India, but in some other authority.

On this matter he differed from the opinion of Prof. A. B. Keith in his 'Constitution, Administration and Laws of the British Empire', and in his 'Responsible Government in the Dominions'.

What was to be the nature and the extent of co-ordination between the States and British India in view of the goal of responsible government for the latter? If the States were to be organically associated with British India, it could be in only one of two ways : "either by becoming part of the unitary government of India on the same footing and with the same powers as the British provinces, or by a federal union with British India."

The first alternative of absorption into British India being inconceivable at that stage, there remained the second possibility of a federation with British India. Here again federation could take one of two forms : one with British India as one entity and all the States as separate entities. Such a federation would have faced numerous difficulties. British India could not possibly agree to the principle of equality, not only with individual States but even with all the States taken together.

Apart from the constitutional anomaly that such a federation would have brought into being, there would have been for British

India no compensating advantage; nor would the States on their part have accepted the decisions of the legislature as binding on them.

Responsible government for British India meant and could only mean responsibility to her legislature and of the legislature to a popular electorate. The creation of a federal body as distinct from the Indian legislature would have made the political machinery cumbrous, slow and inefficient. He came to the conclusion that "a self-governing British India enjoying Dominion Status cannot agree to the creation of any Central Government or authority superior to her own legislature and not responsible to her".

Would a federal constitution of the genuine type be suitable and practicable? After analysing the conditions essential for such a form of government, he came to the conclusion that a federal structure of the genuine type would be unacceptable to the Princes. At that time the Princes were not willing to submerge their individualities.

Federation of any type being thus rejected as inconceivable, the next question was whether subjects of joint interest could be discussed in such a way as to give the States a voice. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report had referred to the interest of the Indian States in some matters common to British provinces, such as defence, tariffs, exchange, opium, salt, railways, posts and telegraphs. The Chamber of Princes, in the view of the authors of the joint report, could be utilised for the purpose of giving opportunities to the princes for joint deliberation and discussion.

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar rejected as invalid the claims of the States share in the revenues of British India arising out of the subjects for any enumerated above. The Chamber of Princes was obviously not representative to an adequate extent. The connecting link between the Chamber of Princes and the Indian Legislature was the Government of India. He had no objection to informal discussions between representatives of the Chamber on the one side and of the Indian legislature on the other. He was even prepared to go a little further and agree to the nomination of a few representatives of the States to the Central Legislative Assembly, not exceed-

ing five per cent of the strength of the Assembly, with their rights limited to matters of common interest.

The question was also discussed by Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar of the relations between self-governing British India and the States, especially during a transition stage. In regard to topics relating to the external affairs of the States, he took the view that they could be dealt with by responsible Ministers even in the transition period. Regarding matters of internal administration, or questions of dynastic or personal concern of the Princes, the population of British India was not directly concerned with them. During the transition period he was prepared to concede that these topics could be left in the hands of the Governor-General, as distinct from the Governor General-in-Council. Even as regards this, he made the qualifying suggestion that the Governor-General could have two members in the Executive Council, both non-official Indians, one chosen from amongst the retired Dewans of the States and the other from among retired members of the Executive Councils, or Ministers, to take charge of the Political Department. Subject to these conditions, he was prepared to exclude such topics from the legislature.

The Montagu-Chelmsford report had referred to the point raised by the more enlightened and thoughtful of the Princes regarding their own share in any scheme of reforms. Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar drew a distinction between the personal interests of the Princes and the need for internal reforms in the States. He laid down a number of conditions which he regarded as the minimum standards of good administration. Professor Westlake (in his *Principles of International Law*) had taken the view that the British Government "was not only preponderant in India, but paramount; not merely the strongest power, but the rightful superior, and that all treaties and grants of whatever date were to be construed as reserving the exercise of that superiority when needed for certain beneficent purposes".

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar's conclusions were :

The hard facts of the present situation, which the Princes have to recognise and adapt themselves to, are : (1) the paramountcy of the British power and the growth of Imperial authority;

(2) the overwhelming preponderance in population of the Provinces of British India by which they are encompassed : (3) the comparative political progress of British India and the pledge of responsible Government given to British India by Parliament with all its implications; and (4) the progress of the democratic idea and the spirit of nationalism which have followed in the wake of Western education and intercourse with the West.

A strong and united Indian nation enjoying self-governing status like the other Dominions, he was convinced, could not afford to speak in an international body like the League of Nations with more than one voice : "The one thing that is necessary on the part of all is to keep a clear eye on the goal and take no steps that will encourage centrifugal forces or discourage the action of centripetal forces."

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar belonged to a generation which would probably feel out of place in the conditions that have prevailed later in free India. His political beliefs and activities were moulded by a faith unshaken by disappointments in the British sense of justice and fair play. There was no room in the philosophy of such a man for the technique that Gandhiji introduced on assuming the direction of the freedom movement.

Of Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar it may be said with complete truth that he served India with no less zeal and earnestness than others who came in a succeeding generation to follow a different path. The quality of that service was greatly enhanced by the most exacting standards of personal integrity worthy of emulation in all circumstances. The impact of such a man left an indelible impression on India's public life.

M. A. Jinnah

15th August 1947, India's Independence Day, is, for those who lived through that exciting period following the end of the Second World War, inextricably linked with the partition of the sub-continent. The final chapter of that story was written in the blood of hundreds of thousands of innocent persons who were victims of large-scale riots in many parts of northern India. Jinnah, who could have played a great part in making the freedom struggle a saga of unmixcd splendour, preferred the way of partition. Uncompromising in negotiation and unhappy and bitter in the end, he had "a truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan" thrust into his unwilling hands.

Much has been written on the circumstances that converted him from an ardent nationalist to a fanatical adherent to division; and much will continue to be written as more details come to light to explain the basic reasons for the change.

Jinnah's political career falls into two distinct and, in some essential respects, contradictory phases: the first until 1937, as a staunch Liberal in his political principles, keen on Hindu-Muslim unity, and anxious to see India emerge as a self-governing Dominion; and the second as the ambitious leader of the Muslim League whose membership registered between 1937 and 1940 a phenomenal rise (but singularly little through his personal efforts), vying with the Congress in the adoption of a radical programme and committed to the creation of Pakistan as a separate independent State.

With Jinnah in his first phase I had intimate contacts going back to 1917, when I went to see him for the first time in his Bombay home to seek his advice : he was then the President of the Home Rule League in Bombay. Mrs. Besant was in internment at Ootacamund for her home rule activities and Gandhiji was contemplating a march of volunteers from Madras—a distance of 350 miles—to enforce her release. Jinnah called a few friends to his house for a discussion : Tilak, Horniman, Syed Hussain, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Omar Sobhani and Shankerlal Banker (apart from myself). Tilak was a little late in coming, and Jinnah utilised the time to explain to Horniman that the sect among the Muslims to which he belonged believed in the ten *Avataras* and had much in common with Hindus in their inheritance laws and social customs. The main point of discussion—Gandhiji's proposal—took little time. Tilak promptly rejected it as impracticable and Jinnah and Horniman agreed with that view.

Later, I saw him in connection with Mrs. Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill in the early twenties. I was going round the country and had secured over a hundred signatures of leading personalities all over India, including Jinnah's. He spoke with unreserved candour when I called on him in his chamber in the Bombay High Court. Gandhiji's non-co-operation movement he considered to be dangerous for the same reason that Mrs. Besant and the Liberals did; and he was particularly apprehensive about the repercussions on Indian Muslims of the Khilafat Movement. The enrolment of ignorant and fanatical Muslims in the movement struck him as extremely unwise.

I got even closer to Jinnah in 1924 when he was a member of the Central Legislative Assembly. Both he and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru were convinced early in the proceedings of the Muddiman Reforms Committee (of which they were members) that unanimity was not possible; a minority report became inevitable, with Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar and Dr. R. P. Paranjpye willing to lend the weight of their support. Jinnah frequently walked over from Maiden's Hotel in Delhi to Metcalfe House where Sapru was staying (with me as his Secretary). After dinner, they would discuss Sapru's first draft of the various chapters. There were negligible differences in their standpoints, easily resolved by a little

give-and-take. "Sapru," he said one night, "I think I have a solution for the Hindu-Muslim problem. You destroy your orthodox priestly class and we will destroy our Mullahs and there will be communal peace."

The fact is that Jinnah, despite all his differences with Gandhiji, retained his nationalist viewpoint and his deep faith in Liberal principles certainly until 1937. It was in 1925 (or perhaps the following year) that, in supporting Pandit Motilal Nehru's resolution inviting the British Government to summon a representative Round Table Conference to solve the Indian problem, Jinnah ridiculed the two-nations theory in his speech :

India is not a nation, we are told. We were a people when the Great War was going on and an appeal was made to India for blood and money . . . We are not a people nor a nation when we ask you for a substantial advance towards responsible government and parliamentary institutions.

No Muslim leader was more genuine in endorsing the national demand than Jinnah was in the twenties. His vanity was somewhat hurt by the preference shown by Gandhiji and the other Congress leaders for the Ali Brothers and other Muslims in the Congress. To retain his nuisance value, he thought it would be better tactics to step up the Muslim demand for separate and privileged treatment. At the All-Parties Committee meeting at Dr. Ansari's residence in Daryaganj (Delhi) in 1928, Jinnah put forward for the first time a claim for reservation of seats in all the Provincial Legislatures, including the Punjab and Bengal, where the Muslims constituted a majority of the population. Pandit Motilal's prompt rejection of the latter part of the formula led to an abrupt termination of the Conference. It was a delicate situation : Jinnah's withdrawal could mean the sabotage of the national boycott of the Simon Commission. "Sarojini," said Pandit Motilal in his dictatorial way, "it is your business now to bring Jinnah back." She was not entirely successful in her appeal to him; Jinnah did not break away from the boycott of the Commission.

Later, at the first Round Table Conference in London in 1930,

Jinnah expressed the hope that out of its deliberations would emerge the Dominion of India. At the first Round Table Conference, he took me aside one morning, while a plenary session was in progress, and said, "Burma is not on today's agenda, but Ramsay MacDonald is going to spring a surprise on us towards the end of the day's proceedings by rushing a proposal through for Burma's separation without a discussion. Some leading Indian delegates have already agreed to such a procedure." He suggested that I should raise an objection and ask for a Committee to examine the proposal. I consulted H. P. Mody and C. Y. Chintamani, the editor of the Allahabad *Leader*, and sought their support for my proposal of a separate Committee on Burma. The plan worked and a Committee came into being, though MacDonald showed considerable annoyance at my raising the point.

The episode affords convincing evidence that Jinnah at that time believed in a united India, even including Burma. The scheme of partition was not then in the air, and so far as Jinnah was concerned, he was more uncompromising in the Round Table Conference on such matters as Army Indianisation and the structure of the All-India Federation than Sapru or Jayakar. Jinnah was more or less an isolated figure at the Conference table. For the British Conservatives Sir Muhammad Shafi and Sir Zafrullah Khan proved much more useful than Jinnah. The end of the three sessions of the Round Table Conference found Jinnah completely cut off from the mainstream of Indian public life. In disgust he settled down for a while in London to practise in the Privy Council.

A strange incident (which Sarojini Naidu, who was in London during the Round Table Conference period, told me) deserves to be recorded here. A palmist who read Jinnah's hand prophesied for him the headship of an independent State at the end of his career. Jinnah laughed at the suggestion as absurd; but the memory of it might have lingered and served over the years as an activating agent on his sub-conscious mind.

The Privy Council experience did not prove encouraging and the inauguration of the 1935 Constitution appeared to revive Jinnah's interest in Indian politics. He returned to India to organise the Muslim League for the general elections in the spring of 1937.

The sharp cleavage of opinion in the Congress, with the left-wing committed to 'the wrecking of the Constitution from within', was a negative factor in his favour. His initial efforts, however, proved a dismal failure. Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan in the Punjab preferred to be his own master as the leader of the Unionist Party; in Bengal Mr. Fazlul Haq had his own affiliations with the Krishak Praja Party; in the U.P., Muslim landlords ignored his appeal and sailed under the banner of the National Agriculturists' Party.

The general elections, contrary to all calculations, gave the Congress a majority in six provinces while it emerged as the largest Party in another. The Muslim League's performance, in sharp contrast, was disastrous, its tally in all the provinces being only 109 out of 482 seats reserved for the Muslims. After the elections, a much chastened Jinnah made a public appeal to Gandhiji for an honourable Hindu-Muslim settlement. It needs to be reiterated that in 1937 there was no demand for a separate Pakistan from any quarter, barring the distinguished personality of Sir Muhammad Iqbal. Zafrullah Khan and all the leading Muslims, who had figured in the Round Table Conference and in the Joint Parliamentary Committee, had turned their backs on Pakistan as "a student's scheme which no responsible Muslim would touch". (Zafrullah Khan went even further in characterising it as chimerical and impracticable.)

The rapid growth of the Pakistan cult between 1937 and 1940 is one of the unexplained (but not inexplicable) phenomena of our recent history. Much was made of 'Congress atrocities' at that time in some of the northern provinces in which its Ministries functioned. Lord Linlithgow rejected a proposal which I made to him in the course of an interview, after securing Gandhiji's approval, for a Committee of Enquiry headed by Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of the Federal Court. How could such a Committee be appointed, the Viceroy asked me, when the Governors of the Provinces concerned had brought no complaints of unjust treatment of the Muslims to his notice? In 1937 at a Conference in London, Sir Francis Wylie, a former Governor of the United Provinces dismissed the atrocity stories as 'moonshine'.

The reasons for the growth of the Pakistan movement appear to lie elsewhere, and have been discussed in the opening chapter.

Important among these was the disappointment of the League at the Congress going back on the understanding, prior to the 1937 elections, that it would form a coalition with the League in the United Provinces, and the growing interest of feudal elements in the League as a rallying point against the radicalism of the growing Congress left. With the Federal elections scheduled for 1938 or 1939, all parties opposed to the Congress and, in particular, to its pro-Socialist elements—the ruling Princes, landlords and industrialists, whether Muslim, Hindu or Sikh—felt the imperative need for a rallying point. That was supplied by the Muslim League. In some of the bye-elections after the 1937 elections such a coalition round the League had seemed to work. Every Muslim in the various legislatures, elected or nominated, was encouraged through official hints to join the League. An astute politician, Jinnah was the tactical advantage of assuring the Princes well before the federal elections that the League would not interfere in the internal affairs of the States.

Fed by such different sources for different reasons, the Muslim League rapidly grew in strength and influence. It may seem a small point today, but Jinnah discarded his western clothes for the baggy trousers of the Punjabi Muslim, an achhkan and a Turkish cap. The League, following the example of the Congress, adopted complete independence as its goal. The two-nations theory (denounced in caustic terms by him in the twenties) was made the basis for the new demand of the League, but not yet crystallised in the concept of Pakistan. Possibly, if the left-wing of the Congress had played a less intransigent role on the outbreak of the Second World War and permitted the party Ministers to continue in office, the Viceroy might have been persuaded to attempt a war-time federation with some conventions introduced to confer on the Executive Council the status and even some of the functions of a National Government.

Outside these domestic considerations was the obvious fact that Lord Linlithgow did not enjoy the confidence of the new British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. In the early weeks of the war, when I pointed out in an interview with the Viceroy that a good deal of responsibility could be passed on to the Executive Council through the establishment of suitable conventions,

he said, "Yes, it would be possible if all the Congressmen were like Mr. Rajagopalachari and Pandit Pant. You cannot afford during a war to have a crisis created in the Executive Council every few days by Mr. Nehru." "Moreover", added the Viceroy, "any new move in India must have Mr. Churchill's approval."

The political stalemate continued, though in a somewhat subdued key, because both in the Congress and in the Muslim League were sober elements anxious to get together for a transitional war-time National Government. Gandhiji himself, Rajaji and Maulana Azad (and there were others) strove for about two years for such a settlement in the early stages of the World War. On the side of the Muslim League was Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, unhappy under Jinnah's leadership and initiating new proposals from time to time for a settlement with these Congress leaders. In February 1940, after evolving a formula which was acceptable to Rajaji, Sir Sikandar sadly confessed to me at Lahore that he was not free to break away from Jinnah.

To do Jinnah justice, he was too hard-headed a politician to subscribe readily to the concept of a separate Pakistan. The League had become by 1940 a formidable Muslim mass movement, with a momentum he could not resist. Suhrawardy (whom he did not trust) declared at a League session, "Pakistan is only our latest demand, but not the last one". Jinnah, if Khaliquzzaman's record (in *Pathways to Pakistan*) is authentic, had doubts at the start about Pakistan being a workable scheme. He had sown the wind but was being forced by circumstances, over which he had hardly any control, to face the whirlwind. Early in 1940 the Viceroy said to me, "Jinnah is coming to see me next week. I am going to tell him, a negative attitude—no, no, to everything coming from the Congress side—won't help him. He must have a positive scheme of his own."

This, in my view, gives a glimpse of the forces at work. Jinnah, for long years the leader of a minority party and after the Round Table Conferences with little influence even on the Muslims, seemed to enjoy the experience of being on the crest of a wave which he certainly did not create and about whose direction he was uncertain. For Churchill it was a Godsend to have the Muslim League adopting an uncompromising position. He

argued with President Roosevelt (who was pleading from across the Atlantic for a quick and honourable settlement with India so that she could come whole-heartedly into the war): whom does the Congress represent, without the princely States (120 million people), without the Muslim League (90 million), without the Untouchables (60 million), not to mention the other minorities? This over-simplified analysis, Churchill professed seriously to believe, summed up the Indian situation during the Second World War. It was good as a debating point against Roosevelt's moves for an immediate solution of the Indian problem.

By the time the war came to an end, Roosevelt was dead and Churchill was out of office. Attlee, the new British Prime Minister, did his utmost to hasten a settlement in India, assisted by two men with knowledge of Indian conditions and deeply sympathetic to our aspirations—Pethick-Lawrence and Stafford Cripps. But they could not, on the Indian problem, overlook the direct consequences of Churchill's sit-pretty policy. Forces had arisen in India during the war years, which neither they nor the Congress could ignore. Jinnah seemed to keep an open mind on the issue of Pakistan, as is apparent from his ten-point memorandum to Sir B. N. Rau after the election of the Constituent Assembly in the late summer of 1946. But the pressure on him was too great to resist. He subscribed to all the doctrines he had earlier denounced with conviction—direct action, the two-nations theory and a homeland for the Muslims.

On the eve of the transfer of power one witnessed on the part of the British Government the rapid abandonment of positions which it had held earlier. The British Cabinet Mission had carefully considered the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and drawn the conclusion that in regard to the Muslim majority areas,

the setting up of a separate sovereign State of Pakistan would not solve the communal minority problem; nor can we see any justification for including within a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and of Bengal and Assam in which the population is predominantly non-Muslim. Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan. . .

We have, therefore, been forced to the conclusion that neither a larger nor a smaller sovereign State of Pakistan would provide an acceptable solution to the communal problem. Apart from the great force of the foregoing arguments, there are weighty administrative, economic and military considerations (against the creation of Pakistan).

This was in May 1946; and yet, only nine months later, in February 1947, the British Prime Minister was compelled to make a declaration that the British authority over India would be withdrawn not later than June 1948, stipulating, however, that "the question would have to be considered to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over on the due date—whether as a whole, or in some form of Central Government in British India, or in some areas of the existing provincial governments or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people".

This major shift in British policy was followed on June 3, 1947, by another policy statement by Lord Mountbatten, the new Viceroy, who advanced the date of British withdrawal from India from June 1948 to 15th August, 1947. He announced on behalf of the British Government that legislation would be immediately introduced in the House of Commons for the transfer of power on 15th August on a Dominion Status basis to one or two successor authorities, according to the decision to be taken as a result of the announcement. The way, he said, was thus open to an arrangement by which power could be transferred many months earlier than the most optimistic had thought possible, at the same time leaving it to the people of India to decide for themselves on their future.

Mr. Nehru accepted this declaration in a spirit of resignation. In a broadcast to the nation, he said :

It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you, though I have no doubt in my mind that this is the right course. For generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free and independent united India. The proposal to

allow certain parts to secede, if they so will, is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one even from the larger viewpoint. The united India that we have laboured for was not one of compulsion and coercion but a free and willing association of a free people. It may be that in this way we shall reach that united India sooner than otherwise and that she will have a stronger and more secure foundation.

So Pakistan came into existence, consisting of regions which had steadily opposed separation from India —and carved by a man who, except for the last decade of his life, was a more ardent Nationalist than any Muslim of his generation. It started as a movement with no positive goal except opposition to the Congress, vitalised by forces that had no real interest in India's partition and utilised by Churchill for indefinitely postponing India's freedom. Too late the Congress leaders realised the price they were being compelled to pay for their failure to be accommodating when Jinnah was prepared to be reasonable, and could control the forces that adopted his banner. Opportunism on all sides had exacted a terrible price.

Jawaharlal Nehru

My first glimpse of Jawaharlal Nehru was in a crowded hall in the heart of Bombay in 1917. A Home Rule League meeting was in progress, with Jinnah (at that time an ardent nationalist) in the chair to protest against the internment of Mrs. Besant and two of her associates for championing the cause of India's freedom in the middle of the First World War. A young man in western clothes quietly walked into the hall and took his seat on a back bench: it was Jawaharlal Nehru, drawn into the movement for India's freedom initiated by Mrs. Besant and Lokmanya Tilak during the First World War.

For about two decades thereafter I saw him only occasionally, either at meetings of the Congress or of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

I can recall, as though it happened yesterday, a stormy scene at the Calcutta Congress in 1928 with Pandit Motilal Nehru as President. Mrs. Besant had asked me to ascertain whether he proposed to secure the support of the Congress for the All-Parties' Report (the Nehru Report) as the nation's reply to the Simon Commission's scheme. "Tell her," said Motilalji, "I do not know if I will continue as President tomorrow." A strong challenge had come from the advocates of Independence—Subhas Bose, S. Srinivasa Iyengar and Jawaharlal Nehru—and the decision seemed to be in doubt and, with it, his own position as the President.

The move was defeated, but what fixed the episode in my memory was the manner of its defeat. After a bitter and pro-

longed debate came the vote, declared at first in favour of the leftwingers. Jawaharlal Nehru, however, was not satisfied that the procedure adopted for counting the votes was correct. On a recount the majority went to those who favoured the Nehru Report. Jawaharlal Nehru accepted defeat, preferring it to a triumph obtained in suspicious circumstances.

In the thirties, when there was a controversy over the issue of acceptance of office under the 1935 Constitution, he did not conceal his disapproval of my efforts to facilitate a solution based on a compromise between Lord Linlithgow and Gandhiji.

After Motilalji's death in 1931, the struggle inside the Congress continued, with Gandhiji seeking a compromise solution. Nehru was distressed by the Congress acceptance of office under the 1935 Constitution on a formula for which Gandhiji was primarily responsible; and he seemed relieved two years later, when the Congress ministries resigned, shortly after the outbreak of hostilities.

The Second World War posed for him a dilemma of deeper significance than in any previous situation. No man in Europe or Asia had seen earlier or more clearly than he had done the rise of Nazism and Fascism to menacing proportions. With a promise of Indian independence after the war, I think he would have committed the country to whole-hearted support for the Allied cause.

Towards the end of 1939, at Wardha, I had my first real interview with Nehru. Earlier, in New Delhi I had given Sir Stafford Cripps a memorandum* indicating the lines on which, it seemed to me, a Constituent Assembly could be brought into existence at the end of the Second World War to frame India's permanent Constitution. Attracted by the suggestion, Cripps suggested that I might discuss it with and secure the reactions of the three most important leaders : Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah. It was at Jamnalal Bajaj's house in Wardha that I discussed the scheme with Nehru during my first extended meeting with him.

In 1940, Gandhiji started the non-co-operation movement so as to put the claim about India's 'voluntary war effort' to the test and incidentally provided his followers with an outlet for their

* Reproduced in Appendix IV.

India's Freedom Movement

long pent-up resentment against the British. There was a certain amount of criticism on the ground that it rested on a false basis of raising the issue of freedom to preach non-violence. In fact the movement was started in view of the growing restlessness in the Congress over British obstinacy in shelving the Indian problem. It was to be restricted to selected individuals and not launched on a mass scale. Nehru very clearly explained his own position in a statement during his trial at Gorakhpur on 3rd November, 1940. He told the Magistrate in the course of his statement :

I am convinced that the large majority of the people of England are weary of Empire and hunger for a real new order. But we have to deal not with them but with what their Government aims at. With that we have nothing in common and we shall resist it to the uttermost. We have therefore decided to be no party to their imposed war and to declare this to the world. This war has led already to widespread destruction and will lead to even greater horror and misery. With those who suffer we sympathise deeply and in all sincerity. But unless the war has a revolutionary aim of ending the present order and substituting something based on freedom and co-operation, it will lead to a continuation of wars and violence and uttermost destruction.

This is why we must dissociate ourselves from this war and advise our people to do likewise and not help in any way with money or men.

Little happened of any great significance for over two years, because of Cripps' absence in Moscow as British Ambassador to the Soviet Union. In March 1942, he returned to India, this time as a member of the Churchill Cabinet, with the famous offer* associated with his name, of a war-time settlement with India, to be followed at the end of the hostilities by the formation of a Constitution-making body.

Among the leaders of the Congress, Nehru and Rajaji were the

* The terms of the proposals made by Sir Stafford Cripps are reproduced in Appendix V.

keenest on a settlement but found that Cripps was unable to agree on behalf of the British Cabinet to strengthen some of the weak points in the offer. A message came to me from Shri Aurobindo (at that time in retirement in Pondicherry) to be conveyed to Gandhiji and Nehru, that the offer should be accepted in its entirety without any bargaining. Since by that time Gandhiji had returned to Sewagram in a mood of frustration and disappointment, I conveyed the message to Nehru and Rajaji.

With a crisis approximating a breakdown developing over the Cripps proposals regarding the transition arrangements for the administration of the Defence Department, Col. Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's Personal Envoy, intervened in a dramatic manner. I became his channel of communication with Nehru in a series of developments which are narrated in the next chapter.

A major reversal of roles seemed to have occurred between Gandhiji and Nehru after the failure of the Cripps Mission. By temperament Gandhiji was constructive and accommodating in his policies and outlook. He had for some years supported the section of the Congress represented by Rajagopalachari, which was keen on making use of the powers conferred on India by the 1935 Constitution. In the early stages of the Second World War, he was for India's unconditional support of Britain and her Allies, consistently with his creed of non-violence. He encouraged more than one effort in 1940 and 1941 designed to establish a transitional war-time federation with the cooperation of Sikandar Hyat Khan and States like Baroda and Jaipur. But from 1941 his faith in the sincerity of British promises and assurances weakened, and was practically extinguished by the fate of the Cripps Mission.

On the other hand, Nehru, who had no use for the 1935 Constitution, except for 'wrecking it from within', saw in the rapid rise of the Nazi and Fascist movements in Europe a grave menace to India and the rest of the world. With the Allied Power facing a crisis, especially after Japan's entry into the Second World War and her spectacular successes in South-East Asia, Nehru's tactics underwent a complete transformation. The failure of the Cripps Mission had much less of an impact on him than on Gandhiji.

The imminence of Japan's attack on India was for him a 'compelling reason to do fresh thinking on Indo-British relations. In the fateful days following the departure of Cripps it was Nehru, assisted by Azad, who exercised a sobering influence on Gandhiji, and prevented him from plunging the country into 'anarchy and chaos'. On their insistence the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee adopted at Allahabad in May 1942 underwent modifications. While demanding that Britain must "abandon her hold on India", and adopting non-violent non-cooperation as its policy, the resolution kept the door open for further negotiations, if possible, with the British Government; it asserted that India could deal with the British only on the basis of independence.

Nehru met Gandhiji at Wardha in the late summer of 1942 after a lapse of two months. Much had happened in that interval—he succeeded in getting Gandhiji to modify his view-point and to agree to three major points : (1) no action against Britain which might even indirectly assist Japan against China; (2) a treaty between the Allies and free India permitting the use of India as a base for Allied operations against the Japanese; (3) avoidance of conflict with the British Government if at all possible.

The failure of the Cripps negotiations with its tragic sequel I regard as the greatest tragedy of the war, culminating in the adoption of the 'Quit India' resolution by the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on 8th August, 1942.* Nehru was an unhappy man in August 1942, as he faced the prospect of another futile term in prison. I interviewed him in Bombay for the *Manchester Guardian* a few hours before his arrest. He made it abundantly clear that, provided there was a firm promise of independence at the end of the war, India's support for the Allies would be active and full, and she would at no stage think of a separate peace. The gesture proved ineffective and came too late, and he disappeared the next day into the void of prison life for three fateful years.

Thereafter, for the rest of the war period a kind of darkness descended on the political scene in India. Nothing came out of the efforts of non-party leaders led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru to revive and improve on the Cripps plan ; these efforts included a

* The text of the 'Quit India' resolution is reproduced in Appendix VI.

memorandum on an interim war-time solution which I circulated* with Sapru's approval, to a number of distinguished Indians.

In San Francisco in the spring of 1945 some of us who had gone to campaign for India's freedom at the U. N. Conference—Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, J. J. Singh, Syed Hossain, Krishna Lal Sridharani, Dr. Anup Singh and a few others including myself—felt that the new world organisation would be heavily weighted in favour of Europe and America. Asia, we felt, would be grossly underrepresented, and, therefore, something had to be done at once to make Asia's voice felt in the post-war reconstruction of the world.

On my return to India in the latter half of 1945, I placed the proposal for an Asian Conference before the Indian Council of World Affairs. The Council welcomed the idea but considered Nehru's active participation essential for its success. Nehru, I found, was warmly responsive to the suggestion. With Nehru practically assuming the leadership, the initial project of a small deliberative Conference was abandoned. The task of organising a large-scale Conference, representative of all, or at any rate, of most Asian countries meant careful planning of an enormous number of details—and, of course, adequate funds. Fortunately for us, the originators of the idea, Nehru became the head of a transitional Government before many months had passed. The attitude of the External Affairs Department underwent a remarkable transformation in this new atmosphere—from one of indifference and even veiled hostility towards an Asian Conference to one of willing and active co-operation. The Conference took place eventually in the spring of 1947.

Gandhiji was at first reluctant to participate in the Conference, strangely diffident about getting involved in an international movement. With Nehru's approval, I approached him to suggest that his absence from an Asian Conference meeting in New Delhi would be open to misunderstanding. He had his misgivings about being committed to decisions or conclusions with

* The text of the memorandum, together with the comments of Sir Mirza Ismail, Sir Ardeshti Dalal, Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer and the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, is reproduced in Appendix VII.

the back-ground of which he was not completely familiar. That, I pleaded, was not necessary; we would be content with a message from him to a plenary session of the Conference. He saw no objection to my suggestion and gave his blessing to the Conference in a memorable utterance.

A few weeks later, on Christmas night in 1945, Nehru and I sat after dinner in his Allahabad home until midnight, working out the details of the Conference. During the three years he had spent in Ahmednagar prison he had evolved some clear ideas on Asia's position in the post-war world. He visualised a federation of the countries of Southern and South-Eastern Asia with defence, foreign policy, trade and a few other subjects of common concern. It was not a move, he assured me, against Europe and the West, but only for the security of Asian countries. On that occasion I had a lengthy interview with him, which I published in full in *The Hindu* of Madras and in a summarised form in the *Manchester Guardian*.^{*} He was thinking in terms of a federation of the countries of South Asia as a possibility at the end of the Second World War. He was not sure at that time that the U. N. would succeed in eliminating imperialism and colonialism.

During the next eighteen months Nehru took an active part in organising the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi. As the date of the Conference was approaching, he asked me to persuade Gandhiji to take an equal interest. I was successful only to the extent of getting him to address the plenary session of the Conference amidst the picturesque ruins of *Purana Quila*.

Seldom have I heard Nehru speak in terms of such wisdom and far-seeing idealism as he did in his address to the Asian Relations Conference. He told that vast gathering:

Standing on this watershed which divides two epochs of human history and endeavour, we can look back on our long past and look forward to the future that is taking shape before our eyes. Asia, after a long period of quiescence, has suddenly become important again in world affairs...

A change is coming over the scene now and Asia is again

^{*} Extracts from the interview are given in Appendix VIII.

finding herself. We live in a tremendous age of transition and already the next stage takes shape when Asia takes her rightful place with the other continents. . .

We have no designs against anybody; ours is the great design of promoting peace and progress all over the world. For too long we of Asia have been petitioners in the Western courts and chancelleries. That story must now belong to the past. We propose to stand on our own feet and to co-operate with all others who are prepared to co-operate with us. We do not intend to be the playthings of others.

After independence, Nehru sent me on the Indian delegation to the U. N. General Assembly for five consecutive years. I dealt, as India's representative, with the colonial problems which came before the U. N. and its Committees—a subject close to Nehru's heart. In 1948, at the Paris session of the General Assembly, which Nehru addressed as India's Prime Minister, I sought an occasion for placing before him a proposal. After Gandhiji's tragic assassination early in that year, a large fund had been collected to perpetuate his memory. I said to Nehru in Paris (after having first scrutinised the memorandum of association and the programme of activities of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace) that two or three crores of rupees of the fund could appropriately be set aside for a similar Peace Foundation named after Gandhiji to function on a world basis.

Nehru's response was positive and immediate. From the External Affairs Ministry he thought he could provide a grant equal in amount to the interest on the Gandhi Peace Fund for calling periodical Peace Conferences in India under the auspices of such a Foundation. I did not get the same reaction however from some of the other leading members in India who were in charge of the fund. The proposal was, therefore, not pursued on the lines that I had suggested to Nehru.

My contacts with Prime Minister Nehru thereafter became frequent and touched many points. No human problem was too small or insignificant for him. The rehabilitation of refugees immediately after partition was a subject which engaged much

of his attention. I had placed before him a scheme for building cheap houses in townships like Faridabad.

In June of that year I wrote to the Prime Minister that special arrangements were necessary in Indian Universities for Indian students from abroad, particularly from East Africa. He promptly replied that he was perfectly prepared to write to the Chief Ministers of States about reservation of more seats for students from overseas, but he doubted if they could go far in this direction, since the pressure in India on Universities was great.

Shortly afterwards I made a passing reference in a debate on the External Affairs Ministry in the Lok Sabha in 1952 to the French and Portuguese possessions in India. In a personal letter subsequently I told the Prime Minister that I was distressed by the large-scale smuggling through Marmagoa and Pondicherry. A joint conference of the officials of the Ministries of External Affairs, Finance and Commerce could (I told him) devise an effective policy.

He replied :

We have considered this question of Goa on many occasions from the economic point of view. In the past it was felt that any steps that we might take would bring more distress on the Goans in India than on the Goans in Goa. However, I agree with you that the time has come for us to revise our policy.

I had taken a keen interest in the strengthening of Staff Councils, which had been established in the Central Secretariat to deal with numerous service problems. I wanted a joint meeting of all the Staff Councils to be addressed by the Prime Minister so as to infuse vitality into the Councils. I knew from talks with representatives of these Councils that they were deeply dissatisfied with the manner of their functioning. Also, I pointed out in a letter to the Prime Minister, there was need for a prompt settlement of pension claims of retired Government servants. There were several thousand cases of prolonged delays in coming to a decision.

Nehru who never failed to respond to such appeals, acted promptly in appointing a Committee with Vishnu Sahay (at that time the Cabinet Secretary) as its head to review the pro-

cedure governing the settlement and payment of pension claims, both at the Centre and in the States. The Committee, in fact, considered another relevant matter, though I had not directly raised it in my letter to the Prime Minister, namely, the settlement of pensions due to Government servants who had been on a temporary basis for several years. The report of the Committee gave considerable satisfaction to retired Government servants all over the country.

Shortly after I had ceased to be a Member of Parliament in 1960, there was a general strike of Government employees in the Central Secretariat. For some years I had attempted, in correspondence with Nehru, to have 'Whitley Councils' on the British model established for negotiating prompt settlement of service problems. The proposal had the strong backing of the Second Pay Commission. I congratulated him on the admirable tone of his broadcast to the strikers to resume work; but strikes by Government servants were practically unknown in the U. K. (I added) because of the existence of 'Whitley Councils'.

Nehru gave me the assurance, even while the strike was still in progress :

I am anxious that adequate machinery should be established for the settlement of any problems that might arise. I think you are right in saying that we have delayed this matter. As a matter of fact, some years ago, we referred a recommendation of the Pay Commission in regard to Whitley Councils and the like to a Committee for their report. We shall now expedite this matter.

In September, 1962, I accompanied C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) and R. R. Diwakar as a member of a delegation to Washington, New York and London on a goodwill mission sent by the Gandhi Peace Foundation, to strive for a treaty for the suspension of nuclear tests. Rajaji made such a deep impression on President Kennedy in the course of our talk with him at the White House that later the President remarked to one of his intimate advisers that his (Rajaji's) impact on him had proved to be one of the most civilising influences he had experienced after assuming office.

The reaction was more or less the same on the senior officials of the State Department in Washington and on the leaders of several delegations to the U. N. in New York, with all of whom he pleaded for the immediate acceptance of even a limited treaty, leaving underground tests for a separate agreement at a later stage.

Bearing this in mind, I wrote to Nehru in July 1963, suggesting that Rajaji should be sent as India's representative to the Geneva Disarmament Conference, and also to the U.N. General Assembly, as a special adviser on disarmament, including, of course, nuclear weapons. He said he had "carefully considered the suggestion and consulted some colleagues about it also. I do not think it will be advisable for us to request Rajaji to go to Geneva to represent Government in the Disarmament Conference. No one doubts Rajaji's great ability and his devotion to the cause of nuclear disarmament; but still, the reasons for his not being appointed as a representative of Government for this purpose are also obvious."

His last letter to me (from Dehra Dun) was written only three days before his death. I had asked him for a foreword to a five-volume study of the work of India's Constituent Assembly, which some of us had undertaken on a suggestion which had the warm support of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Nehru had told me in the previous year that this study should be of "enduring value". He repeated in his last letter to me how useful it would prove to students of the Indian Constitution. About writing a foreword, however, he could not promise it, but would give it a thought later in the year.

Of the very many tributes paid to Nehru, at different times in his career, the briefest—and the most striking—was the one attributed to Churchill. These two men had never met before and a meeting was arranged in London towards the end of 1949, when Nehru was on his way back home after his first trip to the U.S.A. It must have been an extraordinarily interesting scene, this meeting between the most stubborn opponent of India's freedom and its most uncompromising champion.

One of Sir Winston's first remarks, after the exchange of formalities, was (according to my informant), "I wish I had been with you in America to introduce you to her people."

“And what would you have said?”, Nehru is reported to have enquired, with a mixture of amusement and curiosity. “Just this”, came the answer from the former war-time Prime Minister of Britain, “here is a man without malice and without fear”.

What prompted Churchill thus to describe his distinguished visitor, one may infer from a remark he is said to have made to a friend much later. He had met Nehru after India had taken the decision to become a Republic, but continue her association with the Commonwealth, no longer labelled British. Nothing had impressed him more, he confessed, than that a man who had gone to prison nine times in his life to achieve complete independence for his country should have deliberately advised his countrymen, when the opportunity came to make a free choice, without any sort of external political pressure, to accept membership of the Commonwealth. Nehru's personal reaction to Churchill's remark is not recorded—nor is it relevant.

I have pondered frequently in retrospect over the strange career of our first Prime Minister. For twenty years he was an ardent crusader for India's complete freedom; more than once in that period when a settlement seemed possible on the basis of Dominionhood for India, he spurned every effort at a compromise, opposing even Gandhiji and Pandit Motilal Nehru. Yet he was magnanimous in victory, and advised free partnership with the former rulers.

When independence came to India, it was loaded with a number of problems of baffling magnitude and complexity. No man could have taken office as Prime Minister, for the first time in his life, in less propitious circumstances. A divided India, economically disabled by a long and exhausting war and torn by acute communal conflict, came into his charge.

The mood in which he took office was characteristic of the man. Accepting the Mountbatten plan in the summer of 1947 and describing it as another historic occasion when a vital change affecting the future of India was being proposed, Nehru said :

This announcement lays down a procedure for self-determination in certain areas of India. It envisages, on the one hand, the possibility of these areas seceding from India; on the

other, it promises a big advance towards complete independence; such a big change must have the full concurrence of the people before effect can be given to it, for it must always be remembered that the future of India can only be decided by the people of India and not by any outside authority, however friendly. These proposals will be placed soon before representative assemblies of the people for consideration.

Though the partition of India made Nehru sad, he hailed the dawn of independence on 15th August, 1947, as India's, "tryst with destiny". It was an hour-long speech by the new Prime Minister of India. Never before—or since—have I heard him speak with such moving earnestness and spontaneous eloquence. Outlining the faith that was in him he said :

These dreams are for India; but they are also for the world, for all nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom; so is prosperity now; and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

Partition, with its terrible after-math culminating in the assassination of Gandhiji, had multiplied the problems of the new Government a hundred-fold. Nevertheless, for seventeen years he laboured incessantly for the fulfilment of his dreams for India in the spirit of the above-quoted passage. In the early years of his Prime Ministership he received valuable help and support from Sardar Patel, who changed the face of India beyond recognition by the integration of the Princely States, an achievement for which posterity will ever remember him.

Nehru always seemed to me to be a somewhat lonely man. I have a picture of him which I cherish more than any other : it was taken from a strange angle on a memorable occasion. One sees only his back as he watched, with no one by his side, Gandhiji's ashes being immersed at the 'Sangham' at Allahabad, where the waters of the Ganga and the Jamuna mingle. What thoughts passed through his mind as the last remains of his Master dis-

appeared in the waters that winter's morning in 1948 one cannot even guess, because the face is not visible. But there is something deeply touching about that posture, standing erect facing all his problems, with the source of his life's inspiration reduced to a sacred memory.

Few outside the circle of his close associates probably knew the range and the intensity of his daily activities. Before eight in the morning he was ready to sign all the letters and notes dictated to his secretaries the previous night. Seldom did he leave his house without a group of villagers, who had come from far or near with petitions and representations, being given an opportunity to hand them over to him personally. From 9 a.m. to 6 p. m. or later followed interviews at the External Affairs Ministry to senior officials, diplomats, visitors and ministerial colleagues, the venue shifting to Parliament House during sessions of Parliaments after 11 a.m. Lunch and dinner nearly always meant a discussion with an important diplomat, or colleague, or a visiting delegation. In the late afternoon, there was probably a party meeting of the Congress Executive or a public function of some sort; or it might be a Cabinet meeting. Brief intervals between engagements gave him time to look through important telegrams and papers and to dictate replies. Every minute of the day was thus filled with purposeful activity.

After dinner one would imagine that the Prime Minister would have been too exhausted for any serious work. But not he: when the last of his guests had left, he returned to his study. And until midnight (or even later) he was busy reading reports from India's representatives in different capitals, dictating replies, dealing with urgent State matters that could not brook delay, passing orders on a petition from an obscure person in some corner of India, or writing a personal letter to a group of children in a distant land, who had asked him for the gift of an elephant or a message for their school magazine. By his bedside was a bunch of cuttings from periodicals and newspapers marked for his perusal before the light went out for the rest of the night.

This happened day after day and all the days of the year. How he obtained his astonishing vitality is a mystery—unless he drew

on the affection and goodwill of millions, not only in India but all over the world.

No man who had been through such vicissitudes in his long public career and figured in so many controversies as Nehru did could expect the verdict of history to acclaim his judgment in every instance to have been infallible. Estimates of this dynamic and warmly human personality must necessarily vary; but the best tribute to him and the one that will remain true for all time is Churchill's : "a man without malice and without fear".

Subhash Chandra Bose

Of all the stalwarts of India's freedom struggle, Subhash Chandra Bose came least under the influence of Gandhiji and his teaching. Subhash Bose stepped into the void in Bengal's political leadership created by C. R. Das's premature death in 1926, carrying with him the tradition of differing from Gandhiji, even on principles. If C.R. Das had broken away from Gandhiji on an item of comparative insignificance, *viz.* that he did not adopt Gandhiji's programme for the boycott of the legislatures, Subhash Bose went much further : for him the elimination of British Imperialism from India was an objective of such vital importance that the means adopted receded into the background as a matter of relatively little interest.

Early in life he was greatly influenced by the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and later of Aurobindo. Until politics and Indian freedom became an all-absorbing passion with him, he was moved in his youth by an intense interest in the varieties of religious experience.

"Why do I believe in Spirit?" Subhash asked, analysing his philosophical faith, and himself provided the following answer : "Because it is a pragmatic necessity. My nature demands it. I see purpose and design in nature; I discern an increasing purpose in my own life. I feel that I am not a mere conglomeration of atoms. I perceive, too, that reality is not a fortuitous combination of molecules. The world is a manifestation of Spirit, and just as Spirit is eternal so also is the world of creation. Crea-

tion does not and cannot end at any point of time. This view is similar to the Vaishnavite conception of Eternal Play (*Nitya Leela*). For me, the essential nature of reality is LOVE! LOVE is the essence of the Universe and is the essential principle in human life."

He went to Cambridge for higher education and passed the Indian Civil Service examination in 1920. But all the time he was preparing himself for a prominent role in the struggle against foreign domination in India and for a life of sacrifice and dedication. His high rank in the ICS examination came as a surprise to him, but he had already made up his mind not to accept the position in the Service and become part of the British bureaucracy in India. In deference to his family's wishes (including that of his brother Sarat Bose) he joined as a probationer and continued for seven months but he was continuously trying to persuade his family to let him resign. The sacrifices of C.R. Das and the example of Aurobindo Ghosh, whom he expected back in politics in a few years, were prominently before him. He took the final step in April 1921 and resigned from the Service.

At the Calcutta session of the Congress in December 1928, over which Pandit Motilal Nehru presided, the Independence League, with S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Bose as its main exponents, was a source of much concern to both Gandhiji and Pandit Motilal Nehru. Following a vigorous debate on the endorsement of the Nehru Report, a vote was taken on the issue of Dominion Status versus complete independence, the result of which seemed to be in doubt until the final stage of the counting. The opposition, led by Subhash Bose in favour of complete independence, seemed formidable, and the large number of votes cast against veteran leaders like Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru showed the rising strength of the extremist opinion. On a quip by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, in declaring the result, that in the process of voting some dead members had apparently come to life, Gandhiji delivered one of the sharpest rebukes I have heard him utter on standards of behaviour in public life.

There was, in fact, little in common between Gandhiji and Subhash Bose beyond their whole-hearted devotion to the cause of India's freedom. Non-violence—an article of faith with the one—was only a weapon for the other, to be used or discarded

according to the necessities of the situation. Through the thirties, until the eve of the Second World War, Subhas Bose found points of contact with the left-wing of the Congress. He was bitterly opposed to the 1935 British-imposed Constitution and to acceptance of office under any conditions.

In one respect, however, he was cast in a mould different from that of Jawaharlal Nehru. The latter's keen awareness of the danger to world peace from the growth of Fascism and Nazism in Europe left Subhash Bose completely unimpressed. No ideological inhibitions handicapped him in his search for collaborators to overthrow British Imperialism. On a visit to Europe just before the commencement of the Second World War, he made an unsuccessful attempt to secure Hitler's support for India's freedom movement. The Nazi leader was at that time in no mood to challenge the British Empire or even to weaken its hold on any part of the world. In *Mein Kampf* he had written with unconcealed scorn of his Indian admirers as "those Oriental mountebanks each one of whom claims to represent all his countrymen".

It was inevitable that Subhash Bose, with the heavy sacrifices that stood to his credit and with his radical views, should have the honour that had earlier gone to Jawaharlal Nehru—namely, the Presidentship of the Congress. The Haripura session (1938) was his acknowledged right, as it were. But Gandhiji was not happy about some of the behind-the-scenes activities reported to him from Bengal. The terrorist movement was showing signs of renewed life, dramatised by the unsuccessful attempt by a girl at point-blank range on the life of the Governor of the Province, Sir John Anderson. Anderson, with his background of experience of the Sinn Féin movement in Ireland, was firm in dealing with the Bengal terrorists.

Meanwhile, with another session of the Congress approaching at Tripuri in 1939, Subhash Bose was looking forward to a renewed term as its President. This time, however, the members of the Working Committee (including Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kripalani) made public declarations against the proposal. Gandhiji let it be known that Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was his choice for the Presidentship. Nevertheless, Subhash Bose won a keenly fought contest by the small margin of 95 votes.

Gandhiji's reaction was prompt and characteristic : Subhash Bose (he said) was not only entitled to congratulations on his triumph; but he had earned in addition the right to nominate his own Working Committee to form a homogeneous Cabinet. It was clear that Subhash Bose's victory was at the cost of the support of many of his former colleagues and—most significant of all—of Gandhiji. On the outbreak of the Second World War, he was one of the first against whom action was taken under the Defence of India Rules. After spending some time in detention he decided to warn the authorities that a fast unto death was imminent, unless his release was effected without delay. The Bengal Government took the risk (small as it appeared) of complying with his request, maintaining close surveillance on his movements and activities.

The mystery surrounding his escape from India, despite elaborate security restrictions in the early part of 1941 (apparently through Peshawar and Kabul to Berlin) has never been satisfactorily explained. This time he evoked a positive response from the Fuhrer who saw possibilities of developing new pressure against Britain and her Allies. Subhash Bose spent some time in Germany organising the Indian prisoners of war captured by the Germans, and gained valuable experience in the process.

With Japan's entry into the war, and after Pearl Harbour and her spectacular success in South-East Asia, it was felt that he would be more useful in this region and could take over from Rash Behari Bose* the responsibility of building up a new front against the British. After an adventurous submarine voyage of about 30 days in October 1943, Subhash Bose established the provisional Government of Azad Hind. The rapidity of Japan's advance through Malaya and Burma had led him to the belief that the initiative in the war was passing into the hands of Germany and its partners and that he could, with their assistance, play a valuable role in the release of India from British control.

* Rash Behari Bose left India in 1915, married a Japanese girl and became a Japanese citizen. He however continued to work for India. It was owing to his effort that a conference was held at Tokyo in March 1942, leading to the resolution to form an Indian National Army.

On assuming the command of the Indian National Army which he had formed in Malaya, he issued a proclamation in the course of which he observed :

This is for me a matter of joy and pride, because for an Indian there can be no greater honour than to be the Commander of India's army of liberation. But I am conscious of the magnitude of the task that I have undertaken and I feel weighed down with a sense of my responsibility. I pray that God may give me the necessary strength to fulfil my duty to India under all circumstances however difficult or trying they may be. I regard myself as the servant of 38 crores of my countrymen who profess different religious faiths.... It is only on the basis of undiluted nationalism and perfect justice and impartiality that India's army of liberation can be built up. We must weld ourselves into an army that will have only one goal, namely the freedom of India, and only one will, namely to do or die in the cause of India's freedom. When we stand, the Azad Hind Fauj has to be like a wall of granite; when we march, the Azad Hind Fauj has to be like a steam-roller.

In the course of a few weeks, Subhash Bose secured recognition for his provisional Government from several Powers : among them were Japan, Germany, Italy, and other regimes allied to them. From Nippon he received the assurance of "whole-hearted co-operation, so that the struggle for liberating India would ultimately be crowned with success". Thailand expressed through her Prime Minister "full sympathy with the high aspirations of the freedom-loving Indians".

The war with Britain, he had warned his troops, would be long and hard. At last, on 18th March, 1944, the I.N.A. crossed the Burma border and stepped on Indian soil in Manipur. It was a great moment in his life. The fight for India's liberation had actually commenced. With pride he addressed his soldiers :

Inspired by the righteousness of our cause, we have encountered the numerically superior and better equipped but heterogeneous and dis-united forces of the enemy and defeated

them in every battle. Our units, with their better training and discipline and unshakeable faith in Indian's freedom have established their superiority over the enemy whose morale deteriorated with its defeat. . . With their blood sacrificed, these heroes have established traditions which the future soldiers of free India shall have to uphold.

Just when an advance on Imphal was about to begin, Nature in one of her most perverse moods balked the I.N.A. of possible victory. Rain, torrential and unseasonable, converted the region into a quagmire. Retreat became inevitable and, under circumstances of increasing difficulties—shortage of supplies, harassment by American bombers etc—the I.N.A. fell back first on Mandalay, then on Rangoon and finally made for Bangkok.

The rest is a sad story of disillusionment and of hope turning to dust and ashes just as it was near fulfilment. Desertions became frequent and Subhash Bose felt compelled to issue an order for summary trial and death in all cases of cowardice and treachery. News reached him in August 1945 of Germany's collapse in Europe. Where could he turn next for help? Perhaps Russia, he thought, since until then it had remained neutral in the war against Japan. Moscow could be sounded tactfully through Japan, though he had misgivings about the response in view of his friendly relations with Hitler. He did not have to remain in suspense for long. With Japan's difficulties multiplying after Germany's collapse, Russia declared war against Nippon.

Every circumstance thus seemed to conspire against Subhash Bose. No longer was he an asset to the Japanese but a heavy liability. But even in adversity his courage did not desert him. In the final stage there were recriminations about the composition of the Indo-Japanese War Council. Other difficulties too were arising, and the Japanese, fighting for their own survival, had no thought to bestow on India's liberation.

The end came with tragic suddenness. A group of Japanese approached Subhash Bose and some of his close lieutenants somewhere in Malaya. A plane was in a near-by field (they assured him) ready to take off and he could have a seat. What was the destination? The reply was vague. Could one of his lieute-

nants accompany him? No, the plane (he was informed) was full, though actually some seats went empty. Taking faith in the future for his guide, he accompanied them, alone. A few days later a Japanese naval officer announced to his anguished friends, "Netaji is dead." So that no doubt might linger as to his meaning, he added, "His Excellency Subhash Chandra Bose is dead."

So a meteoric career ended, leaving behind a memory which will linger in the hearts of all his admirers and followers. Subhash Bose will be gratefully remembered by his countrymen for his passionate love of freedom and his dauntless courage.

The celebrated trial of three officers of the Indian National Army at Delhi's historic Red Fort in 1946, ending in their acquittal, was a vindication of Subhash Bose's heroic effort.

The three accused placed on trial for "waging war against the King" were Capt. Shah Nawaz Khan (1/14 Punjab Regiment); Capt. P. K. Sehgal (2/10 Baluch Regiment); and Lieut. Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon (1/14 Punjab Regiment)—all of them Indian Commissioned Officers. The defence was conducted by a number of lawyers led by Bhulabhai Desai.

B. N. Rau suggested two distinct lines of defence in a memorandum which he prepared for Bhulabhai Desai. The first was that, broadly speaking, when circumstances offer no choice except between two evils, it is not a crime to choose the lesser of the two. For instance, under Section 81 of the Indian Penal Code, the captain of a ship running down a boat containing two passengers in order to avoid running down another boat containing 30 commits no crime.

The situation in which these officers found themselves in 1942 and 1943 was most abnormal in character. Japan was advancing with lightning rapidity. Malaya had been evacuated. Singapore, regarded as almost impregnable, had surrendered under circumstances that were not fully disclosed. Burma was being evacuated. Even Madras was almost evacuated (in April, 1942) in panic. There were also rumours of plans for the evacuation of various other parts of India. Charges of discrimination during evacuation had been made because of special arrangements made for Europeans.

The question therefore arose : who was to protect Indian lives and Indian property in the areas evacuated or about to be evacuated? Protection was sorely needed from enemy violence and looting and—in Burma and Malaya—also from unruly elements of the local population. But there was another, even more pressing, need. Japan was threatening to send a large number of Indian prisoners of war to starvation and death in the South-West Pacific region unless they formed an I.N.A., and she had actually carried out the threat on some occasions. This kind of mass murder had to be stopped.

The I.N.A. had, therefore, to be formed for these two main purposes : (1) to prevent mass deportation and marooning of Indian POWs; and (2) to protect Indian lives and property in the territories evacuated or about to be evacuated by the forces of the Crown. But obviously such an organisation could not function—Japan would not have allowed it to function—unless it kept up at least an appearance of collaboration in her war effort. A minimum degree of collaboration was, therefore, found necessary—both in word and deed—hence the speeches and slogans. But even so, it may be noted that: (a) every opportunity was given to those who, on any ground, did not wish to go into action on the Japanese side, and (b) even in the speeches made, POWs joining the I.N.A. were told that they might have to fight against Japan if necessary. It is thus clear that collaboration was to be kept down to the minimum possible.

It must not be imagined—it would indeed be disingenuous to pretend—that (1) and (2) were the only motives that influenced the organisers. But they were the only motives of *legal significance*. The conduct of the accused was to be judged, not in the light of the circumstances existing in 1946, but in the light of those existing at that time.

The second line of defence suggested by B. N. Rau, was as follows. The charges against the accused were under the Indian Penal Code, but that Code must be read subject to the principles of international law whenever possible. For example, a Japanese, normally caught bombing any part of India, would be chargeable under the Indian Penal Code; but obviously if this was done during a war, he would be treated as a POW and so not chargeable.

After citing a number of cases (such as MacLeod vs. the United States and MacLeod vs. Attorney-General for New South Wales), it was argued that if, under the recognised principles of international law, the accused were POWs, the Indian Penal Code did not apply to them. Phillimore, a great legal authority, cited the case of General Lee in the war between England and the rebellious American colonies in 1776. General Lee was released because the American contention that he was entitled to be treated as a prisoner of war ultimately prevailed. Phillimore himself apparently considered Lee's temporary detention to be a 'melancholy example' of unwarranted severity.

There was another reason why the act could not be described as voluntary. The prisoners *believed* that their duty of allegiance to the Crown had ceased when they were formally handed over to the Japanese by Col. Hunt. They *thought* that they were from that time subject to the orders of the occupying Power. They might have been wrong in so thinking; but if they had honestly thought so, the point had a bearing on the question of *mens rea*; it would show that they had not *intentionally* committed any breach of allegiance to the Crown and that they had merely carried out what they considered to be the lawful orders of the occupying Power.

There is a widespread notion—not confined to laymen—that protection by the Crown and allegiance to the Crown go hand in hand, so that when the one ceases, so does the other. In a statement to the Press, Sir Hari Singh Gour had once said: "The theory of allegiance to the Crown postulates fulfilment of the Crown's duty towards its subjects of safety and protection, both of person and property. When on account of its defeat in war this protection is no longer possible, international law takes the course of *inter arma silent leges*—war suspends the law." The I.N.A. accused also believed so, particularly after Col. Hunt handed them over to the Japanese, and therefore their collaboration with Japan—so far as it went—was not a voluntary breach of allegiance to the King. If the accused were not 'deserters', the only ground for regarding them as beyond the pale of international law disappears and they were entitled to be treated as prisoners of war and not as ordinary criminals. Assuming for the moment that these young officers were technically rebels, nevertheless,

the circumstances were so peculiar that a general amnesty might well have been declared, especially after the war had been brought to a successful close.

Rebellion is an ugly word, but let us not forget that Washington was a rebel—fortunately for him, a successful one. At one time, the British view was that the Boer War was also a rebellion, since the Transvaal Republic was under the suzerainty of the Queen; in this view, General Smuts was a leader of the rebels. De Valera was a rebel. Michael Collins and his associates, with whom Lloyd George's Government (which included Sir Winston Churchill) concluded a treaty in December 1921, were all rebels. Papineau was the leader of a rebellion for self-government in Lower Canada in 1835. The revolt failed and Papineau became a refugee in the U.S.A.; but Canada obtained self-government in the end and Papineau's great-grandson died in action fighting on the Allied side in 1917, earning the M.C. for gallantry in 1915. In the American Civil War, the Confederate Army was an army of rebels, but after it had surrendered there was an amnesty; not a single officer or man was tried or punished.

It is of minor significance which of the above arguments finally prevailed with the court—the legal arguments or the appeal to statesmanship. The three accused were acquitted by the court at the end of the lengthy and sensational trial whose outcome was a fitting commemoration of the role of Subhash Bose in India's freedom struggle.

Sir Stafford Cripps

I came into contact with Sir Stafford Cripps for the first time in New Delhi in December 1939. He was at that time a private Member of the House of Commons, unattached to any political party. He seemed to me a genuine friend of India, keenly interested in the solution of her political problems, both immediate and long term.

At a press conference in New Delhi at which I was present, he made a statement to the effect that he had come to India after discussing with men having intimate knowledge of India possible solutions for the deadlock which had been caused by the resignation of the Congress Ministries from the Provinces in which they had held office from the summer of 1937. Before leaving London, he told the press conference that he had had discussions with Lord Hailey, Sir Findlater Stewart, and one or two other important officials of the India Office. He was in search of a solution to enable, as a first step, the resumption of office by the Congress Ministries.

At the end of the press conference, Cripps and I had a short discussion, in the course of which I told him about the efforts I had made to bring about a settlement. I referred to the suggestion I had made, through *The Hindu* and the *Manchester Guardian*, of a substantial advance within the framework of the 1935 Constitution. The acceptance of my suggestion would have resulted in the formation of an Executive Council consisting of India's national leaders functioning by convention, though not by sta-

tute, in a spirit of responsiveness to the Central Legislature. I also told Sir Stafford about the memorandum I had drawn up for the summoning of a Constituent Assembly or a National Convention at the end of the War as a long-term solution of India's problem. I explained to him that this memorandum was drawn up on the basis of my experience of the procedure adopted by the National Convention of 1922-23, of which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mrs. Annie Besant were joint sponsors. The memorandum had been revised by Sir B. N. Rau who was then in the Reforms Office of the Government of India. Cripps seemed to be greatly attracted by my suggestion and we met again the following day when I gave him the memorandum.

We discussed the contents of the memorandum, and he showed great interest in the proposals made. He retained a copy with him to be shown to Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru at Wardha where he was going on an invitation from the Congress Working Committee in the middle of December 1939. He suggested that I should also proceed to Wardha *via* Bombay where I would meet Mr. Jinnah and discuss with him if possible the contents of my memorandum.

Acting on Cripps' suggestion I went to Bombay and met Mr. Jinnah for such a discussion. His reaction was, to my agreeable surprise, somewhat favourable. He expressed his willingness to give serious attention to the points contained in the memorandum. On arrival at Wardha I communicated Mr. Jinnah's reaction to Cripps, who presumably had discussed it with Mahatma Gandhi and certainly with Pandit Nehru. At Wardha station, where Pandit Nehru and I saw him off on his way to Calcutta, Cripps, in bidding good-bye, asked Nehru to discuss the scheme in detail with me. It was a memorable three hours' discussion I had with Nehru that night, walking up and down under a full moon in Seth Jamnalal Bajaj's compound.

Cripps was shortly afterwards appointed British Ambassador to Moscow, where he remained until the early part of 1942. Early in March of that year, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, announced in London his intention to send Cripps (now Lord Privy Seal and a member of the war Cabinet) on behalf of the

British Cabinet, with concrete proposals for the solution of the Indian problem.

Cripps arrived in New Delhi on 23rd March. Three days before his arrival, at a party given by a high-placed Indian official, the following reference was made to the Cripps Mission within my hearing. Said a British official : "Isn't it comic that Cripps of all people should be sent to India to settle the Indian problem?" An Indian official replied : "Not comic; there is a plan behind it. Cripps is ambitious and has his eye on the Prime Ministership. If the mission fails, his political career will suffer." A second British official (connected with the Indian States) commented : "How can he succeed? Will the Muslims, the Princes and the Depressed Classes ever accept the plan he is bringing?"

The details of the Cripps offer were not revealed in advance to the members of the Government of India, not even to the Governors of Provinces. The Executive Council was taken into confidence at a special meeting a day after his arrival, and later the contents of the document were divulged to the Governors of Provinces who visited New Delhi.

One of the Indian Executive Councillors told me what he thought of the proposals. He said: "We all heaved a sigh of relief when Cripps revealed them to us last night. I said to a colleague next to me, these will never be accepted by the Congress."

The Executive Council was resentful that it had not been taken into confidence until almost the commencement of the negotiations. Through all the following weeks, members of the Council saw Cripps but once during the negotiations and collectively again only after the final breakdown. They were very touchy on this point, particularly after their experience of the Chiang Kai-Sheks' visit to New Delhi. The Chinese visitors had given Nehru and his sister, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, several hours of their time every day, and dismissed members of the Executive Council with a fifteen minutes' interview each.

The atmosphere in India did not seem to be favourable from any point of view for a positive settlement. Sir Frederick Puckle, the Secretary of the Information Department, told a press conference, before Cripps' arrival, that he (Cripps) would discuss the political problem with Indian leaders, and the military situation.

with the Viceroy and General Wavell. He asked correspondents to say that the Viceroy, far from resenting this arrangement, was 'delighted', because for a few weeks at least he would be free from the preoccupations of the political problems, and could give all his time to the prosecution of the war.

Cripps, after spending a few days in Viceroy's House, moved into a separate residence (3, Rajendra Prasad Road) to meet Indian political leaders by himself without the Viceroy being present. Lord Linlithgow must have greatly resented the procedure which virtually ignored him. After Cripps had returned to London, I was invited to an interview with the Viceroy, when he discussed with me the contents of the cable I had sent to the *Manchester Guardian* in the course of which I had observed that with greater cooperation from the Viceroy, Cripps might have been successful in his Mission. With obvious irritation, Lord Linlithgow said to me : "You are old enough to remember the time of the Montagu-Chelmsford tour of India. Did Mr. Montagu ever see any Indian leaders without the Viceroy being present on every occasion?"

The reception on the official side that Cripps had in New Delhi was, from the start, anything but cordial. After the first press conference on 23rd March, he took me aside for a moment and said, "So you think I will succeed?" I replied : "It all depends on the nature of the proposals; but India is anxious for a settlement and the press will give you every support."

I met him again on the following day, and had a long discussion, in the course of which we reviewed the situation in all its bearings. At the outset I told him that there was a great deal of race feeling in India on account of the treatment meted out to Indian evacuees from Malaya and Burma. These evacuees had gone to all parts of India, and with them had spread accounts of neglect and even ill-treatment. I pointed out that such race feeling had not existed in India since the days of Amritsar in 1919. Just at this juncture, when the Japanese were using the race argument prominently in their broadcasts, the existence of this feeling in India appeared to me to be dangerous beyond measure.

We then turned to the political situation. I said that it had changed fundamentally since his last visit to India two years

earlier. At that time the Congress seemed to attach much more importance to a declaration of India's position after the war, than to interim arrangements at the Centre and in the provinces. Now the emphasis was almost entirely on the present and not on the post-war future. There should be an immediate and complete transfer of power to a provisional National Government.

I was asked by him what I meant by the phrase 'National Government'. I answered that within the framework of the existing Constitution a great deal could be done to alter the character and functions of the Executive Council and also of the Legislature. As I read the Act, there was nothing to prevent the Legislature from being made an elected body, though the Executive Councillors and Parliamentary Secretaries (whose appointment I recommended) would technically be officials nominated by the Governor-General. Nevertheless, the two Houses of the Central Legislature could be made, in reality, almost completely elected bodies by rules under the Act. I also said that the Governor-General should choose members of the Executive Council in consultation with the leaders of the two biggest groups, the Congress and the Muslim League, if they came in. The Governor-General could establish a convention of consulting the Executive Council even in regard to matters in his discretion.

I also made a passing reference to the Princely States and said that the National Defence Council could be reconstituted on the basis of Provinces' and States Governments' representation, without a non-official element. Another suggestion I made was that in the formation of the Executive Council the choice need not be limited only to British India but could be extended to the States.

The question then arose about Defence. General Wavell had told India two weeks before that the defence of the country rested on three factors : (1) planes, (2) guns and tanks, and (3) civilian morale. Of these Wavell regarded the last as the most important. Cripps thought there might be serious difficulties in the way of transfer of defence to an Indian Defence member just then, during a critical phase of the war. Would there be interference with the movements of troops, for example? I replied that if a suitable Indian was appointed, there need be no apprehension. No Indian Defence member would be so foolish as to

interfere with the movement or disposition of armed forces during a war. He would certainly concern himself with recruiting, and do his best to obtain young men of character and courage and enterprise for the defence forces; he would ascertain if there was sufficient equipment for India's defence forces and whether production was receiving adequate attention. In fact, not only would he not hinder the Commander-in-Chief, but he would prove to be of positive and great assistance to him in a variety of ways. I suggested, therefore, that the problem should be looked at differently : how best to secure fullest cooperation between the Defence member and the Commander-in-Chief.

I asked him to look at the problem from another standpoint : what were Indian leaders to tell the country—that while India's youth must be prepared to make sacrifices, even to lay down their lives in this war, the British were not prepared to trust them to the extent of appointing an Indian Defence Member, in spite of assurances that there would be no interference with the authority of the Commander-in-Chief? That point, I stressed, had a great psychological value at that juncture. The Japanese were making attractive offers of independence to India, which a great many people doubtless believed. What would be the strength of an appeal by Indian leaders to India's people not to attach any importance to such promises—unless they could say, "We have already achieved almost complete freedom." Cripps expressed his gratitude to me for putting the matter so clearly to him.

Cripps created an excellent atmosphere for the reception of his proposals. On March 23, he broadcast :

We believe that a generally acceptable line of practical action can be laid down now, and that thus the main obstacle to India's full co-operation in her own defence will have been removed. We feel confident that with the political atmosphere thus clarified, the leading political organisations will be enabled to put forward their maximum effort in preserving their country from the brutalities of aggression.

I want to play my part as a member of the War Cabinet in reaching a final settlement of the political difficulties which have long vexed our relationship. Once these questions

are resolved, and I hope they may be quickly and satisfactorily resolved, the Indian peoples will be enabled to associate themselves fully and freely, not only with Great Britain and the other Dominions, but with our great Allies, Russia, China and the United States of America, so that together we can assert our determination to preserve the liberty of the peoples of the world.

Two days later, he saw the Congress President, and handed over to him a copy of the proposals. The conversations have not been recorded, but Maulana Azad in reply to the point made by Cripps that the formation of a National Government was sprung upon him by Congress leaders in their interview on April 9 as a last-minute surprise, said :

It is difficult to appreciate the point that the Congress leaders waited till the last moment to demand the formation of a National Government. The final interview with them took place on April 10. But the resolution of the Working Committee was ready on April 2, and communicated to him without delay. It was at his request that publication was withheld until the end of the negotiations. Gandhiji was present at the discussions preceding the adoption of the resolution and left Delhi obviously dissatisfied on April 4. The Congress Party's main criticisms of the British offer were : (1) the Cabinet's proposals related principally to the future, upon the cessation of the hostilities; and they suffered from two serious defects, namely (a) denial of the right of representation to 90 million people of the Indian States, and (b) the novel principle of non-accession of a province which, in the Congress view, was 'a severe blow to the conception of the unity of India and an apple of discord likely to generate trouble among the provinces'; (2) the vagueness of the *interim* arrangements, and the absence of an assurance of vital changes in the present structure of the Constitution.

The Working Committee thus explained its position : It has been made clear that the defence of India will in any event remain under British control. At any time defence is

a vital subject; during war time it is all important and covers almost every sphere of life and administration. To take away defence from the sphere of responsibility at this stage is to reduce that responsibility to a farce and nullity, and to make it perfectly clear that India is not going to be free in any way and her Government is not going to function as a free and independent government during the pendency of the War. An essential and fundamental pre-requisite for the assumption of responsibility by the Indian people in the present is their realisation as a fact that they are free and are in charge of maintaining and defending their freedom. What is most wanted is the enthusiastic response of the people which cannot be evoked without the fullest trust in them and the devolution of responsibility on them in the matter of defence. It is only thus that even at this grave eleventh hour it may be possible to galvanize the people of India to rise to the height of the occasion.

Cripps had, at the start, placed a generous interpretation on the implications of the Cabinet's offer: a National Government like that in Britain, with the Viceroy occupying the position of the King. Congress leaders were impressed with the liberal character of the offer on the civil side of the administration, though their resolution (of April 2) complained of the absence of any vital change in the structure of the Government. But they were anxious, for the reasons set forth in the resolution, to secure a real measure of power over Defence.

Another point must be remembered. The proposals were released to the press in India on March 29. Explaining the proposals to the press, Cripps said that the object was to give the fullest measure of government to the Indian people consistent with the possibilities of the Constitution which could not be changed till the end of the war. But he did not rule out some small changes with regard to the composition of the Executive Council, particularly the elimination of the condition that there should be three Service members of at least ten years' standing. He added, "the intention of the document as far as possible, subject to the reservation of Defence, is to put power into the hands of

Indian leaders". At the same time, he made it clear that "the scheme goes through as a whole or is rejected as a whole".

The resolution of the Congress was ready on April 2, and handed over to Cripps on that day. But the negotiations continued. Defence (to which the Working Committee attached the greatest importance) was the first and main obstacle. On April 4, the Congress leaders met General Wavell and discussed the situation with him.

A great deal was said by Cripps later in London to suggest that Gandhiji after leaving Delhi directed the Congress Working Committee to reject his offer. Why Gandhiji's view should have commanded greater respect from Congress leaders *after* his departure than when he was there is an unexplained point.

Col. Johnson, President Roosevelt's personal envoy, had arrived in New Delhi on 3rd April. I saw him at Cochin House, the headquarters of the American Mission in New Delhi, within a few hours of his arrival. He was most friendly and cordial and spoke of the valuable part journalists sometimes played in America from behind the scenes in facilitating agreements. A settlement of the Indian problem, he said very frankly, was essential for success in the war which America, not Britain (he asserted), was really fighting. America was anxious to see China and India occupy dominant places in Asia in the post-war era. The question arose whether and how he could help.

I gave Johnson the main features of the crisis which had developed over the defence provision in the Cripps offer. His immediate intervention, I suggested, was desirable to avert a complete deadlock.

"Can I see Nehru?" he asked me, "at once, if possible?" Johnson was staying at Viceroy's House with Lord Linlithgow.

"Today," I said, "might be difficult, and certainly not at Viceroy's House."

"Perhaps tomorrow?" he queried.

"No, better today," I told him.

Johnson offered to go to Nehru's residence, if necessary. That I ruled out as impracticable, with the American flag flying on the bonnet of his car; success would depend on the utmost secrecy

and there would always be journalists hovering around Nehru's house.

For the rest of the time that I was with him, I gave Johnson an account of the Congress leaders' views and general attitude towards the war. Nehru would have been co-operative on the basis of a firm promise of full freedom at the end of the war, and his co-operation might have meant India's active participation in its prosecution. Gandhiji, with his creed of non-violence, of course, viewed the situation from a different standpoint. He did not believe in making a conditional offer of support to Britain in her fight with Germany; his support would have been moral, not active. It was a baffling problem for men like Nehru, but I was sure that with the support of his colleagues, Sardar Patel and Rajagopalachari, he would have had his way, if Churchill had been a little more accommodating.

Johnson seemed interested in my summing-up of the situation. "About two things the President is keen," he said finally: "Will India agree (of course with a settlement that would satisfy Nehru and his friends) never to make a separate peace with Japan ahead of all the other Allies; and, secondly, will the Hindus be just, in a settlement, to the Muslims and the Untouchables?"

On both these points I felt I could, without hesitation, indicate Nehru's willingness to agree without any sort of reservation. I was not aware until that morning that President Roosevelt attached such vital importance to India's immediate freedom as part of the grand strategy for winning the war. I felt grateful that it was given to me to bring Johnson and Nehru together. Out of that meeting, I felt, might emerge a solution of India's difficulties with Roosevelt's help.

From Johnson I went straight to Nehru and urged him to go to Cochin House that same afternoon for a frank talk with the President's envoy. I briefly summarised Johnson's views and stressed Roosevelt's anxiety and determination to see an immediate settlement with India. Nehru's first reaction was one of hesitation: could he commit himself to meeting Johnson without first consulting the Congress President Azad and all his colleagues? I begged him to see the advantage of getting America's full backing for India's freedom movement. There was no time to be

lost, with the deadlock over defence threatening to wreck all negotiations. Nehru made up his mind quickly and, in order to avoid publicity, agreed to use my car for going to Cochin House in the afternoon.

All went well, and for about two hours Nehru and Johnson had a full and frank discussion of the Indian problem in all its aspects. Meanwhile, his colleagues of the Congress Working Committee were making frantic enquiries all over Delhi to ascertain Nehru's movements.

What the sequel to this discussion might have been one cannot say, if the *Statesman's* representative had not, by the merest accident, traced Nehru to Cochin House. Sensing that some big news was in the making, he waited patiently outside until the talk was over and rushed to his office to issue a special edition of the paper that evening to announce the Johnson-Nehru talks.

That blasted all hopes of an informal and quiet approach by Johnson to facilitate a settlement. The premature disclosure of his meeting with Nehru greatly increased the complexities of the problem. Churchill was not going to lend colour to the inevitable impression that Britain was yielding on India to American pressure—the Prime Minister who had said, shortly after assuming office, "I have not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."

Col. Johnson's intervention following his interview with Pandit Nehru resulted in a formula which he published as his proposal : (1) the appointment of an Indian Defence Member who would hand over such functions to the Commander-in-Chief (to be designated War Member) as were not retained by himself; (2) a list of agreed subjects to be prepared for administration by the Defence Member.

Whether the Viceroy or Cripps knew about it, before Col. Johnson and Nehru met, I don't know. Cripps himself, after the failure of his mission and his return to Britain, during a speech he made in the House of Commons on April 28, explained that Col. Johnson's first interview with the Congress leaders was arranged in consultation with the Viceroy and in accordance with his advice. He said :

On my suggestion, and in accordance with his own personal desire to be of any assistance that he could, he had other interviews which were of great help in clarifying the situation. At no time did he act otherwise than in a purely personal capacity, and he, like two or three of my good Indian friends, merely did his best to give what help he could to the parties. I am personally most grateful to him, and I am sure that leaders of Congress are similarly so. But I wish to make it abundantly clear that there was no question of any American intervention, but only the personal help of a very able American citizen.

The background of the Cripps negotiations should be borne in mind: a radical and sincere friend of India coming with proposals enjoying the unanimous backing of the War Cabinet; America determined (as the Congress leaders were encouraged to believe) to seek a satisfactory settlement through Col. Johnson who was obviously impressed with Nehru's point of view and the reasonableness of the Congress demand; the Japanese advancing through Malaya and Burma and preparing to attack India.

After a good deal of discussion, Cripps wrote to Maulana Azad, on April 7, that the British Government "would do their utmost to meet the wishes of the Indian people and to demonstrate their complete trust in the cooperative efforts of the two peoples, British and Indian, which they hope may reinforce the defence of India. They also appreciate the force of the arguments that have been put forward as to the necessity of an effective appeal to the Indian peoples for their own defence."

Cripps proposed, on behalf of the Cabinet, the following formula :

- (a) The Commander-in-Chief should retain a seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council as 'War Member' and should retain his full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India, subject to the control of His Majesty's Government and the War Cabinet, upon which body a representative Indian should sit with equal powers in all matters relating to the defence of India. Member-

ship of the Pacific Council would likewise be offered to a representative Indian.

- (b) An Indian representative member would be added to the Viceroy's Executive, who would take over those sections of the Department of Defence, which could organizationally be separated immediately from the Commander-in-Chief's War Department and which were specified in an annexure. In addition, this member would take over the Defence Co-ordination Department which was directly under the Viceroy, and certain other important functions of the Government of India which did not fall under any of the other existing departments and which were also specified under head (ii) of the annexure.

Cripps added that this formula, if it proved acceptable to the Congress and "other important bodies of Indian opinion", would enable the Viceroy "to embark forthwith upon the task of forming the new National Government in consultation with the leaders of Indian opinion".

Negotiations continued thereafter until April 10, when Maulana Azad, in the course of a final letter to Cripps, explained the Congress point of view : "We cannot accept them (the long range proposals) as suggested." At the same time he added, "the ultimate decision... would be governed by the changes made in the present". Elaborating this point, the letter went on :

The over-riding problem before all of us, and more especially before all Indians, is the defence of the country from aggression and invasion. The future, important as it is, will depend on what happens in the next few months and years. We were, therefore, prepared to do without any assurances for this uncertain future, hoping that through our sacrifices in the defence of our country we would lay the solid and enduring foundations for a free and independent India. We concentrated, therefore, on the present.

Regarding proposals for the present, the criticism was that they were vague and incomplete,

except in so far as it was made clear that His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the full responsibility for the defence of India. These proposals, in effect, asked for participation in the tasks of today with a view to ensure 'the future freedom of India'. Freedom was for an uncertain future, not for the present; and no indication was given in clause (e) of what arrangements or governmental and other changes would be made in the present.

On Defence, the Congress pleaded that without control over it a National Government could function only in a very limited field.

The chief function of a National Government must necessarily be to organize Defence both intensively and on the widest popular basis and to create a mass psychology of resistance to an invader. Only a National Government could do that, and only a Government on whom this responsibility was laid. Popular resistance must have a national background, and both the soldier and the civilian must feel that they are fighting for their country's freedom under national leadership.

It is necessary to examine in some further detail the Congress attitude towards defence.

The question (said the letter) was one not of just satisfying our national aspirations, but of effective prosecution of the war and fighting to the last any invader who set foot on the soil of India. On general principles, a National Government would control Defence through a Defence Minister, and the Commander-in-Chief would control the armed forces and would have full latitude in the carrying out of operations connected with the war. An Indian National Government should have normally functioned in this way. We made it clear that the Commander-in-Chief in India would have control of the armed forces and the conduct of operations and other matters connected therewith. With a view to arriving at a settlement, we were prepared to accept certain limitations on the normal

powers of the Defence Minister. We had no desire to upset in the middle of the war the present military organization or arrangements. We accepted also that the higher strategy of the war should be controlled by the War Cabinet in London which would have an Indian member. The immediate object before us was to make the Defence of India more effective, to strengthen it, to broadbase it on the popular will, and to reduce all red tape, delay and inefficiency from it. There was no question of our interfering with the technical side. One thing, of course, was of paramount importance to us : India's safety and defence. subject to this primary consideration, there was no reason why there should be any difficulty in finding a way out of the present impasse in accordance with the unanimous desire of the Indian people, for in this matter there are no differences amongst us.

Congress leaders were not satisfied with the classification of subjects for administration by the Defence and War Members respectively. They described it as 'a revealing list', assigning to the Indian Defence Member 'relatively unimportant subjects'. Nevertheless, they continued the negotiations in the hope that when the picture was completed, it would represent a substantial measure of advance, particularly in the field of civil administration.

In the final stages of the negotiations, however, the Congress leaders were disappointed with the explanations given by Cripps. Maulana Azad revealed :

You had referred both privately and in the course of public statements to a National Government and a 'Cabinet' consisting of 'Ministers'. These words have a certain significance and we had imagined that the new Government would function with full powers as a Cabinet with the Viceroy acting as a constitutional head. But the new picture that you placed before us was really not very different from the old, the difference being one of degree and not of kind. The new Government could neither be called, except vaguely and inaccurately, nor could it function as a National Government. It would just be the Viceroy and his Executive Council with the Vice-

roy having all his old powers. We did not ask for any legal changes but we did ask for definite assurances and conventions which would indicate that the new Government would function as a free government the members of which act as members of a Cabinet in a constitutional government. In regard to the conduct of the war and connected activities, the Commander-in-Chief would have freedom, and he would also act as War Minister.

The Congress leaders were informed that the question of suitable conventions could be discussed at a later stage with the Viceroy (though that stage was never reached for no fault of theirs). It was pointed out to them that resignation was always a possibility to enforce a popular decision. But they rejected the suggestion as an inappropriate approach. They wanted the Government to proceed by agreement, not by threats of conflict and deadlock.

The question may be asked, was it necessary for the Congress leaders to demand in advance certain assurances from the Viceroy? Under the Constitution, he was bound to accept the decisions of a majority of his Executive Council, unless such acceptance was likely to imperil the safety or tranquility of the country or any part of it. No Viceroy would have lightly set aside majority decisions and risked conflicts, especially in the middle of a war.

But the Congress was faced with a real difficulty. Five years earlier, in 1937, the point had arisen whether the Congress should form Ministries in the seven Provinces in which it had obtained substantial majorities at the general elections held at the beginning of that year. The Ministries were responsible under the Government of India Act to the Legislatures, and they were constituted as single-party Governments. Even under those circumstances, the Congress had decided to ask for certain assurances that the Governors, through resort to their special powers, would not stand in the way of their Ministers carrying out their programmes.

The Congress argument in the final stages of the Cripps negotiations may broadly be stated thus : we asked for assurances from Governors five years ago despite the fact that (a) the Ministries

were responsible to the Legislatures; and (b) the Congress *alone* would form the Cabinets. Those assurances were given by the Viceroy, with the support of Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India. But here, at the Centre, there was no responsibility to the Legislature, the Viceroy being supreme; and no party majority in the Executive, let alone a party Cabinet. Therefore, the case in favour of assurances being given was immeasurably stronger.

The Viceroy possessed vast powers. Mr. Churchill, when in the Opposition, had described them in 1934 as such that they might well be "the envy of Mussolini". The Viceroy was not only Governor-General as in the Dominions : he was, besides, his own Prime Minister and Foreign Minister; he could, sometimes acting with an Executive Councillor, but sometimes alone, take decisions in the name of the Government of India; he represented the King in the capacity of Crown Representative; and there were several other matters 'in his discretion' regarding which he need not consult the Executive Council.

Moreover, during the Cripps negotiations, certain Members of the Executive Council had intimate talks with one or two leading members of the Congress Working Committee and had pointed out that the autocracy of the Viceroy needed some checks. There was no doubt that Lord Linlithgow had interpreted the Constitution in a narrow, illiberal way, almost always to his own advantage, and unduly limited the powers and authority of the Executive Council.

So far as the Congress leaders were concerned, they felt that in demanding these assurances, they were relying on their own experience five years earlier in the Provinces, fortified by first-hand knowledge of the actual working of the Executive Council on the part of some of the present members. And after all, such assurances having been given in the Provinces could be repeated at the Centre. Another point was that if they did not demand them, the All-India Congress Committee would have been entitled to an explanation from the leaders for their omission.

In a final review of the picture as presented, the Congress leaders felt : we have been very moderate in our demands; in regard to defence, we have asked for much less than what a Dominion enjoys; we have the powerful support of America through

Col. Johnson who has already given evidence of his liberal approach to our problems; therefore, even an initial refusal by Sir Stafford Cripps in regard to transfer of power on the civil side need not be taken too seriously, particularly after the generous intentions expressed by him in the earlier stages.

Right up to the last moment, there was optimism among Congress leaders that there would be a settlement. But misgivings were expressed on the official side in Delhi. On April 8, an Executive Councillor told me that Congress leaders were only manoeuvring for position and had no intention of coming into the Government. On the following day a report appeared in the press that Lord Halifax had announced in a speech in Washington the breakdown of the Delhi negotiations.

Cripps was showing signs of weariness. There were indications of an early summer and he found the temperature of Delhi disagreeably high. He was also anxious about developments in England. He asked me more than once if the Congress leaders were really keen on a settlement. I told him that while I could not generalise, I was certain that Azad, Nehru, Rajagopalachari and that section which they represented were anxious for one. I asked him repeatedly if he could not bring Rajagopalachari into the discussions. He said he would have had no objection; but it was for the Working Committee to send him. I had suggested on an earlier occasion, and repeated in my final talk with him, that he should summon together six or seven of the men he had been seeing separately—not only Congress leaders, but Jinnah, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Rajagopalachari and Ambedkar—and reach a general agreement. He gave me the impression he had it in his mind.

The last time I saw Cripps was on April 9. Events moved very quickly from that date. On April 10, I was informed by one of his Secretaries that the breakdown seemed final, the Congress leaders had rejected everything and Cripps was bitterly disappointed. I urged his Secretary, whom I saw, to request Cripps to postpone his departure by a few days because a settlement, once almost in sight, could not be so difficult to reach. In any event, I said, it would be tactful not to announce a final breakdown,

but merely to say that certain new points had arisen necessitating a personal discussion with the British Cabinet.

I was afraid that the effects of a failure might further complicate the situation. Japanese planes had bombed, in that week, two of India's coastal towns on the Madras coast and also Colombo. British losses in a naval encounter in the Indian Ocean had been heavy. But for some reason Cripps was not willing to stay on.

He left Delhi by air on April 12. Before going he broadcast to India giving the reasons for his failure. The effect was devastating. He blamed the Congress leaders for the breakdown and gave two reasons which no one who had followed the negotiations with care could appreciate : (1) that they had demanded an immediate change in the Constitution, a point (he said) raised at the last moment; (2) that they had asked for a true National Government untrammelled by any control by the Viceroy or the British Government. He interpreted the second point as a system of Government "responsible to no Legislature or electorate, incapable of being changed and the majority of whom would be in a position to dominate large minorities". He went on to say that the minorities would never accept such a position, nor could the British Government consent to a breach of its pledge to the minorities.

The Congress point of view was very different. Explaining the cause of the breakdown, Mr. Rajagopalachari said :

We were proceeding all along under an impression that the National Government to be set up would be a Cabinet functioning as in a constitutional government, that is to say, the Governor-General would accept the advice of Ministers and that the only reservation was the authority of the Commander-in-Chief and of the British War Cabinet, but we were aghast when we were told that all the new Members of the Government would only function like the present Executive Council members and not as Ministers in a constitutional government. When we protested, we were told that we could threaten to resign and otherwise use our strength against the Governor-General and the Secretary of State for India, but there was to be no agreed understanding on the .

subject to prevent such conflicts. On this single issue the negotiations finally broke.

The negotiations did not reach the state when the composition or the manner of the formation of the National Government were to be discussed. The whole thing broke on an issue which was not understood by anyone as having anything to do with the communal problem.

Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad made similar statements, expressing astonishment that Cripps should have thrown no them the responsibility for the breakdown.

Looking back over that period, one can point to many things which made a settlement difficult, almost impossible. The personal factor loomed very large. It was very clear that Cripps' procedure of seeing the Indian leaders without the Viceroy being present was greatly resented. The Viceroy said to me that he had offered such loyal cooperation to Cripps as he could from the outside; but that he could not intervene in the way I suggested (about his power of veto), because that point was never put to him! The reference to Montagu not seeing Indian leaders in 1917 without the Viceroy also being present was extremely significant.

Secondly, did Louis Johnson's intervention help or complicate the situation? Did Cripps really welcome it, or did he feel embarrassed that Johnson should have come right into the negotiations? Thirdly, would Nehru have been quite so firm in his demands, if in his many talks with Johnson he had not felt encouraged to think that America would insist upon a settlement by agreement? Jinnah's opposition, Johnson was from the beginning inclined to regard as a minor obstacle. If Nehru and the British could come to terms, he told me several times, Jinnah could be brought round by the British in half an hour.

Apart from this, the Executive Council was in no mood to be helpful. I saw, later, a memorandum prepared by some of the Indian members in which they complained in strong language about having been ignored by Cripps throughout the period of the negotiations. They felt that their prestige had been undermined, and Cripps had shown no consideration for the manner in which

they had at a critical moment come to the assistance of the Viceroy.

Then there were the Princes. Some of them were disappointed that the Cripps scheme would not permit the States to form a Dominion of their own; and also that they could not, after joining the Indian Union, retain direct relations with the British Government. Two Princes saw Cripps by themselves, and were told by him in effect: "The British will quit India after the war; why don't you (Princes) make up with Gandhi and the Congress?" The conversation and its sequel were conveyed to me by a Minister of one of these Princes. Two of them went to the Viceroy, it seems, and wanted a report sent at once to the Prime Minister. The Viceroy asked for a written record of the conversation. The two Princes considered on reflection that this might be a risky undertaking, particularly as they were warned by their advisers that Cripps might one day be Britain's Prime Minister.

It was apparent that Cripps had not been entirely tactful in his handling of the situation in Delhi. Congress leaders he alienated by making unfounded charges in his final broadcast, and non-Congress elements he made no attempt at any time to win over. The officials were never his friends. He made the position worse by varying his explanations for the breakdown. In Delhi he said that the Congress asked for constitutional changes and majority rule in the Executive. That was promptly denied. Later, he said that Gandhiji had raised the issue of violence and non-violence. Later still (after Gandhiji's arrest) he suggested that he sabotaged the negotiations after leaving Delhi on April 4. That was categorically denied by Rajagopalachari who was in the Working Committee from the beginning to the end of the discussions. I had also a report from a British friend of Gandhiji's (who spent a day at Sewagram with him in July) that Gandhiji definitely said he had no communication with the Working Committee after leaving Delhi.

While these charges were made from the British side, there were suggestions, on the other hand, that Cripps' instructions were altered in the final stages and therefore he could not carry out the promises he had made earlier. Whether this was true or not, no one can say with authority. Johnson asked me, soon

after Cripps' departure, whether I had heard that Cripps' attitude definitely changed after he had received a cable from Churchill on April 7.

Circumstantially, however, there was a good deal to support the suggestion that Cripps was not as free to negotiate at the end as he was at the beginning. Churchill's first announcement made it quite plain that Cripps alone would discuss the political situation with the Indian leaders. A week after his arrival in Delhi, Cripps told a press conference that he would stay for two months in India if necessary (with the Cabinet's permission), and put through the settlement in all details. When there was a hitch over Defence, he brought the Congress leaders and General Wavell together for a discussion. But in regard to the Viceroy's power of veto, the point over which the breakdown occurred, he would not have a similar discussion in the presence of the Viceroy.

I was told as a press correspondent that no suggestion of interference with Cripps' freedom of negotiations would be permitted in my cables. It was significant, however, that Cripps found it necessary to deny at a press conference in the second week of his stay in Delhi, that any Generals or high officials had threatened resignation, or that the Viceroy was making difficulties. Despite the denial, the report persisted that he was not having things his own way and could not agree to anything which had not the approval also of the Viceroy and of General Wavell.

Leaving aside these reports, it was beyond dispute that Cripps did use the terms 'National Government' and 'Cabinet' in the early stages; he had talked of the abolition of the India Office and the removal of the three service members of the Executive Council. Maulana Azad referred in his letter to the "growing deterioration" in the atmosphere as the negotiations proceeded, Cripps "explaining away" these earlier promises.

It is on record that when Cripps left London with the scheme, certain details regarding the interim arrangements were left deliberately vague, to be specified in the final stages. He seemed confident of securing the consent of the Congress for the post-war arrangements, bearing in mind the impressions he had formed on his previous visit in 1939. I think he gambled on this and lost. In order to win over the Congress to his side, he went too far in

talking about a National Government arguing to himself that once he got the Congress to agree, Jinnah could not afford to stand out; and the consent of both the major parties thus secured, he could then afford to take a bold line in regard to the immediate present—bolder than what the British Cabinet would otherwise have sanctioned. His calculations went wrong from the beginning in almost every respect; and he found that his earlier explanation of the implications of the scheme for the immediate future was his main embarrassment.

It may be of interest to note Nehru's view of the failure of the negotiations. At a press conference held on April 12 (within a few hours of Cripps' departure from Delhi) he was asked as to who was responsible for the breakdown. In answer he explained in detail the various stages of the negotiations. If he had been asked just before his last interview with Cripps he would have said that the chances of coming to an agreement were about 75 per cent. At that interview, however, the full picture which Cripps, suddenly and for the first time, put before them of the proposals was such that he could not agree to it. "A big change had occurred somewhere in the middle," he said. It was obvious that there was some trouble between Cripps and others. He went on to say, "While it was my extreme desire to find a way out and make India function effectively for defence and make the war a popular effort—so great was my desire that some things I have stood for during the last quarter of a century, things which I could never have imagined for a moment I would give up, I now agreed to give up—I am convinced personally that it is impossible for us to agree to the proposals as they eventually emerged from the British Government's mind. I am in complete and whole-hearted agreement with the Congress resolution and the letters of the Congress President."

After pointing out that Cripps, in his final interview on April 9, went back completely on his earlier assurances about a National Government and the Viceroy being only a constitutional head, Nehru declared: "I was amazed. It might be that he had been pulled up by his senior partner in England or someone here." He added:

If our approach had not been one of sympathy, our attitude would have been one of direct embarrassment, and we could have broken the whole war effort in India, both in regard to production and even in regard to the army proper. We did not do that because of wider sympathy for the larger cause. While we wanted to dissociate ourselves from the activities of the British Government, nevertheless we did not embarrass them. In regard to the Japanese invasion, we are out to embarrass them to the utmost. There is a difference because there is a difference between a new invasion and old, but there is another difference also. So far as I am concerned, in spite of the language of high authority it uses, the Japanese invasion is a played-out affair; but ultimately our attitude is governed by our ideological sympathy with certain causes. It is a hateful notion that after five years of war China should be defeated. It is a hateful notion that Russia, which represents certain human values which mean a great deal to human civilization, should be defeated. But ultimately, naturally, I have to judge every question from the Indian viewpoint. If India perishes, I must say—selfishly, if you like to call it—it does not do me any good if other nations survive.

About Japan, Nehru was equally explicit :

The fundamental factor today is distrust or dislike of the British Government. It is not pro-Japanese sentiment. It is anti-British sentiment. That may occasionally lead individuals to pro-Japanese expression of views. This is shortsighted. It is a slave's sentiment, a slave's way of thinking to imagine that to get rid of one person, who is dominating us, we can expect another person to help us, and not dominate us later. Free men ought not to think that way. It distresses me that any Indian should talk of the Japanese liberating India. The whole past history of Japan has been one of dominating others. Japan comes here either for Imperialist reasons straight out, or to fight with the British Government. Anyhow, whatever the reason, if it comes here, it does not come here to liberate.

Nehru was anxious that, regardless of the failure of the

Cripps Mission, India should maintain the same attitude towards the war. He strongly favoured the adoption of a scorched-earth policy, and guerilla tactics against the Japanese; and in these respects he did not hesitate to hold views different from Gandhiji's.

Between April 12 when Cripps left India and August 9 when the Congress leaders were arrested, there were three important meetings of the Congress Working Committee, the first in the last week of April at Allahabad, the second in the middle of July at Wardha, and the final one early in August in Bombay.

Nehru left Delhi shortly after Cripps' departure and visited Bengal and Assam before returning to Allahabad in time for the meeting of the Working Committee. Before leaving, he told a Press Conference :

The whole approach was one of lighting a spark in hundreds of millions of minds in India. It was not an easy responsibility for anyone to undertake. Nevertheless, we felt that circumstances demanded it and whatever our grievances with the British Government, whatever the past history of our relations, we could not allow that to come in the way of what we considered a duty to our country at present.

But this tour made a definite impression on him. He discovered that his point of view did not rouse enthusiasm among his audiences in Bengal and Assam. Cripps' statement after the breakdown had created a great deal of resentment. Moreover, thousands of Indian evacuees trekking from Burma over the Assam frontier were full of bitter complaints about the negligence and callousness of British officials in charge of the camps and the racial discrimination between British and Indian evacuees in regard to the arrangements for evacuation and *en route*. Nehru was moved to issue a strongly worded condemnation of British inefficiency.

These reports were also reaching Gandhiji at Sevagram. Harsh measures were being adopted, aggravating the sad plight of villagers in East Bengal and Assam who were being compelled, at extremely short notice and with very inadequate compensation, to vacate their villages for military purposes. Gandhiji began to

receive complaints from men, in whose words he had confidence, of loot and rape by soldiers in these areas.

Then there was the war situation. Almost a week after Cripps' departure, a report spread one afternoon in Madras that the Japanese fleet was approaching the city. The provincial Government and most of the British officials and residents of Madras fled to different parts of the province. It was a pathetic exhibition of panic.

Such was the background of the Allahabad meeting of the Congress Working Committee at the end of April. The reactions of the different Congress leaders were characteristically different. Rajagopalachari, for instance, coming from Madras, reached quick but far-reaching decisions. He was convinced that the British would not resist the Japanese and the people had not the means for effective resistance. Only a National Government could save the country; but the British were not willing to part with power. Therefore, power had to be wrested from them. How could it be done? Only, he argued, by coming to terms with Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League. Their demand of Pakistan after the war was the lesser of the two evils, since refusal would mean (by reversing this process of reasoning) invasion of India by the Japanese. He put forward this view with great courage, lucidity and persistence at Allahabad and for some weeks later in South India, until finally he resigned from the Congress.

Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhiji said in an article in the *Harijan*, a day after Cripps' departure from India, was the foundation of independence :

Why blame the British for our own limitations? Attainment of Independence is an impossibility till we have solved the communal tangle. We may not blind ourselves to the naked fact. How to tackle the problem is another question. We will never tackle it so long as either or both parties think that Independence will or can come without any solution of the tangle.

Then came Gandhiji's suggestion, much discussed all over the world, of the complete withdrawal of British and Allied troops from India. Referring to Britain, Gandhiji said :

There is no guarantee that she will be able to protect, during this war, all her vast possessions. They have become a dead weight round her. If she wisely loosens herself from this weight, and the Nazis, the Fascists or the Japanese, instead of leaving India alone, choose to subjugate her, they will find that they have to hold more than they can in their iron hoop. They will find it much more difficult than Britain has. Their very rigidity will strangle them. The British system had an elasticity which served so long as it had no powerful rivals. British elasticity is of no help today. I have said more than once in these columns that the Nazi power had risen as a nemesis to punish Britain for her sins of exploitation and enslavement of the Asiatic and African races.

Whatever the consequences, therefore, to India, her real safety and Britain's too lies in orderly and timely British withdrawal from India.

Gandhiji saw another advantage in the suggestion he was making :

The fiction of majority and minority will vanish like the mist before the morning sun of liberty. Truth to tell, there will be neither majority nor minority in the absence of the paralyzing British arms. The millions of India would then be an undefined mass of humanity. I have no doubt that at that time the natural leaders will have wisdom enough to evolve an honourable solution of their difficulties.

Whether Gandhiji's advice was sound or not, the circumstances under which he gave it must be borne in mind. His line of argument briefly was : the Japanese are going to land in India and the British cannot stop it (according to General Molesworth)* the precipitate flight of the Madras Government from Madras is evidence of low British morale; I do not believe in Nehru's methods of guerilla tactics and scorched earth; on the other hand, the withdrawal of the Allied forces from India

* Public Relations Officer of the Defence Department.

would give me an opportunity to practise non-violent resistance against the Japanese : it is possible that such a noble gesture on the part of Imperialist Britain as withdrawal from India would enable Hindus and Muslims to come together and form a provisional government in an atmosphere of non-violence.

I went from Delhi to Allahabad to report the proceedings for my papers. Before leaving, I called on Johnson who was most anxious that the Congress leaders should not pass a resolution which would stop all further negotiations. He wanted to make another attempt to find a way out of the deadlock. He gave me a letter for Nehru, to be delivered personally to him at Allahabad where the All-India Congress Committee was scheduled to meet. He said, "Give this letter to Nehru, and persuade him to accept my suggestion. I have a plane ready to fly him to Washington. Let him meet the President and place the Indian problem before him. He can return to New Delhi in three weeks."

I could not feel so confident of success as Johnson appeared to be. Nehru's first meeting with him did not have the approval of all his Congress colleagues. British reactions from Churchill, Linlithgow and Wavell all down the line were sharply unfavourable. A flight to Washington in an American plane for a personal discussion with the President did not strike me as promising of positive results.

In that event, Johnson said as I was about to take leave : "Place yourself in the President's position and draft a declaration which Churchill could make, and the Congress might accept. Show it to Nehru, and if he approves, bring it back to Delhi at once." His idea was that the draft would then be cabled to Washington and Churchill influenced into making a declaration broadly on those lines, if possible, before the end of the proceedings at Allahabad. Though the suggestion was extraordinary, I worked hard for two days on it and produced the following draft :

"The Congress has not accepted the view that major changes in the Constitution are not possible during the war. Nevertheless, in order to facilitate a settlement, it is prepared to agree to a declaration by the British Cabinet on the following lines :

"Indian leaders attach the greatest importance to arrangements

for the administration of India in the immediate future. The British Cabinet is willing to go to the farthest limits possible within the frame-work of the existing Constitution to convert the Executive Council into a National Government in practice.

"For this purpose, the Viceroy is being authorised to invite a small number of representative leaders to examine the Constitution from this standpoint. The Cabinet accepts the view that minor changes in the Act, alterations in the methods of functioning of the Executive Council and in the Central Legislature by resort to rule-making powers, and the establishment of suitable conventions are permissible within the meaning of the formula contained in the last paragraph.

"The Cabinet will accept the decisions of such a body and ask the Viceroy to proceed to the formation of a National Government to replace the present Executive Council. He will discuss with that body the composition and personnel of the National Government which must necessarily include in adequate proportions representatives of the two main political organisations, namely, the Congress and the Muslim League.

"There have been apprehensions expressed in India about the Viceroy's powers of veto. Under the Constitution, he is bound by the decisions of the majority of the Executive Council, unless the adoption of such a course is likely, in his opinion, to imperil the safety or tranquility of India or any part of India. It is inconceivable that the Viceroy, to borrow the language in which he conveyed a similar assurance to the Congress party in 1937 before it agreed to take office in the provinces, "will act against the advice of the Executive Council, until he has exhausted all methods of convincing the Council that his decision is the right one". He will do his utmost before taking a final decision, to persuade his Council of the soundness of the reasons for which he is unable to accept its view.

"In the sphere of Defence, it has already been agreed that the Indian Defence Member will take over all such functions as are not assigned to the Commander-in-Chief who as War Member will continue to be a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. There will naturally be the closest consultation and collaboration between the two. Moreover, the Commander-in-Chief as a

member of the Executive Council will be responsible to the Executive Council for all measures and policies originating from his Department. The precise allocation of subjects for administration by the Defence and War Members respectively will also be left to the Viceroy and the Conference of leaders invited to take part in the discussions for settlement with the Commander-in-Chief. In the event of disagreement, the matter will be referred to the War Cabinet in London, whose decision will be final.

I went to Allahabad with Johnson's letter proposing a visit by Nehru to Washington and my draft of a declaration by Churchill. Nehru read Johnson's letter but hinted that he had already faced sufficient criticism from some of his colleagues for seeking American intervention. As regards the draft declaration, Nehru read it carefully and said he had no criticism to offer. But he discouraged any further move for the reason that he would have to consult his colleagues, many of whom did not approve of outside intervention. I showed the draft to Rajaji who endorsed it warmly, but that did not mean much to Johnson. Some years later when I met Johnson in New York during a session of the U.N. General Assembly, he expressed his firm belief that if only Nehru had accepted his advice and accompanied him to Washington, India's freedom might have been hastened by some years.

Johnson made one final effort from New Delhi to get the President to act. He suggested some modifications in the Cripps plan and added :

If Churchill and Cripps would approve the above proposals generally, then through the Viceroy, at London's direction, Nehru, Jinnah and Rajagopalachari could be brought together here and if necessary taken to London for a final agreement. I can persuade Nehru and Rajagopalachari to attend the meeting. The Viceroy can get Jinnah. Before the meeting, I would have G. D. Birla talk with Gandhi.

Both Congress and Cripps have stated there will be no further approach by either; therefore an outside move must be made if India is to defend herself and not be another France. At this distance I believe no one but the President can move successfully. Nehru writes me today of 'fierce feeling against

Britain'. America alone can save India for the United Nations cause and my suggestion ought not be disposed of on the basis of meddling in the internal affairs of a subject nation. I respectfully urge that saving India concerns America as much as Great Britain. The effort cannot harm. It may be a miracle. I urge immediate consideration and pray for the President's aid. Time is of essence.

But the President had become cautious and was reluctant to prod Churchill further. He replied to Johnson that while he greatly appreciated his earnest efforts, "an unsuccessful attempt to solve the problem along the lines which you suggest would, if we are to judge by the results of the Cripps' mission, further alienate the Indian leaders and parties from the British and possibly cause disturbances among the various communities. On balance, therefore, I incline to the view that at the present moment the risks involved in an unsuccessful effort to solve the problem outweigh the advantages that might be obtained if a satisfactory solution could be found."

Johnson never wavered in his conviction that a settlement with India was possible, if Churchill would only agree to an adequate measure of freedom immediately and complete independence at the end of the war. At his farewell press conference in New Delhi, he made a cryptic remark on the failure of the Cripps Mission: "Some day", he told the journalists, "there will have to be a Johnson version of this affair."

To the President he reported :

Cripps is sincere and knows this matter should be solved. He and Nehru could solve it in five minutes if Cripps had any freedom or authority. To my amazement, when a satisfactory solution seemed certain with an unimportant concession, Cripps with embarrassment told me that he could not change the original draft declaration without Churchill's approval and that Churchill had cabled him that he would give no approval unless Wavell and the Viceroy separately sent their own code cables unqualifiedly endorsing any change Cripps wanted.

Roosevelt was greatly distressed. He wanted Cripps to stay on in New Delhi and continue the negotiations. But Cripps had already returned to London and Churchill felt that he could not be asked to return. He told Roosevelt :

You know the weight which I attach to everything you say to me, but I do not feel I could take responsibility for the defence of India if everything has again to be thrown into the melting pot at this critical juncture. Anything like a serious difference between you and me would break my heart and surely deeply injure both our countries at the height of this terrible struggle.

Roosevelt, anxious about reactions in India, felt somewhat comforted by a long and conciliatory message from Nehru, sent through Johnson, in which he assured the President :

The failure of the Cripps Mission has added to the difficulties of the situation and reacted unfavourably on our people. But whatever the difficulties we shall face them with all our courage and will to resist. Though the way of our choice may be closed to us, and we are unable to associate ourselves with the activities of the British authorities in India, still we shall do our utmost not to submit to Japanese or any other aggression and invasion. We who have struggled so long for freedom and against an old aggression, would prefer to perish rather than submit to a new invader. Our sympathies, as we have so often declared, are with the forces fighting against Fascism and for democracy and freedom. With freedom in our own country those sympathies could have been translated into dynamic action.

This intense activity on Col. Johnson's part had an adverse effect on his health. From the Irwin hospital in New Delhi (where he was an in-patient) he sent a message to the President that Nehru, who was visiting him every day, had given an assurance that he would "continue his efforts to calm India, speed production and make them hate the Japs".

The President was reluctant to permit Col. Johnson to return to the U.S.A. in spite of his illness, because of the fear that it might be misinterpreted both in England and in his own country. Col. Johnson's health, however, was such that an operation became necessary and he urged the President to permit his return, as otherwise the result might be extremely serious.

Johnson returned to Washington later in the summer, a very sick man. In a confidential report he said :

The Viceroy and others in authority were determined at the time of the Cripps Mission that the necessary concessions should not be made and are still of the same opinion; the British are prepared to lose India, as they lost Burma, rather than make any concessions to the Indians in the belief that India will be returned to them after the war with the *status quo ante* prevailing.

In the middle of May, I took the liberty of writing to Gandhiji on the situation in the country. I said :

The Working Committee of the Muslim League had adopted a resolution at Nagpur on 25th December, 1941, on the defence of India. The operative part of the resolution is as follows :

'The Working Committee once more declare that they are ready and willing as before to shoulder the burden of the defence of the country, singly or in cooperation with other parties, on the basis that real share and responsibility is given in the authority of the Government at the Centre and the provinces within the framework of the present constitution, but without prejudice to the major political issues involved in the framing of the future Constitution.'

I have discussed this with Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, General Secretary of the Muslim League. He interprets this offer as containing three main points : (1) All major issues to be postponed until after the war; (2) power to be sought within the framework of the existing Constitution; (3) Muslims to have a real share of power at the Centre and in the Provinces.

He had elaborated this in his speech in the Legislative Assembly in March last. In that speech he had said that the Muslim League was willing to consider a settlement with the British Government either alone or in combination with other parties on the above basis. If, however, the Hindus were prepared to concede the principle of Pakistan (leaving details to be worked out after the war) then Mr. Jinnah would not limit even the interim arrangements to the existing Constitution but would favour any reasonable adjustments, even if that meant alteration of the Constitution.

I would respectfully suggest to you that you should meet Mr. Jinnah in Bombay and discuss this question with him. You have yourself written more than once in the *Harijan* that if the Muslims want a partition of India, only a civil war can prevent it.

A settlement with the Muslim League would enable men of Mr. Rajagopalachari's way of thinking to form a National Government both at the Centre and in the Provinces. It will enable such men to resist the enemy by all means available.

If you succeed in coming to a general understanding with Mr. Jinnah, details of the settlement may be left to Pandit Nehru and one or two others from the Congress side. Gandhiji replied promptly :

I would go barefoot to Jinnah Saheb if I felt that he would look upon my advance with favour. Why don't you get from him what you have got from the Nawab Saheb? By a process of elimination I have reached the conclusion I am discussing in the columns of *Harijan*.

I met Nehru in New Delhi on 24th May and conveyed to him the substance of my correspondence with Gandhiji. He was obviously worried and sad. Cripps had proved a great disappointment. Rajagopalachari was splitting the Congress over Pakistan. Gandhiji was urging immediate and unconditional British withdrawal and had turned his thoughts in the direction of mass civil disobedience. The only break in the clouds was

that the menace of a Japanese attack, which had seemed imminent in April, had receded somewhat into the background.

Gandhiji meanwhile received several letters from his followers charging him with going back on his previous position of demanding complete British withdrawal. Quoting one, he wrote on June 23 :

The writer is afraid that my reconciliation to the presence of British troops would mean a descent on my part from my non-violent position. I hold that my non-violence dictates a recognition of the vital necessity. Neither Britain nor America share my faith in non-violence. I am unable to state that the non-violent effort will make India proof against Japanese or against any other aggression. I am not able even to claim that the whole of India is non-violent in the sense required. In the circumstances it would be hypocritical on my part to insist on the immediate withdrawal of the Allied troops as an indispensable part of my proposal.

In the following week he repeated :

The refusal to allow the Allied troops to operate on Indian soil can only add to the irritation already caused by my proposal. . .

We can disown the authority of the British rulers by refusing taxes and in a variety of ways. These would be inapplicable to withstand the Japanese onslaught. Therefore, whilst we may be ready to face the Japanese, we may not ask the Britishers to give up their position of vantage merely on the unwarranted supposition that we would succeed by mere non-violent efforts in keeping off the Japanese.

Lastly, whilst we must guard ourselves in our own way, our non-violence must preclude us from imposing on the British a strain which must break them. That would be a denial of our whole history for the past twenty-one years.

Why should not Muslims who believe in Pakistan but also believe in Independent India join such a struggle? If, on the other hand, they believe in Pakistan through British aid and under British aegis, it is a different story. I have no place in it.

Free India, he told Edgar Snow, would undoubtedly make common cause with the Allies, adding :

I cannot say that free India will take part in militarism or choose to go the non-violent way. But I can say without hesitation that if I can turn India to non-violence I will certainly do so. If I succeed in converting 40 crores of people to non-violence it will be a tremendous thing, a wonderful transformation.

"But you won't oppose a militarist effort by civil disobedience?" Snow asked.

"I have no such desire. I cannot oppose free India's will with civil disobedience, it would be wrong."

The Government of India took very little time to come to a decision on the Congress resolution passed at Wardha.

I had it on the authority of a Member of the Executive Council that the decision to arrest Congress leaders, after the endorsement of the resolution by the All-India Congress Committee, was taken on 15th July. Even the Government's official resolution justifying the arrests was drafted between that date and 20th July, only final touches being given just before its issue, immediately after the AICC's adoption of the resolution on 8th August. The Government of India was determined to have a show-down with the Congress.

The high hopes roused by Cripps' coming to India in March 1942 thus ended in bitterness and despair. The path of wisdom was probably the one indicated by Sri Aurobindo from Pondicherry early in April when the Cripps proposals seemed to be in danger of rejection : "Accept them" (he sent a message through a disciple) "without further discussion, and all would be well."

In the furtherance of the war effort, a Government consisting of Indian leaders could probably have expanded the powers of the executive from within, instead of holding futile discussions on points of constitutional propriety from without. The point is only of academic interest, nearly thirty years later. Cripps himself, I am convinced, was moved throughout by a genuine desire to hasten a settlement in that fateful spring of 1942. But

the odds against which he was battling proved overwhelming, and by temperament he was unsuited for the complex and delicate negotiations which alone could have ensured success.

Under more favourable circumstances, as a member of Attlee's Cabinet, with an experienced colleague like Pethick-Lawrence to guide the deliberations of the Cabinet Mission in the summer of 1946, Cripps' brilliance and resourcefulness proved to be an invaluable asset.

Errors of judgment and tactics wrecked the Cripps Mission in 1942: but these were on both sides, British as well as Indian. Cripps deserves to be remembered with gratitude for the risks he took in 1942, though they ruined his political career for the rest of the war period, as much as for the quick solution he found for many points bristling with complications that enabled Attlee's Government to hand over power to India on 15th August, 1947.

President Roosevelt and his Envoys

Between President Roosevelt and Mr. (later Sir) Winston Churchill there was complete agreement on almost every point concerning the successful conduct of the Second World War : the one notable exception was the freedom of India, an issue on which the difference was and remained fundamental until the end of hostilities. The President had an unshakeable conviction that complete freedom alone could bring India and her 400 million people whole-heartedly into the fight against Nazi tyranny. With equal ardour Mr. Churchill cherished the belief that even without that freedom India's resources and vast manpower could be adequately mobilised for the purpose.

The President, with a clear vision of ultimate objectives and rare persistence, resorted to every form of persuasion in dealing with the British Prime Minister on the subject of India's freedom. In the end he gave way, but only because further controversy might have meant a rift between the Allies, weakening the war-time coalition so essential for ultimate victory.

The President's pro-Allied sympathies were never in doubt. He told the American Congress, almost a year before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 brought the U.S.A. into the war, that never before was "American security as seriously threatened from without" as it was at that time. He pledged at an early stage of the hostilities, even while his country was at peace, America's "full support of all those resolute peoples everywhere who were resisting aggression and thereby keeping war

away from our hemisphere; and (there would be) no acquiescence in a peace dictated by aggressors and sponsored by appeasers."

All through 1941, Britain was reeling heavily under the impact of Germany's blows, particularly at sea. There was defiance in Mr. Churchill's utterances, but defiance tinged with despair. The threat of German domination of Europe spreading to Africa and southern Asia was real and imminent. The prospects struck him as bleak, and he appealed in anguish to Roosevelt, "unless we can establish our ability to feed this island, to import munitions of all kinds which we need, unless we can move our armies to the various theatres where Hitler and his confederate Mussolini must be met, and maintain them there, and do all this with the assurance of being able to carry it on till the spirit of the Continental dictators is broken, we may fall by the way and the time needed by the United States to complete her defensive preparations may not be forthcoming."

Roosevelt, surveying the war scene from afar, was uneasily conscious of the fact that the campaign lacked an ideological basis. A charter of liberty for all the subject peoples of the world he considered essential for enlisting the active support of the hundreds of millions who longed for a heart-warming statement on Allied war aims.

It is today a little known story that in the dark days of the Second World War—the early months of 1942—when Japan's fleet moved at will in the Bay of Bengal after her armies had swept through Malaya and Burma with hardly any resistance, Roosevelt pleaded with deep earnestness for India's immediate freedom. He found an admirable emissary in George Winant, his Ambassador in London.

Earlier, in May 1941, the Assistant Secretary of State, Adolph Berle, had drawn up a memorandum to underline the increasing contribution that India was capable of making in regard to war supplies. Connected with this problem was that of India's political status. He feared that she might become an active danger to the whole situation in the Near East in the not distant future, but Britain seemed to be doing nothing about it. A provisional settlement of the Indian problem was, in Berle's view, an essential condition for getting solid help. The general fear in

India, that if the British Empire collapsed in the war her own fate might be worse than under the British Empire, was of course a factor of some significance. He explained in an elaborate *aide memoire*, that if the conclusions seemed sensational all he could say in justification was that it was no time for half-measures.

After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour came a warning from London from George Winant, the American Ambassador, on the same lines as Berle's. In a note to the President he drew attention to the uneasiness felt by Australia and New Zealand as a result of the phenomenally rapid Japanese advance in the Pacific Ocean. This seemed to him to suggest an appropriate opportunity for making a reference to India. The charge of Imperialism against Britain in the United States was mainly focussed on the Indian situation. Because of this sentiment, American opinion was somewhat lukewarm in rendering timely aid to Britain. Winant added :

If we can count on a friendly India, with China already as an ally, the future problem in the Far East will be in large measure solved as well as bridged to the western world. The British have always emphasized the problem of minorities in India, and the practical difficulties of securing an agreement on a Constitution in which protection was given to the minorities and under which a stabilized State can be established. It can be argued that the war period does not permit the time and attention necessary to solve the issue; but it is also true that failing to solve it disturbs large groups, both within the British Empire and elsewhere in the world, and handicaps the support of the war in India itself. . . .

It might be possible at least to get agreement on the right of Dominion status for India so as to eliminate that major issue now, while at the same time giving further pledge to implement this status within a stated period following the cessation of hostilities. Among other considerations I believe this action would have a sobering effect upon the Japanese. In my opinion a number of members of the (British) Cabinet would favour such a plan. When the Indian question was up at a Cabinet meeting some time ago, the Prime Minister was

opposed to taking action. Unless the idea was suggested by you, I doubt if this subject would again be pressed for further consideration.

With the steady deterioration in the war situation, Roosevelt felt by early August 1941 that the time had come for a direct approach to the British Government. He authorized his Ambassador in London to raise with the British Government two issues: first, the grant of Dominion status to India and second, the working out of a new relationship between India, Australia, New Zealand and China. Sumner Welles (the Assistant Secretary of State in Washington), however, had his own doubts about the wisdom of Winant taking up officially with the British Government such a question as India's political status. He preferred that the President should discuss the matter "in a very personal and confidential way with Churchill".

This, partly at any rate, was the genesis of the Atlantic Charter, drawn up with Churchill's concurrence and collaboration. In language of appropriate dignity, the Charter laid down that "they (the signatories) respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they live" (that clause incidentally, having been taken intact from the first draft prepared by Churchill himself). Other points referred to "*all* States, great or small", to "*all* nations" and also to "*all* the men in *all* the lands". Indeed, that one small word '*all*' came to be regarded as the cornerstone of the whole structure of the United Nations.

The publication of the Atlantic Charter in August 1941 over the signatures of the President and Churchill seemed to the subject peoples of India, Burma, Malaya and Indonesia to be a beacon of new hope, much more than the British Government seemed to have realised.

Both statesmen clearly understood at the time of signing the document that the provisions of the Charter were for universal application—in Asia and Africa as much as in Europe. Doubts and suspicions, however, began quickly to surround the document almost from the moment it was signed by Roosevelt and Churchill. Mr. (later Earl) Attlee broadcast its implications from the B.B.C.—but as the leader of the Labour Party and not as Deputy Prime

Minister of Britain. India was quick to note the distinction and to ask the embarrassing question whether the British Cabinet did not as a whole subscribe to Attlee's view.

Three weeks later, Churchill broke an awkward silence to tell the House of Commons: "At the Atlantic meeting we had in mind primarily the restoration of the sovereignty and self-Government and national life of the States and Nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke, and the principles governing any alterations in their territorial boundaries which may have to be made. That is quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and for people who owe allegiance to the British Crown." He excluded in a later passage "India, Burma and such other parts of the Empire" from a vital passage in the document which recognised "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they would live". What the President and he had primarily in their minds, he told the House, "was the revocation of the sovereignty of the European nations under the Nazi yoke".

But India and Burma could not be disposed of so easily. George Winant informed the President that a majority of the members of the British Cabinet, including Mr. Amery (Secretary of State for India) were not with Mr. Churchill in this interpretation. Months passed in controversy over the significance of the Atlantic Charter: did it apply to India and Burma or not? The Prime Minister was personally full of misgivings about India "being thrown into chaos on the eve of the Japanese invasion".

Roosevelt made a statement on Washington's birthday defining his own attitude towards the scope of the Atlantic Charter: "We of the United Nations are agreed on certain broad principles in the kind of peace we seek. The Atlantic Charter applies not only to the parts of the world that border the Atlantic, but to the whole world; (it includes) disarmament of aggressors, self-determination of nations and peoples, and freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear."

Sumner Welles decided at last on some tardy action. In a note to Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State, on November 15, 1941, Welles confessed that the joint declaration of the President and

Churchill (the Atlantic Charter) had no real meaning if it was not to be regarded as all-inclusive and consequently valid in its application to the people of India and of Burma. Welles, however, saw a formidable problem in raising this matter immediately with the British. Halifax, whom he regarded as "probably the most liberal Viceroy that India has ever had", had told him that British civil servants, who were most experienced in Indian affairs, entertained serious misgivings about the grant of immediate Dominion Status to India. They feared a situation developing as a result with which the meagre number of British in the country could not cope.

Welles, while deeply sympathising with the objective of freedom for India, feared that a fresh representation might make Churchill, with his strong convictions about India, draw the conclusion that the U.S.A. was taking advantage of Britain's position and her dependence upon her ally to force her into an immediate step to which Churchill personally was opposed with the concurrence of the overwhelming majority of British authorities in India, both civil and military.

Japan's sudden attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 resulted in a swift and complete transformation in the war situation. It brought the U.S.A. directly into the war; but the prospects of an Allied victory were fast receding under the smashing blows Japan was delivering in south-east Asia. The loss of two British battleships tilted the naval balance dangerously in Japan's favour. Malaya and Burma collapsed without resistance, and India seemed poised precariously on the precipice.

A day following the surrender of Java, Rangoon fell into Japanese hands, thus cutting access by sea to the Burma Road. Dr. Evatt, at that time Australia's Foreign Minister, considered the situation "practically desperate", adding "the rising sun has, indeed, risen: the gigantic fan is now almost fully unfolded and it has covered territory, land and sea, the security of which had previously depended largely upon the power of the British Empire. This traditional Power is now frail, indeed, east of Suez, and none too sure of its chance of survival even in the Middle East."

The cumulative result of these alarming developments was that Roosevelt found himself in a position in which hundreds

of millions of people all over the world, but especially in Asia, looked to him for deliverance or protection. As the Chinese Foreign Minister had observed in a letter to Hopkins, Roosevelt was the one hope of mankind. Thrust into such a position by the exigencies of the war, a situation of extreme delicacy for him had developed particularly in his dealings with Churchill.

In India, the likelihood of Japanese landings on the Madras coast was daily growing stronger; but there was little realisation on the part of the people of the magnitude of the peril or of its imminence. The President was at last personally convinced by his advisers in Washington that it was time to act, regardless of normal diplomatic proprieties. Disarmingly he told Churchill: "Of course this is a subject which all of you good people know far more about than I do and I have felt much diffidence in making any suggestions concerning it." Narrating the history of the American Revolution in the eighteenth century, he expressed the hope that "the move towards the achievement of self-government for India would originate in London and would be made in such a way that the people of India would have no ground for criticism that it was 'being made grudgingly or by compulsion'."

Because of a divergence in views in Washington on the practical wisdom of raising the issue of India (and Burma) with Churchill, Henry Wilson, who at that time was the American Commissioner in India, was asked to report Indian reactions to Churchill's statement; and, in particular, to indicate whether it had produced a further deterioration in India's political situation prejudicial to the prosecution of the war.

Wilson's reply was that while many sections of the Indian press had adversely commented on Churchill's interpretation of the Atlantic Charter, he personally did not attach much importance to these views. Roosevelt's popularity in India had not been affected thereby.

Harry Hopkins, a trusted adviser of the President's, quoted one of Churchill's 'closest and most affectionate associates' in reporting from London to Roosevelt: "The President might have known that India was the one subject on which Winston would never move a yard. He would rather see the Empire in ruins and himself buried under them than concede the right of any

American, however great and illustrious a friend, to make any suggestions about India."

On the other hand, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington took a clear and firm stand: "We should demand that India be given a status of autonomy. The only way to get the people of India to fight is to get them to fight for India. Gandhi's leadership in India becomes part of America's military equipment." From London, Averell Harriman, after a talk with Churchill, informed the President that discussions were going on about making a declaration of Dominion Status for India, with the right of secession to be exercised at her will.

It was in these dramatic and exciting circumstances that Stafford Cripps was sent by the British War Cabinet on a mission of peace to New Delhi in March 1942. The story of this infructuous mission, and of Louis Johnson's unsuccessful efforts to save it, has been narrated in the preceding chapter.

On 1st July, Gandhi addressed a letter to President Roosevelt in which he referred to his numerous personal friends in England, who were as dear to him as his own people; he told the President: "In spite of my intense dislike of British rule, I have nothing but good wishes for your country and Great Britain." He expressed his keenness to turn into goodwill the illwill that existed towards Britain.

In the course of the same letter, he observed:

I venture to think that the Allied declaration that the Allies are fighting to make the world safe for freedom of the individual and for democracy sounds hollow, so long as India and, for that matter, Africa are exploited by Great Britain, and America has the Negro problem in her own home. But in order to avoid all complications, in my proposal I have confined myself only to India. If India becomes free, the rest must follow if it does not happen simultaneously.*

In Washington, Lord Halifax was reported to be working on a plan for India, though Bajpai, India's Agent-General in Washing-

* See Appendix IX for correspondence of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru with President Roosevelt.

ton, seems to have pointed out that nothing short of an announcement of independence by a certain date would prove an adequate solution.

Similar efforts were continued in New Delhi after Johnson's return to Washington through the American Mission in New Delhi, by G. Merrel and Lampton Berry. Three weeks before the 'Quit India' resolution (passed on 8th August, 1942), Berry obtained from Nehru fresh proof of his anxiety to avoid a conflict. Nehru told Berry :

Let the British Government make a declaration acknowledging the independence of India here and now, and requesting all the various parties in India to get together and form a provisional Government. This provisional Government, after its formation, would then negotiate with the British Government in the best of good-will as to how together they could best organize and promote the war effort to the greatest possible extent.

Nehru seemed confident that the Congress could come to terms with Jinnah on the basis of such a declaration.

Maulana Azad was of a similar view and proposed the following :

(1) Let Britain make an absolute promise of independence after the war and let the United Nations or President Roosevelt alone guarantee fulfilment of this promise, and (2) let the United Nations or President Roosevelt alone offer to arbitrate the question of an interim settlement and he (Azad) would guarantee that he would get Congress to accept the offer and agree beforehand to accept whatever interim plan was submitted by the United Nations or President Roosevelt alone.

On July 25, General Chiang made yet another attempt to secure Roosevelt's intervention. He told the President :

If India should start a movement against Britain or against the United Nations, this will cause deterioration in the Indian situation from which the Axis Powers will surely reap benefit.

Such an eventuality will seriously affect the whole course of the war, and at the same time the world might entertain doubts as to the sincerity of the lofty war aims of the United Nations. This will not only prove a great disadvantage to Britain but will also reflect discredit on the democratic front.

Sumner Welles advised the President that the point of view contained in Chiang's letter was confirmed by all the information received in the State Department.

The President acted on this advice and requested Churchill to let him have as soon as possible his thoughts and suggestions regarding the nature of the reply he should make to the General.

The American Ambassador in London was invited by Amery to receive the British reaction. Amery's estimate of the situation in India was optimistic. The Viceroy had an Advisory Council of fifteen of whom eleven were Indians. The refusal of the Indians to reach agreement with Cripps was supported neither in nor out of India. The Viceroy had wisely adopted a salutary course in the hope that the Congress might adopt a more co-operative attitude. Amery was sure that there would be no real change in India's contribution to the war, whatever might be the internal situation. Winant asked Amery why India's freedom was excluded from the Atlantic Charter. He argued at first that this had not been done, but later qualified his statement by asserting that the point had been clarified in Parliament reiterating Britain's promise to India made in August 1940.

On 1st August, 1942, President Roosevelt sent a personal letter to Gandhiji in general terms. The U.S.A. was consistently striving for the adoption of policies of fair dealing, fairplay and of principles looking towards the creation of harmonious relations between nations. He was anxious that the war, which was a result of Axis dreams of a world conquest, should be won through a supreme effort by those who hoped for freedom throughout the world. He concluded: "I shall hope that our common interest in democracy and righteousness will enable your countrymen and mine to make a common cause against a common enemy." This letter did not reach Gandhi until long after the adoption of the Quit India resolution of 8th August, 1942.

The President's next move was to reply to General Chiang after studying British reactions conveyed to Winant through Amery. Conscious of the difficulties of intervention, the President observed: "I feel that it would be wiser for you and for myself to refrain from taking action of the kind which you have in mind for the time being." He, however, gave the assurance that he would note all the suggestions made by the General for further consideration at a moment's notice, should the Indian situation take a more serious turn.

After the arrest of Gandhi and all the Congress leaders on 9th August, 1942, General Chiang sent yet another message to President Roosevelt describing the development as "certain to have a disastrous effect on the entire war situation". The influence of the Axis Powers, he feared, would be considerably strengthened, "and the avowed object of the Allies in waging this war would no longer be taken seriously by the world".

The President sent a prompt reply to the General regretting as much as the latter did the unfortunate controversy between those forces in India led by Gandhi and the British Government. He reiterated "the deep interest of his Government, both under its long-standing policy and especially under the provisions of the Atlantic Charter, in independence for those who aspire to independence".

William Phillips became President Roosevelt's Personal Representative in December 1942, some months after Col. Johnson's departure from New Delhi. Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State, told him in a message four days later:

The State Department earnestly hopes that you will undertake the assignment which is viewed as one of profound importance because of the political and military problems related to the current situation in India.

Phillips immediately accepted the offer, conscious of its importance. In reply, he was authorized to discuss cautiously the Indian situation with the appropriate British officials in London. In particular, the views of President Roosevelt and Cordell Hull favouring freedom for all dependent peoples at

the earliest date practicable and drawing a parallel between the Philippines and the Indian situations, were recalled. He was told further :

We cannot bring pressure, which might reasonably be regarded as objectionable, to bear on the British, but we can in a friendly spirit talk bluntly and earnestly to appropriate British officials so long as they understand that it is our purpose to treat them in a thoroughly friendly way. A settlement arising from such friendly and non-partisan conversations with both sides or with either side would probably be most practicable as well as most desirable... The terrible complexities of the Indian situation are difficult to analyse and understand. With your great experience and fine common sense, you will well understand how to preserve thoroughly agreeable relations with both countries and how to say or do anything in a tactful way that might encourage both sides or either side in the way of a practicable settlement.

The point was impressed on him in the instructions :

"We have an added interest in the settlement of this matter by reason of its relation to the war."

American forces were at that time being poured into India, the principal objective being Assam and the 'hump' over the Burma Road into China. Large supplies had to be transported from Karachi to Assam and other points farther east and south. It was, therefore, necessary, in the interests of swift and uninterrupted transport, to ensure peaceful conditions within India. Mr. Phillips had already heard of the growing hostility to British rule in India. There were reports of widespread resistance, violence and sabotage as a sequel to the 'Quit India' movement which implied a serious threat to war supplies.

He entered on his duties with some misgivings about his prospects of success, since a settlement had been sought in vain for years. In a letter from London on December 19, 1942, on his way to India, he told the U. S. Secretary of State, "I hope you do not expect too much of me. I will do my best, but the more I learn of actual conditions, the more I appreciate the bitter

divisions among the Indians themselves. A British authority in London interprets this increased bitterness as a struggle for party power resulting from the impending Dominion Status promised by the British Government after the war. Each party, therefore, wishes to occupy a dominant position in the constitution-making power, and this is especially noticeable in the attitude of the Muslim League, which is gaining day by day in strength. The same authority admits that while the Indians declare that they do not believe British assurances, actually they do believe them and are alarmed at the problem which is about to be put up to them, of creating out of so much internal discord a united nation."

For the next two months in London, he discussed the Indian situation with many British experts including Anthony Eden, who expressed the hope that he (Phillips) would get the whole picture and report it faithfully to the President. He also suggested that Phillips might usefully spend a day or two in Cairo on his way to India and have a look at the Indian Forces.

Before leaving for New Delhi, Phillips lunched with Mr. and Mrs. Churchill at 10, Downing Street. His description is worth quoting :

He (Churchill) radiated vitality. Despite a cherubic expression and a rotund contour, I felt at once his dynamic power of leadership; his every word had a hammer-like quality.

During lunch Churchill was extremely critical of Wendell Wilkie, comparing him to "a Newfoundland dog in a small parlour, which had wiped its paws on a young lady's blouse and swept off the teacups with its tail". Mr. Wilkie's crime had been that he had made a number of speeches in America criticising the British handling of the Indian problem.

During lunch, there was a reference to India. Phillips reported :

When the Prime Minister got around to the subject of India, it was difficult precisely to fathom his mind. In one phrase he reiterated his public assertion that he would

never part with any portion of his Empire. Yet in another phrase he referred to the offer of freedom which had been made to the Indians, meaning, I suppose, the ill-fated Cripps Mission to India. But what an outstanding personality Churchill is !

Summing up his impression of Churchill's attitude towards India, Phillips felt that while he was aware of the important, if peaceful, role that India was called upon to play in the war, he was not quite clear about the close link between such a role and the internal political situation in the country.

Early in the New Year (1943), Phillips arrived in New Delhi after reviewing Indian troops in Cairo as a sympathetic prelude to his work in India. He was astonished to observe the immensity of the American air base on the outskirts of Karachi.

The general impression he gathered in London was that he had the confidence of the British and also their hope that out of his mission to India would develop some light. There was even an offer to permit him to see Gandhi in prison if that would facilitate a solution.

Cordell Hull, writing on New Year's Day of 1943, expressed confidence that he would do an excellent job in Delhi, but that they were fully aware one must not expect the impossible when the problems were such as they were in India at that time.

Phillips' first impressions after two weeks in New Delhi he conveyed in a personal letter to the President. He found the Viceroy most cordial and friendly, keen that he should feel free to move about the country as he wished, and to meet and converse with all shades of opinion. Linlithgow, the Viceroy, he regarded "as a good example of the Tory type, a huge man physically, very reserved before people, but warming up in private conversation".

Soon after moving into the headquarters of the American Mission in New Delhi, he held a press conference because there was much curiosity as to the purpose of his assignment with the rank of an Ambassador which no previous envoy in India had enjoyed. He read out to the press correspondents a brief, prepared statement :

I come to study and to learn as much as I can of the India of today—the India of the future which has such an important role to play in the world affairs, and I shall report my findings to Washington.

We, Americans, together with the people of the United Nations, are determined to carry on the war to final victory. That victory is now assured. Our troops are proud to be associated with the magnificent soldiers of India, some of whom I had the privilege of visiting in their desert camp in Egypt.

We all of us have much to learn from one another, Americans from Indians, Indians from Americans, and I am confident that I shall find here the friendly guidance so necessary to help me to understand and co-operate, and thus to fulfil my mission for the President.

He was extremely cautious in answering the questions which followed this statement.

Lord Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief, was one of the first he called on. Though reserved in manner, he struck him as unassuming and forthright; at the same time, Phillips felt that he was depressed, perhaps tired. He wondered whether Wavell was really in sympathy with the Viceroy's stern policy towards Gandhi and the thousands who had been imprisoned with him. He also met Gen. Auchinleck who at that time was under Churchill's displeasure and lived quietly in New Delhi without a job or an assurance as to the future. He got busy with other Members of the Government, representatives of the Indian press, Hindu and Muslim leaders, and, in fact, representatives of Indian life from all parts of the country and various groups.

Phillips' first impression of the British position in India was that he did not consider it unreasonable, especially after having acquired vast vested interests in the country which would be jeopardized by their withdrawal from India, possibly opening the door to a bloody civil war. There were the guarantees to the ruling Princes. At the same time, certain inconsistencies struck Phillips as obvious. For instance,

The British insisted that the Indians show a willingness and ability to get together, yet they were holding incommunicado the Hindu leaders, Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, the two spokesmen of the All-India Congress Party, the most important political party in the country.

Of the terrible problems facing India, he gave a broad outline. The Hindus were united in their distrust and intense dislike of the British, but they were not altogether united behind Gandhi. Savarkar, the leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, he thought, was even more uncompromising than the Congress leaders in his demand for a Hindu rule over all minorities, including a hundred million Muslims. Jinnah and the Muslim League were equally resentful of the presence of the British; but because of their fear of Hindu claims for an All-India administration they probably preferred to have the British remain unless their own claims to Pakistan were guaranteed. The Princes kept aloof from the religious and political controversies of India. Some had liberal and advanced governments, while others were 'pitifully backward', having made little or no progress since the Dark Ages.

Phillips found in India an eagerness for the application of the Atlantic Charter to India, particularly the concept of freedom for oppressed peoples. There was also a general insistence in the country, both amongst Hindus and Muslims, on the British Government granting a degree of freedom to India without further delay. The existing Government was not really representative, since all its members were puppets selected by the Viceroy without consultation with party leaders. The general desire was for a substitution of a truly representative All-Indian Government for the existing setup.

Four men, it seemed to him, dominated the scene: Churchill and his Viceroy, Gandhiji and Jinnah. "The Viceroy represents England of the old school, of the tradition of Empire, of British responsibility to govern backward peoples. Behind him are the six hundred British Indian Civil Servants who are devoting their lives to India and who know little of what is going on in the world outside and who in their hearts want to preserve the *status quo*, since their livelihood depends upon it. Undoubtedly their

views must have some influence on the Viceroy."

While in London, Phillips got the impression that the English people were ready and even eager to grant Dominion Status to India (with the exception of Churchill but not several other members of the Government). The situation in India appeared to be the reverse. Phillips observed :

The British whom I have met seem unaware of the changing attitude in England and cannot really envisage a free India fit to govern itself. They point out that eighty-five percent of the country is illiterate, that the great mass of the people are utterly indifferent as to who governs as long as there is a government to which they can look for food and relief in times of stress. They see the antagonism of the Hindu and Muslim political parties and feel that it is hopeless to expect them to reach any practical agreement! They speak of civil war the moment England departs, etc. Naturally these views are reflected in the Indian leaders who are convinced that British promises are worthless.

Of Gandhiji, a great personality, "a God to many people—but (he imagined) a wholly impractical God"—he said : "If he could be convinced that the British are sincere in their desire to see India free, there is hope that he might be unexpectedly reasonable in his approach to Jinnah and the League." Phillips did not think it wise to make a request of the Viceroy to give him permission to see Gandhiji immediately, unless he could put forward some helpful suggestion.

Jinnah and Gandhiji, he thought, distrusted each other and were bitter political enemies. The Muslim League stood for Pakistan, that is, a complete and independent Muslim State free from any interference whatsoever from the British and Hindus alike. Phillips' conclusion was :

And so there seem to be four men who hold in their hands the destiny of three hundred and eighty million people : Churchill dominates the Viceroy, the Viceroy dominates the Government of India, Gandhi controls the Congress and

Jinnah the great mass of the Indian Muslims. There seems to be only one way to bring about an agreement between the Indians themselves and that is to be in a position to convince them of Britain's sincerity. How this can be done is the heart of the problem. I hope that I may have some suggestions to offer later but not until I have more information.

On the important issue of Pakistan, his own comment was: The more I studied Jinnah's Pakistan, the less it appealed to me as the answer to India's communal problem, since to break India into two separate nations would weaken both and might open Pakistan, at least, to designs of ambitious neighbours.

In response to a request from Phillips, I gave him a note on 26th January 1943, on a possible solution of the Indian problem.*

Suddenly, the situation took a serious turn with Gandhiji's decision to fast early in February 1943.

Gandhi's fast and its implications dominated the rest of Phillips' stay in India. He was embarrassed by the question frequently put to him whether he intended to see Gandhi and the Congress leaders. He, therefore, decided to request the Viceroy for permission to call on Gandhi. He explained to Linlithgow: "My duty is to keep the President informed of the situation here, and that I could not do without at least a call upon the leader of the principal party."

Linlithgow, instead of giving a straight answer, explained that Gandhi was to be freed for the duration of the fast and since no member of his Government would see him, he had to make a request that Phillips also refrain from doing so. Phillips commented: "I detected for the first time a suspicion on the Viceroy's part with regard to my motives. He asked me directly what were my intentions, a question which I did not welcome; but when I explained again that I was here to keep you fully informed and not to 'intervene', he said 'I see that we understand each other'. He became very friendly, called for drinks, and since then has kept me in close touch with developments by personal letters."

* The text of the note is given in Appendix X.

The results of Gandhi's fast he could not assess, though the general British view in Delhi was that there would be no serious complications, because according to them Gandhi's stock had fallen of late. The position of the American Mission in New Delhi, he told the President, was becoming embarrassing. "Unhappily for me, more and more attention seems to be centred upon this Mission and upon me personally. Every Indian who comes to see me feels that through my influence the present deadlock with the British can be solved. Naturally I am in the picture only because of the popular feeling that the President of the United States alone can bring any influence to bear upon the British Government. I find it very difficult to know what to suggest. I do feel that the Gandhi fast has complicated the situation and made it even more difficult for the British to move, if they had any intention of doing so. But as long as he has no intention of 'fasting unto death' he may come out of it without having caused any material change in the situation.

Giving his personal opinion, Phillips added : "It would seem wise for Churchill to 'unlock the door' which he could do by convincing the Indian people that the promise of their complete independence after the war is an iron-bound promise. New words and phrases will not, I fear, carry enough weight, and therefore a new approach must be made in order to accomplish results. It must be a willingness on the part of the British Government to transfer as much civil power as possible now, on the understanding that the complete transfer will be made after the war. This would be the invitation to the leaders of the opposing parties to get together, which they cannot do now, not only because the leaders of one party are under arrest but because there is no inducement for them to make the necessary concessions to one another, and in view of the general distrust of British promises." Even the Princes, he thought, would adopt a different attitude, since the old treaties between them and the British Government were (according to the ruler of Nawanagar) obsolete and the Princes could not expect to have any greater powers in their States than the King of England himself.

As Gandhi's fast progressed his anxiety about the Indian leader's capacity to survive the ordeal increased. The Indian

press (Phillips reported) was pressing the Americans to show their sympathy with India's aspirations. He saw a rising trend of criticism against the U.S.A. by Congress sympathisers. His position was difficult : he felt deeply that the hopes and expectations of the Congress appeared to centre more and more upon him. But without instructions from Washington he could not do anything to jeopardize his position with the Viceroy. Therefore, he could only listen to appeals from Indians. He reported that the feeling was very well expressed that Gandhiji should be freed and not merely granted a release for the duration of the fast, and that someone should be authorized to see him and convey his views to the Viceroy.

On February 16th, Phillips was told that according to Sir Sultan Ahmed, a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Gandhiji's condition was very grave and he might die within a few days. Four or five Indian members of the Executive Council were thinking of resigning, though no definite decision had been reached. Phillips wanted the President's permission to tell Linlithgow, in the event of Gandhiji's life being in imminent danger, that the American Government was deeply concerned over the political crisis. No immediate results could be expected, but such action would be useful for the record and help to correct the impression "based on our inactivity and the presence of the American troops, that we have been giving support to the Viceroy's position".

The reply was a proposal by the President that Phillips should return to Washington for consultations at the end of April or the beginning of May. Meanwhile, Halifax called on the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. Hull tactfully said that if Gandhiji should die during his fast, acute conditions might arise and precautionary measures would be necessary. Halifax appreciated the observation very much and assured Hull that the British Government was giving the closest attention to all phases of the matter. Hull raised the question whether the British would or could find it possible or advisable to consider certain additions to the Cripps proposals of 1942. On the following day Hull told Phillips that the President and he agreed with the suggestion that Phillips should approach the Viceroy informally and "express our deep concern over the political crisis and add", for it seemed to him

wise to do so, "the expression of the hope that means may be found to avert the worsening of the situation which would almost certainly follow Gandhi's death."

From New Delhi the report went that Mody, Aney and Sarkar had resigned from the Viceroy's Executive Council and Linlithgow told Phillips that the final decision in regard to all matters, such as Gandhiji's fast, remained with London.

On February 23 Phillips sent a long letter to the President. He said :

It is difficult for Anglo-Saxons to understand the deep-seated feelings which have been aroused by this performance of an old man of 73 years. Many Indians have told me that during his previous 'fasts unto death' there was nothing like the present nation-wide consternation. The explanation given is, that to vast numbers of Hindus Gandhi has a semi-divine quality which separates him from, and elevates him above, the rest of mankind. That such a being is willing to sacrifice himself for the cause that every Indian has at heart, namely, the independence of India, has touched the people as a whole. While, of course, Gandhi's methods in the past are not approved probably by a majority, nevertheless his honesty of purpose is respected, and Indians who have been violently against him have now joined the chorus of appeals in his behalf. There could be nothing like it in any other country but India.

As an example, I attended a banquet last evening, given by one of the Indian members remaining in the Viceroy's Council in honour of the Governor of the United Provinces. I was told that fifty guests out of approximately one hundred and fifty acceptances shirked the dinner at the last moment and even the host's wife and two daughters boycotted the dinner out of sympathy for Gandhi.

Contrary to all fears Gandhiji survived his fast and the Government of India issued the following communique :

On the termination of Gandhi's fast, the arrangements for his detention and that of the other persons detained at the Aga

Khan's Palace which obtained before the fast have now been resumed. Such extra medical assistance and nursing as may be necessary will continue for the present.

At the end of the two agonising weeks of suspense over his capacity to survive the ordeal, Phillips sent a long report to Roosevelt in which he observed :

The whole episode has brought the United States prominently into the picture and I have been literally besieged by callers and overwhelmed by telegrams from all parts of India, asking whether there could not be something done from Washington or by me to relieve the present deadlock.

Phillips met Rajagopalachari, "one of the few real statesmen in the country". In his report to the President, he said : "I admire his wise and restrained attitude in comparison with the lack of conciliation and reasonableness of other leaders." Phillips felt that his own position was becoming increasingly untenable. After a private conference with leading Indian editors in New Delhi, he reported : "My failure to see Gandhi was bitterly criticised. They spoke of the growing antagonism to the British with whom America was now closely identified. More and more the feeling was crystallising that America and Britain were one in holding India down to its present position."

In a subsequent and lengthy communication to the President, Phillips analysed the situation, concluding :

I see only one remedy to this disturbing situation, and that is, to try with every means in our power to make Indians feel that America is with them and in a position to go beyond mere public assurance of friendship.

But America could do nothing to move the British. Phillips was anxious to see Gandhiji before returning to Washington in April, but Linlithgow was not willing to give him permission. He reached Washington in May, at a time when Churchill was staying at the British Embassy. Roosevelt suggested an interview. In Phillips' words : "I sensed that F.D.R. had his difficulties with the

Prime Minister, among them the problem of India, and preferred to have me tackle this particular unpleasantness for him as he had previously been rebuffed."

The interview was far from being friendly or pleasant. Phillips noted in his *Ventures in Diplomacy* :

The Prime Minister received me alone in the Embassy drawing-room on Saturday morning, May 23. I was aware at once that he was not pleased to see me, for he must have known that I was not wholly in sympathy with the British Government's policies in India. I began by saying that as I had just returned, possibly he might care to have some of my impressions, to which he replied, 'Go ahead, tell me what you have on your mind'.

Phillips then told Churchill :

I travelled extensively and had opportunities to meet many leading personages, both British and Indian. The Viceroy and the various Governors with whom I had stayed had all been most kind and co-operative. But wherever I went, in the provinces and States, among Hindus, Muslims and other groups, I had found distrust of British promises for ultimate Indian independence. There seemed to me, therefore, a very real need of some concrete evidence of British intentions. The Indian leaders were asking for this and were calling for a limited transfer of power to a provisional coalition representation at the Centre (for the duration) to deal with domestic affairs leaving all military matters in the hands of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief.

An opportunity for Gandhi and Jinnah to meet and discuss the problem of India, Phillips continued, might prove useful.

That was more than Churchill was prepared to hear. Phillips noted :

Churchill was annoyed, and annoyed with me; that was clear. He got up and walked rapidly back and forth. My answer to you is : 'Take India if that is what you want ! Take it by all means. But I warn you that if I open the door a crack,

there will be the greatest blood-bath in all history; yes, a blood-bath'. 'Mark my words,' he concluded, shaking a finger at me, 'I prophesied the present war, and I prophesy the blood-bath!'

It was hopeless to argue. I closed the interview by reminding him that I was not suggesting that Britain should pull out of India then, that I was referring only to the desirability of encouraging the two dominant parties to get together and that, in my opinion, the present was the opportune moment to do so. The Prime Minister accompanied me to the head of the stairs and repeated once more his certainty of a 'blood-bath'.

Phillips made a personal report to Roosevelt the same night. He was not keen on returning to India, he told the President, merely to eat hot curries with British and Indian hosts. All India was looking to him for help and his continued presence in the country would put him in a false position, unless there was a shift in the British attitude.

Roosevelt decided to make one last attempt. He told Phillips that he would recommend to Churchill that he send Eden to India to explore the situation, to talk to leaders of all parties and groups, Gandhi included, and report his findings to Churchill. If the suggestion was favourably received, he would say to the British that he would like him (Phillips) to be in India during Eden's visit, in the belief that he, the President, through his personal representative, might be of help to Eden.

Phillips did not resign his post as the President's special envoy in India until March 14, 1945, in order not to give Indians cause to think that the President had forgotten them while American forces were still in India. But Churchill's choice for the Viceroyalty was Wavell, and Eden was not going to be sent to India for a fresh effort. Phillips remained in London for the rest of the period, though nominally he was the President's special envoy in India. With that came to a close President Roosevelt's persistent efforts to solve the Indian problem during two critical years of the Second World War.

Chiang Kai-shek

India has never been sufficiently grateful to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. I can still recall, after an interval of nearly thirty years, the excitement of his visit to New Delhi along with his talented wife, and his bold if unconventional expression of sympathy for India's political aspirations. It was, strictly speaking, a diplomatic indiscretion thus to intervene in the domestic affairs of an Allied Power in war time.

There is no doubt that Nehru was definitely influenced by the friendliness and charm of the Chiangs : but it was much more, as the subsequent events proved, than mere goodwill.

In August 1940, when the war seemed to be going against the Allies, one of Chiang's Ministers, Cheng Yin-fun, wrote to Nehru: "Our mutual undertaking for national liberation, we believe, will bring even closer the existing ties of friendship. We are earnestly looking forward to the day when the Indians and the Chinese can work hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder for the peace of the world". In October that year the Generalissimo, worried by Japan's growing aggressiveness, made an appeal to Nehru that "we, in order to safeguard our liberty and freedom, must first of all bring the chief perturber of peace (Japan) to account".

All this was, of course, helpful from the British point of view. In the early months of 1942, with Burma in the hands of the Japanese, Chiang made active efforts to secure President Roosevelt's support for an immediate political settlement with India on the

basis of freedom. In a message to the President on the conclusion of a visit to New Delhi, he conveyed to him his impressions :

Please take this opportunity to tell Churchill that I am personally shocked by the Indian military and political situation which is in such a state that I could never conceive of before I arrived in India. I am afraid Churchill himself does not know the real situation. I have tried to view the colonial problem most objectively. I feel strongly that if the Indian political problem is not immediately solved, the danger will be daily increasing. If the British Government should wait until Japanese planes begin to bomb India and India morally collapses, it would be too late. If the solution is postponed until after the Japanese armies enter India, then it will be certainly too late. If the Japanese should know of the real situation and attack India, they would virtually be unopposed.

In my opinion, if the British Government should voluntarily give the Indians real power and do not allow different parties in India to cause confusion, the Indians would change their attitude towards England, forget their hard feelings and become loyal to the British Empire.

An almost identical message was sent to Churchill in London. The British Prime Minister was greatly irritated by its terms, though Roosevelt agreed with the Chinese leader that the danger was extreme unless the British Government changed its fundamental policy towards India.

On the eve of Sir Stafford Cripps' arrival in New Delhi in March 1942, Chiang told the American Ambassador in Chungking that Britain was "blind to the realities" and the result might well be "an outcome serious for Britain in India and also for China". Madame Chiang was even more outspoken. India, she told him, would not be satisfied with Dominion Status, because "India had no feelings of a racial or of a common destiny with regard to the British". After having seen Nehru several times in New Delhi, she was convinced that the Indian people would be prepared to discharge their responsibility to the Allied nations

provided there was a settlement based on a transfer of real political power and responsibility.

The Chiangs maintained a vigilant eye on developments in India. After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Madame Chiang again sought Roosevelt's intervention :

According to information received from Nehru the Mission's failure has resulted in a deterioration of the position and increased Indian hostility of feeling toward Britain. Further (according to Nehru) no real shift in authority was offered and no possibility existed for the establishment of a people's army for defence purposes. Therefore, there was no basis for compromise.

The situation in India continued, however, to deteriorate and in fact was assuming alarming proportions. Gen. Chiang made a personal appeal to Gandhiji to observe restraint and not to embark on civil disobedience. Replying in an unusually lengthy letter, Gandhiji observed in June 1942:

I am anxious to explain to you that my appeal to the British Power to withdraw from India is not meant in any shape or form to weaken India's defence against the Japanese or to embarrass you in your struggle. India must not submit to any aggressor or invader and must resist him. I would not be guilty of purchasing the freedom of my country at the cost of your country's freedom. That problem does not arise before me, as I am clear that India cannot gain her freedom in this way, and a Japanese domination of either India or China would be equally injurious to the other country and to world peace. That domination must therefore be prevented and I should like India to play her natural and rightful part in this... There is grave danger of public feeling in India going into wrong and harmful channels. There is every likelihood of subterranean sympathy for Japan growing simply in order to weaken and oust British authority in India. This feeling may take the place of robust confidence in our ability never to look to outsiders for help in winning our freedom. We have to

learn self-reliance and develop the strength to work out our own salvation. This is only possible if we make a determined effort to free ourselves from bondage. That freedom has become a present necessity to enable us to take our due place among the free nations of the world.

My heart goes out to the people of China in deep sympathy and in admiration for their heroic struggle and endless sacrifices in the cause of their country's freedom and integrity against tremendous odds. I am convinced that this heroism and sacrifice cannot be in vain; they must bear fruit. I look forward to the day when a free India and free China will co-operate together in friendship and brotherhood for their own good and for the good of Asia and the world.

Gandhiji's assurances did not, however, convince the Chinese leader that a crisis could be averted in India during the period of the war. Reports about the Congress preparing to adopt the 'Quit India' resolution appeared to him to be in conflict with the spirit of Gandhiji's letter to him. Chiang authorised his Ambassador in Washington to convey to Roosevelt his fear that the situation in India would unquestionably blow up unless some outside help was forthcoming. There was, moreover, the likelihood of the Japanese extending their movements towards India at the end of the monsoon in 1942. The question of India was regarded by the whole of Asia as a test case for ascertaining the sincerity of the Allied Powers. It was, therefore, essential that both China and the U. S. Government should initiate fresh negotiations with representatives of the Congress Party in India as friends of both sides, under-writing the carrying out of the terms of any agreement reached.*

Roosevelt forwarded to Churchill the substance of this message from Chiang Kai-shek adding that he would be grateful for his frank reactions. (Churchill in his memoirs referred to Chiang's "voluminous protests" to Roosevelt which were later forwarded to him, adding "I resented this Chinese intervention".)

Immediately after the adoption of the 'Quit India' resolution

* The text of Gen. Chiang's message is given in Appendix XI.

India's Freedom Movement

by the Congress in August 1942, Roosevelt replied to Chiang that it did not seem to him to be "wise or expedient" for the time being to consider taking any of the steps which he had suggested in his message. He assured Chiang, however, that the door was always open for him to make any further suggestions at a later stage.

Lord Attlee

Lord Attlee's name will always have an honoured place in India's history as Britain's Prime Minister responsible for the decision after the Second World War, to confer freedom on India. He was fortunate to have as his colleagues in the Cabinet two brilliant men with an intimate knowledge of India and a real sympathy with her aspirations : Lord Pethick-Lawrence and Sir Stafford Cripps. But the master-mind behind the plan evolved by the British Cabinet Mission in 1946 was that of the Prime Minister.

Lord (then Mr.) Attlee's first experience of India in the late twenties was a disastrous one. As Ramsay MacDonald's nominee on the ill-fated Simon Commission, he and his colleagues were the victims of hostile demonstrations in many parts of India. Later, he was excluded from the deliberations of the Round Table Conference in London mainly because of Indian suspicions of him as a member of the Simon Commission.

I had my first personal contact with Mr. Attlee in 1933, at the centenary celebration of the British Trade Union Congress at Weymouth to which I was an invitee on behalf of the Indian Trade Union movement. He did not strike me as a man of exceptional ability; but there was a ring of sincerity in his references to India which was impressive. Possibly it was that quality which brought him somewhat unexpectedly to the front place in the British Labour Party after MacDonald's sad eclipse on the eve of the Second World War.

In Sir (then Mr.) Winston Churchill's Coalition Cabinet,

Attlee became Deputy Prime Minister and found an early opportunity to exercise his influence on the Government's India policy. It was generally understood that the Atlantic Charter, to which both President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were signatories, was meant for universal application. In India, the assurance of freedom for subject peoples everywhere, which was the key-note of the Charter, was hailed as marking the beginning of a new relationship with this country. It seemed odd at the time that Attlee should have broadcast his own interpretation of the Charter in terms entirely acceptable to India but in his capacity as the leader of the Labour Party and not as Britain's Deputy Prime Minister.

The significance of the episode became clear three weeks later, when Churchill, ignoring the protests of several of his Cabinet colleagues, made a statement in the House of Commons excluding India and Burma from the scope of the Charter.

When the perils of war overshadowed India in the early months of 1942, after Japan's spectacular drive through Malaya and Burma, Churchill's choice for a renewal of negotiations with India's leaders was Sir Stafford Cripps, not Attlee. In formulating the basic features of the British offer to India, Sir Stafford and Mr. Amery made substantial contributions; but Attlee's experience and advice proved helpful behind the scenes.

I saw a good deal of Attlee in 1945 at San Francisco where he was Anthony Eden's deputy in the British delegation to the United Nations Conference. He kept himself in the background, leaving all the speaking in the Conference and at press conferences to Eden and sometimes to Lord Halifax. In private conversations he did not conceal his distress over the unfortunate developments in India, following the adoption by the All India Congress Committee of the 'Quit India' resolution in August 1942.

British politics underwent a dramatic change in the general election of 1945, placing the Labour Party, for the first time in its career, in a majority position in the House of Commons. I saw Attlee at 10, Downing Street in London in September 1945, three days after he had assumed office. The Cabinet was still in the making, and he was in no position to spell out his views on India, beyond a hint that the Cripps offer of 1942, conceding the right

to the Indian people to frame their own Constitution at the end of the hostilities, held a promise that could not be ignored.

The devastation caused by the war and Britain's numerous domestic problems did not prevent the new Prime Minister from going rapidly forward with proposals for a new deal with India. After a round of preliminary investigations, through a carefully chosen Labour party delegation, Attlee sent out Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Alexander to India—the British Cabinet Mission as it has been described—to negotiate with India's leaders and recommend a generally acceptable plan and procedure. He made it clear in a statement to the House of Commons on March 15, 1946, that his three Cabinet colleagues would make "the utmost endeavours to help India to attain her freedom as speedily and fully as possible". It was for India to decide whether she would remain in the Commonwealth or not. On behalf of his Government, he gave the assurance, "that if she does so elect, it must be by her own free will. The British Commonwealth and Empire is not bound together by the chain of external compulsion. It is a free association of free peoples. If, on the other hand, she elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so. It will be for us to help to make the transition as smooth and easy as possible."

After some months of futile argument in India between the Congress and the Muslim League over the interpretation of parts of the Cabinet Mission's plan, Attlee made a final effort in December 1946 to bring about an agreement on the procedure to be followed in the Constituent Assembly. On its failure he announced in February 1947 that while the plan remained his Government's policy, it "could not contemplate forcing a Constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country".

The door was thus opening almost inevitably towards India's partition. The official announcement on February 20, 1947, in the House of Commons, referred to the danger of continuing uncertainty in India and the need to reach a quick decision. "His Majesty's Government", Attlee told the Commons, "wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take necessary steps to effect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948. If, meanwhile, a fully

representative Assembly had not produced a Constitution acceptable to all parts of the country, the British Government would reserve the right to decide to whom power should be transferred whether as a whole, to some form of Central Government of British India, or in some areas to the existing provincial governments."

Nehru welcomed the announcement as "a wise and courageous decision". Stormy events forestalled the final phase of British rule in India, leading early in June to an advancement of the date of transfer of power from June 1948 to August 15, 1947. Lord Mountbatten played a decisive part in securing British assent to such a bold proposal involving an abandonment of the right of the House of Commons to endorse the Constitution evolved by the Constituent Assembly.

As one looks back to the last stages of British rule in India many figures come up to claim India's gratitude : Ramsay MacDonald for his courage in announcing to the Round Table Conference in 1931 the intention of his minority Government to confer on India the status of a self-governing Dominion; Sir Stafford Cripps, much misunderstood at home and in India; Lord Pethick-Lawrence, a man of deep convictions and of sound judgment.

Nevertheless it was Attlee—modest, unassuming and of unquestionable integrity—who set India firmly on the path to full freedom. He rose to a remarkable height in enunciating, through a period of baffling complications, a policy that resulted in success of a kind which led even Nehru to declare that "our present decision (to accept partition) is the right one".

Lord Pethick-Lawrence

Lord Pethick-Lawrence was the last of the Secretaries of State for India. His claim to a place in posterity will rest on his championship of two great causes, first as a supporter of the suffragette movement in Britain and, much later in life as the leader of the British Cabinet Mission in 1946 which led to the granting of freedom to India.

After a brilliant career in Cambridge, he could have achieved distinction in any sphere : law, business, journalism, teaching (of mathematics or economics) or politics; but he chose and shone in public life.

India appealed to him quite early in his life. Tagore had made a great impression on him, floating on one occasion into the room 'like a supernatural being'. After two visits to India, the latter at the time of the Simon Commission, in the late twenties, Pethick-Lawrence correctly summed up the Indian demand: it was not "a Commission appointed by Britain to consider what modifications of the Constitution she would be graciously pleased to grant to India, but a Round Table Conference of Indians and British to arrange the details of the change-over to complete Dominion Status".

His interest in India was roused further through Mrs. Besant's offer to him, at the end of the first world war, of an assignment to write an occasional letter for her daily paper in Madras, *New India*. She had heard of him through common friends in the British Labour Party like Mr. George Lansbury; his reputa-

tion from the start of his public life was of a man of deep convictions willing to make sacrifices for his principles. He belonged to a generation later than hers; and by the time he had completed a distinguished career at Cambridge, with a first class degree and a fellowship of Trinity College, she had made her home in India.

Essentially, Pethick-Lawrence was a parliamentarian, having contested seven elections in his career as a Labour candidate out of which he won five. He had a long record of eighteen years in the House of Commons and sixteen in the House of Lords. His first parliamentary success was in 1923 against Churchill (then a Liberal) whom he defeated by a majority of 4,000 votes.

Typical of the man's courage and honesty of purpose was Pethick-Lawrence's public condemnation, shortly after his entry into public life, of Britain's declaration of war against the Boers in South Africa in the closing years of the last century. Later he came into prominence in the campaign for women's suffrage in Britain, of which his wife was one of the acknowledged leaders. He actively associated himself with the campaign and cheerfully went through all the phases of a militant struggle common at that time: arrest, hunger-strike, imprisonment and forcible feeding.

In the First World War Pethick-Lawrence was critical of Britain's vacillating attitude which landed her in a position from which there was no escape except through a war with Germany. Twenty years later, despite his ardent belief in passive resistance, he was forced to the conclusion that war with Hitler was inevitable. "With very great heart-searching (he wrote) I found myself compelled to support the war... Hitler is a kind of embodied Karma, demonstrating on a gigantic scale, that brute violence fails in the long run."

In his election addresses shortly after the First World War he urged self-government for Ireland and India and a League of free peoples. Again, before the general elections in 1945, both he and Sir Stafford Cripps made a special point in their speeches of immediate freedom for India.

He held a junior post at the time of the Round Table Conference in 1930 as Financial Secretary to the Treasury. Though his interventions as a member of the Federal Structure Committee were occasional, these laid the foundations of many enduring friend-

ships with delegates like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. Jayakar. With Gandhiji, he and his wife found much in common to bring them together outside the Conference.

With no personal ambitions to advance, it is not surprising that Pethick-Lawrence declined to go with Ramsay MacDonald in 1931 into an alliance with the Conservatives under the name of a Coalition, though he retained a personal friendship for the erstwhile Labour Prime Minister who conveyed to him, after the disastrous General Elections of 1931, his personal regret that he could not plant India more firmly on the road to independence.

The association with India's leaders in the formative stages of the 1935 Constitution was of enormous help to him when he became Secretary of State for India in Attlee's post-war Cabinet of 1945. His interest in India was not limited to her political freedom. Religion for him was "a conscious unity with the entire sentient creation". It was a measure of the confidence and respect that he inspired in his colleagues, that the Prime Minister's choice for the India Office fell on him rather than on Sir Stafford Cripps.

Pethick-Lawrence had a sound knowledge of the different and often baffling aspects of the Indian problem as visualised in the famous statement of the Cabinet Mission of 16th May, 1946. He never permitted an opportunist approach to any of the problems as an easy way out. Sir Stafford, a much younger man, more resourceful and having the advantage of closer contacts with the Indian leaders, was doubtless more in the news; but no step could be taken and certainly no decision adopted without Pethick-Lawrence's careful scrutiny and assent.

As the leader of the British Cabinet Mission, he wrote to his wife from New Delhi : "I have commended myself to God for Him to fit any little piece of myself into His great plan as He thinks best." Never did he lose faith in the ultimate success of the Mission to India. Overcoming the anxiety caused at one point by the prospects of failure, he felt (he told her) "a thrill almost amounting to enjoyment in grappling with these tremendous forces; in trying, however imperfectly, to ride the whirlwind. And there is a sense too that we are but the instruments

of Powers far greater than ourselves, whose Will will in the end be done."

There are many interesting details in Pethick-Lawrence's letters to his wife during the visit of the British Cabinet Mission to Delhi and Simla. He was "fascinated by the psychological aspect of it all", though the stakes were "very high". On more than one occasion he felt "nearly overwhelmed by the awe-inspiring consequences of the negotiations" that he and his colleagues were conducting. "Sun and storm follow one another at short intervals", he wrote in another letter. Later still he found the "tensions and anxieties of the Mission" reflected in the exhausting summer heat of Delhi in June. Indeed, at one stage he found himself near despair :

The situation is very critical and this afternoon it looked for a while as if the decision would almost certainly be reached in some thirty-six hours and could scarcely be other than a rejection. For a moment I had a sensation of relief as one who has kept for a long while a weary vigil at the bedside of a beloved sick relation and there are signs that the end is approaching; and then came the reaction as I thought of the terrible time I would have if the calamity in fact materialised.

I recall with keen pleasure an occasion on which he honoured my home with a visit during the Cabinet Mission's stay in New Delhi. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was my house-guest and the Mission decided to spare him—a desperately sick man—the strain of going to Viceroy's House for a discussion of the plan. Contrary, I believe, to Viceregal practice, the three Cabinet Ministers (Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Alexander) and Lord Wavell called on Sir Tej Bahadur and spent nearly an hour with him.

Pethick-Lawrence brought to bear on the final solution of India's problem a sympathetic insight, fully in keeping with his liberal principles. Within a few hours of the publication of the Cabinet Mission plan on 16th May, 1946, he broadcast from New Delhi on India's future. He said :

The future of India and how that future is inaugurated are matters of vital importance, not only to India herself, but to the whole world. If a great new sovereign State can come into being in a spirit of mutual goodwill, it will be an outstanding contribution to world stability. The Government and people of Britain are not only willing, they are anxious, to play their full part in achieving this result.

Between Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps there was a bond of close friendship and affection. During the several weeks that the Cabinet Mission spent in Delhi and Simla, Cripps proved to be an understanding and hard-working colleague. In the final stages a memorandum had to be prepared setting forth the Mission's views; and according to Pethick Lawrence, "Cripps produced it in a single hour—some three thousand words all in his own handwriting in his usual red ink, covering ten closely packed foolscap pages".

Cripps, compelled to leave India earlier than his colleagues (for reasons of health), wrote a moving letter to Pethick-Lawrence :

"I cannot leave India without expressing to you, as the leader of our Mission, the intense admiration and gratitude that I feel for all you have done. In the conduct of our negotiations you have made a wise mixture of caution with enthusiasm for the cause of Indian independence, and a determination not to let your patience become exhausted, even though you yourself were feeling physically exhausted.... It has been a tremendous privilege and joy to me to be associated with you in this historic enterprise, and I believe that you can be satisfied with the contribution that you have made to World History.

In his papers was a leaflet published at the time of Cripps' death in 1952 : it concluded with the following sentiment : "This is the comfort to friends, that though they may be said to die, yet their friendship and society are in the best sense ever-present because immortal."

A newspaper correspondent once asked Pethick-Lawrence at a press conference in New Delhi whether he agreed with Mr.

Churchill's notion of losing the Empire. His reply was characteristic : "Nothing can redound more to the highest traditions of liberty which prevail in my country than if, as a result of our labours, we have in the years to come a sovereign country here in India whose relationship with ours is one of friendliness and equality."

As the historian Dr. G. P. Gooch once observed, "British Imperialism, sometimes labelled colonialism, is dead, and Lord Pethick-Lawrence was one of our elder statesmen who drove the nails into its coffin."

Pethick-Lawrence had a deep and instinctive appreciation of Gandhiji's point of view; but he told his wife on one occasion that Gandhiji was not a very easy person with whom to negotiate a political settlement, "most generous (though he was) in attributing good motives to those who differed from him".

After the passage of the Indian Independence Act which he piloted through the House of Lords, he went virtually into retirement. The final chapter of a book on Mahatma Gandhi which he subsequently wrote in association with Mr. Polak and Mr. Brailsford, he concluded with a reference to the verdict of history on the vital issue of war and peace. He wrote :

War is a terrible evil. Even a so-called 'righteous' war of defence brings frightful evils in its train. Each successive war sees the invention of new and more deadly weapons. If wars continue with atom bombs and perhaps bacteriological warfare, and who knows what fresh horrors, can civilisation survive? The world may yet be forced to think again of some escape from self-destruction along Gandhi's lines.

Pethick-Lawrence's religious convictions were rooted in an outlook which is summed up in the following passage :

I have no knowledge or experience of inner light which enables me to predict what happens to the individual after death. It lies entirely beyond my ken. But when I look out upon this shatteringly wonderful universe, I am driven more and more to feel that the Central Life from which it all emanated

has some good purpose in creating it and in particular in creating me and Emmeline (his wife) and that that good purpose cannot have remained unfulfilled.

Even after India's achievement of freedom, Pethick-Lawrence maintained his interest in India. After the Suez crisis, worried by the possibility of India withdrawing from the Commonwealth, he wrote to Nehru begging him "not to desert those British who are trying to redeem the Commonwealth from the disgrace". With a number of Indian leaders, including Rajaji, he had correspondence almost up to the end of his life. He wrote a poem entitled the 'Cosmic Hymn' in the *New Statesman* which Rajaji described as "Vedanta pure and simple".

There have been, in the records of the British Labour movement, examples of earnest men and women championing great causes and suffering for them; but somehow, it seems to me, destiny could not have selected a more appropriate instrument for the renunciation of British authority over India than Lord Pethick-Lawrence.

C. Rajagopalachari

We have abundant reason in India to feel grateful that we have alive in our midst an outstanding statesman of the freedom struggle, with his mental faculties and brilliance undimmed by age (he is well past 90), and sustained by a faith in the future, which has withstood all the shocks and disappointments of public life. A lone figure at some points in his career, misunderstood sometimes by his own colleagues, never has Rajagopalachari deviated from a course dictated by conviction.

I first saw Rajaji, as he is popularly known all over India, on the platform of Gokhale Hall in Madras in the middle of the First World War. The Home Rule Campaign had brought many people like him out of their old grooves into a somewhat exciting public life. The vision of a free India at the end of the war was one which inevitably stirred deep emotions in most people.

The end of the war synchronized with Gandhiji's assumption of leadership of the Congress, and in the acute controversies of the time following the Amritsar tragedy in 1919 and the adoption of non-cooperation as his programme, political workers had been driven somewhat far apart. Rajaji was drawn by the magnetism of Gandhiji's personality into a close association with him and his policies; while I, in a far humbler role, was steadfast in my loyalty to Mrs. Besant. There was, however, a strange connecting link between us in Mr. George Arundale, a warm-hearted Englishman with a rare gift for making friends. Arundale and I were giving much of our spare time outside the demands of Mrs. Besant's

paper *New India* to the organization of industrial labour in Madras. Rajaji, through some circumstance that I cannot now recall, also became interested in the movement. Frequently, we made trips together to Perambur to address the workers of the Railway Workshops. Differences in political outlook seemed to be of little account: between Rajaji and Arundale there developed a warm relationship which did not leave me unaffected.

That early contact must have left a subconscious impression on me. Some years later, as the boycott of the Simon Commission in the late twenties was running into difficulties, Rajaji (who was travelling in the same train to Calcutta as Mrs. Besant and I were, for the annual session of the Congress in 1928) made a suggestion to me at a wayside station: if she could be persuaded, he said, to shed her misgivings about civil disobedience creating a mass upheaval, she and Gandhiji could jointly sponsor an effective movement to infuse vitality into the boycott of the Simon Commission. The suggestion proved, however, to be unacceptable to her.

From the moment that he threw himself into the Home Rule Campaign in 1917, Rajaji seemed destined for a place of high distinction in our freedom struggle. The impact of his speeches on his audiences in Gokhale Hall, Madras, in those far-off days was great because of his cogent reasoning, his sharp, analytical intellect and a singularly unemotional approach. Gandhiji made an irresistible appeal to him and drew out of him a loyalty that stood the test of differences of opinion on a number of occasions during the freedom struggle. His period of apprenticeship was somewhat long; for over a decade after the war while C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru were busy building the Swaraj party and challenging British might on the legislative front, Rajaji was content to devote his energies to Gandhiji's constructive programme of the removal of untouchability and the cult of the spinning wheel.

In 1931, Ramsay MacDonald's promise to the first session of the Round Table Conference in London of almost immediate responsible government in the form of an all-India Federation, and the external status of a Dominion, opened a new phase in our progress towards freedom. Rajaji sensed in it a call to play a more significant role in shaping India's political future. Behind the

scenes in the spring of 1931 in New Delhi, with both C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru prematurely dead, he became closely associated with Gandhiji in the parleys with Lord Irwin.

The Gandhi-Irwin pact which resulted from these negotiations and enabled Gandhiji to represent the Congress in the second session of the Round Table Conference was a notable achievement in constructive statesmanship for which Rajaji quietly laboured with skill and persistence.

A few years later, in a very different setting, Rajaji and I again came together. It was after the completion of the 1935 Constitution, when a controversy arose in the Congress over the exercise of the Governors' special powers threatening to create a deadlock in bringing the Act into operation. Could a formula be evolved within the limitations of the Constitution, wondered those who were anxious to avert a breakdown, to enable the Congress to form ministries in the Provinces where it had secured majorities, with a reasonable measure of assurance that the party's programme of economic and social reforms could be implemented without unnecessary interference by the Governors?

I was at that time the New Delhi correspondent of *The Hindu* and the *Manchester Guardian*. After a discussion with Rajaji, immediately after the first general elections for the Provincial Legislatures early in 1937, I sent an identical message to both these papers, embodying a proposal, apparently on my personal assessment of the situation, that suggested a possible way out of the impasse. About a fortnight later in the middle of April, I was summoned over the telephone to Viceroy's House. Without wasting words on formalities, Lord Linlithgow referred to my message in the *Manchester Guardian*: taking a newspaper clipping from his papers he tossed it to me with the remark, "Lord Zetland (the Secretary of State for India) has sent this to me to enquire what your authority is for the statement in your message that Mr. Gandhi might advise the Congress to accept office on the basis of your proposal."

I told the Viceroy that Rajaji was the real author of the formula and he knew intimately the working of Gandhiji's mind. "That certainly makes a great difference", replied Lord Linlithgow. His reaction was immediate: would I see Gandhiji in strict confi-

dence and obtain from him an elaboration of certain points which both he and Lord Zetland regarded as vital for a settlement? I saw Gandhiji on a Monday—his day of silence—in a village in Belgaum district where the annual meeting of the Village Industries Association was being held. I passed on to him a slip of paper to indicate that they were really the Viceroy's (and Lord Zetland's) questions. After three days of careful drafting and revision he gave his final approval in Poona to a statement which later opened the door to a settlement. As I was leaving 'Parnakuti', his Poona residence, he said to me: "I have only to be coaxed by the British... they are a decent people, it is easy to make a deal with them."

There is no doubt that Gandhiji lent his support in the pre-war years to those in the Congress Party like Rajaji who held, in Gandhiji's language, that "the Government of India Act of 1935 was an attempt, however limited it might be, to replace the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority".

There was acknowledgement on all sides that during the two years and more that the Congress Ministries were in office, for efficiency of administration and good relations between Ministers and the Civil Service, Madras under Rajaji's leadership was well ahead of all other provinces. Some of the healthy conventions established by Rajaji have stood the test of time and continued to operate in Madras in the last three decades. Such was the favourable impression created by him that in October 1939, on my suggestion to the Viceroy for the reconstitution of the Central Executive Council to function in effect as a national government, the Viceroy's comment was that it would have merited serious consideration if all Congress leaders were of the same type as Rajaji and Pandit Pant.

It is idle to speculate at this distance of time on the consequences of the Congress as a whole deciding to pursue a course which had the support of Gandhiji, Rajaji and some other leaders in the organization. Their triumph in 1937 in obtaining the approval of the A.I.C.C. for the formation of Ministries proved to be short-lived. The withdrawal of the Ministries from office shortly after the outbreak of World War II in 1939 was a blunder of the first magnitude for which the left wing of the party was

primarily responsible. The abandonment of a position of strength was fatal to effective negotiations, whether with the British or with the Muslim League, as Rajaji knew all the time. Men like him were caught in a vortex of conflicting forces, Congress left-wing demands being matched by British short-sightedness.

In 1940 and the following year, a series of behind-the-scene negotiations took place in which the prime movers were Rajaji, Maulana Azad and Pandit Pant from the Congress and Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan the head of the Punjab Unionist Party. These efforts, which had Gandhiji's blessings, were intended to bring into being a war-time Federal Government under the 1935 Constitution, with suitable conventions to confer on the Executive the substance of constitutional responsibility; and for a long-term settlement, at the end of the war. The Premiers of all the Provinces were to be authorized to form the nucleus of a Constituent Assembly for drafting a new Constitution. Gandhiji was fully aware of the nature and course of these negotiations and was keen on their success; but every time success seemed near, the way was blocked by British unwillingness to accept the proposals.

Then came the crucial year—1942—when India faced a perilous situation baffling in its complexity. So long as Cripps was in New Delhi, the hope of a satisfactory settlement flickered, though intermittently. Early in his discussions with Indian leaders, baffled by a deadlock over defence arrangements for the duration of the war, it was to Tej Bahadur Sapru, Rajaji and B. N. Rau that Cripps turned for assistance in evolving a compromise.

When finally failure overtook the Cripps mission, with the Japanese fleet in control of the Bay of Bengal, and Madras in grave peril of attack, the situation demanded quick and far-reaching decisions. At the fateful Allahabad meeting of the A.I.C.C. in the last week of April, Rajaji came out with his bold suggestion of accepting the principle of partition as the basis of an understanding with the Muslim League. The circumstances under which he reached such a conclusion, startling to his colleagues in the Congress, are worth recalling.

Churchill was in no mood to attempt an immediate renewal of effort with India's leaders, and Roosevelt seemed reluctant to needle him further while the fortunes of the war were fluctuating

and unpredictable. Never did Rajaji exhibit such courage and foresight as in this unprecedented crisis. He had good reasons to go ahead with a drastic proposal. Madras, he knew better than anyone else, was in imminent peril of a Japanese landing, and the British had already declared their intention of not offering resistance. Only a National Government could possibly rouse the morale of the Indian people for self-defence, but its formation was contingent on the support of the Muslim League. On the acceptance of the principle of partition by the Congress hung the slender prospects of an immediate settlement and the hope of a National Government emerging to prevent Japanese occupation of India's east coast.

The great bulk of the members of the A.I.C.C. drawn from other parts of India were unprepared for the division of India at the end of the war. Rajaji went into the wilderness for the rest of the war, sacrificing his position and influence in an unsuccessful bid to overcome the obstacle that had engulfed the Cripps mission. But all through that summer, never for a moment did he abandon hope of a settlement with the League to gather the maximum support for India's freedom.

Later in that year, Rajaji disassociated himself from the 'Quit India' resolution which the A.I.C.C. adopted in Bombay on August 8, 1942. He thus dared once again to strike a note that he knew would almost completely isolate him from the rest of the Congress. But he was not alone in holding the policy enunciated in the resolution to be detrimental to India's long-term interests.

A day before the adoption of the resolution Nehru had made it abundantly clear, in an interview to me for publication in the *Manchester Guardian*, that the resolution was not to be interpreted as an ultimatum to the British Government. India, provided that its demand was conceded at the end of the war (declared Nehru), would fight to the end of the war on the side of the Allied Powers. Nehru was, in fact, in a most conciliatory mood throughout the crisis and appeared to be in substantial agreement with Rajaji, though he preferred to go with Gandhiji and the Working Committee in committing himself to the resolution.

On the eve of Gandhiji's release from detention in 1944 Rajaji proposed a formula for discussion with Jinnah in which was implicit

a joint declaration of independence to become operative on the termination of the war and the immediate formation of a National Government, except for some temporary reservations in regard to defence.

It would be relevant here to refer to the precise terms of Rajaji's formula for partition which he evolved during the detention of Congress leaders in 1942-44: (1) the Muslim League to endorse the demand for complete independence and join the Congress in forming a provisional National Government during the interim period; (2) a plebiscite, after the termination of the war, of all the inhabitants of districts in the north-west and north-east of India, demarcated by a commission, to determine whether a separate State or States should be established; (3) in the event of separation being the verdict, agreements for safeguarding defence, commerce, communications, etc. to be drawn up for acceptance by both sides; (4) these terms to be binding only on condition of British willingness to transfer full power and responsibility to the Indian people.

Gandhiji, in accepting the formula as the basis for his discussions with Mr. Jinnah in September, 1944, relied on the promise, implicit in the formula of a treaty of separation which, as he told the leader of the Muslim League, "should provide for the efficient and satisfactory administration of foreign affairs, defence, communications, customs, commerce and the like which must necessarily continue to be matters of common interest between the contracting parties". The breakdown of these talks barred further discussions; but the point to remember is that neither Gandhiji nor Rajaji ever contemplated abrupt separation. In the establishment of Pakistan as a sovereign, independent State, an essential feature from their point of view was the treaty of separation to provide for a difficult period of transition.

It was our misfortune that the threat of near-chaos which hung over the sub-continent on the eve of our freedom in 1947 and the anxiety of the British to withdraw from India by 15th August left no time or opportunity for calm deliberation on the details of such a treaty.

It was a privilege for me to accompany Rajaji in 1962 as a member of the Gandhi Peace Foundation delegation to some of the

world's capitals on a great quest—a treaty for the suspension of nuclear tests. We met several leading personalities, President Kennedy amongst them.

It was an unusually crowded day for the President, with the Cuban affair simmering, the Mississippi crisis (over the admission of a Negro student into the University) at its peak and numerous engagements quickly following one another. He had warned one of his advisers that 20 to 25 minutes was the utmost he could spare for the Indian delegation.

The meeting was in Mr. Kennedy's reception room in the White House. Rajaji began on a note of moderation in his proposal. His was not a plea for general disarmament; how could he suggest it to another State, when the Government of India's defence policy was not based on such a consideration? The immediate cessation of nuclear tests in the atmosphere (and also in outer space and under the sea) stood on a different footing. Skilfully he introduced the argument that the world as a whole had a right to say to the Nuclear Powers that they could not, in the name of nuclear testing, poison the atmosphere, with incalculable harm to humanity, now and in the future. Unilateral action on the part of the USA—in the absence of an agreement with the Soviet Union—would earn for her the moral support and approval of the world. That would more than offset such military disadvantages as there might be.

In 35 minutes of quiet but cogent reasoning Rajaji made a comprehensive survey of every aspect of the problem. There was not a superfluous word or argument. The President listened in complete silence, obviously impressed by the sincerity of the speaker and the soundness of the argument. When he did speak, it was to say that he considered the proposals 'reasonable' and would, of course, give them serious consideration to see which among them were feasible. He made no secret of his own anxiety to see all nuclear tests banned at once. The interview was prolonged well beyond an hour, but the President was in no hurry to send away his distinguished visitor.

After we had taken leave of the President, he is said to have remarked to one of his official advisers who was at the interview: "Seldom have I heard a case presented with such precision and

clarity and elegance of language." This comment, in varying terms, was made later by nearly everyone whom the delegation (of which Rajaji was the leading spokesman) saw in Washington, New York and London.

Our programme in New York was equally strenuous, centring mainly round the United Nations and the various attached missions. The interview with U Thant was a delightful experience, the Secretary-General being a genial person, besides possessing, thorough competence for the onerous duties that devolved on him. Rajaji had the impression in Washington that a resolution in the General Assembly providing for the expulsion of a member-State defying the decision to stop nuclear tests might prove a deterrent. But U Thant was clear in his view that such a clause could find no place in any General Assembly resolution.

On the main point, however, every one was agreed that it would be an extremely desirable move to get the General Assembly to reiterate its position against nuclear tests in strong terms. The immediate danger, as someone pointed out, was of rifles and machine-guns being provided with atomic heads and such dangerous weapons being sent to different conflict-torn regions in the world.

One of the most abiding memories of the delegation's trip in New York was a visit to Sir Zafrullah Khan, the President of that year's Session of the General Assembly. He greeted Rajaji with deep respect and affection, describing him as "a statesman of world stature with rare courage of conviction". As Assembly President Sir Zafrullah Khan could take no active part in the proceedings; nevertheless, he assured Rajaji and the delegation that all his influence would be in favour of securing a ban on nuclear tests.

The interview with Mr. Gromyko of the Soviet Union was a pleasant surprise. Mr. Gromyko's English, spoken with a distinctly foreign accent, was admirably clear and terse. He left us in no doubt as to the Soviet attitude towards nuclear tests. His Government, he declared, would sign "here and now" a ban on all tests, if the U. S. A. were willing. As a compromise they were also willing to have a juridical obligation on over-ground, under-the-sea and space tests, and a moral obligation on underground tests pending negotiations for a final settlement. The Soviet

Union, said Mr. Gromyko, was anxious to reduce to the minimum the pollution of the atmosphere, but could not endanger her national security.

Whatever might have been the immediate results in terms of a nuclear test ban—complete or partial—the delegation left behind a fund of goodwill and friendliness for India and genuine respect and affection for an old man who ventured out of India for the first time at the age of 84, on a mission which essentially concerned all humanity.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, affectionately known as Badshah Khan, had fought valiantly for India's freedom with such stalwarts as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Rajaji and Rajendra Prasad. The partition of India was a terrible shock for this doughty champion of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. His sturdy independence and his fight for the rights of his fellow Pathans in the Pakhtoon region, once Pakistan had emerged, were too uncomfortable for the rulers of that country. He languished in prison for 15 years and was released only after his health had broken down.

His has been a chequered and heroic life, 30 years of which were spent in imprisonment, divided equally between British and Pakistani jails. Badshah Khan could have had a life of ease and plenty. With a good family background, and a personality of commanding height (6 feet 3 inches), there was nothing he could not have had for the asking—a commission in the British Indian Army, for instance. Such education as he had under a broad-minded British missionary, Mr. E.F.E. Wigram, had made a deep impression on him. The education of the Pathans, he decided early in life, was to be his life's main work, so that the numerous tribes from Chitral to Baluchistan could be roused to a sense of unity, with pride in their ancient past.

Badshah Khan refers nostalgically in his memoirs* to his home-

* *My Life and Struggle—Autobiography of Badshah Khan.*

region as 'the cradle of Aryan civilisation'; a land where the Buddha's gospel once spread far and wide, as two magnificent statues of his bear testimony even today in Bamian; and the home of the greatest grammarian of all times, Panini. Subjection to foreign rule and suffering for the Pathan tribes began with the Moghul invasion, continued under British rule and was intensified under Pakistan. The Pakhtoon country was divided into different areas, some described as the settled districts, some others were 'unsettled' (a kind of no-man's land), some again as political agencies. More in sorrow than in anger, he has written: "Neither the British Government, when it was in power, nor the Pakistani Government after the partition, have ever allowed me to have any connection with my tribal brethren, or to visit them and stay with them and share their joys and sorrows."

For centuries, from the Moghul to the British period, and from the British to Pakistani rule, the tribal Pathans have never been treated with equality or dignity. Because of their isolation from the rest of the world, the Pathans have been misunderstood; their love of freedom and liberty described as disregard for law and order, their bravery and courage called savagery... their traditional hospitality and sociability misrepresented.

Failure to salute a Britisher, as he witnessed very early in life, for a Pathan, meant the 'stocks'—"a large wooden frame with holes for the feet and a lid on the top, in which an offender is locked up in a sitting position, his feet sticking out through the holes."

His first taste of prison life as a freedom fighter, when he was barely 20, was dreadful; the fetters on his feet were so tight that he could hardly walk, and the feet were bleeding. Sir George Roos-Keppel, a sympathetic administrator, reduced his first sentence to six months, but his freedom was of brief duration. Touring in the villages round his home in Utmanzai was considered risky. A security was demanded but he was in no mood to furnish one. Back he went to prison, this time to serve a full three years' rigorous imprisonment with solitary confinement. The jailor was willing to provide relief for a consideration, but Bad-

shah Khan told him : "Bribing is a social evil : I will have no part in it. You know that I am here because I refused to furnish security. If I have to bribe anyone, I may as well pay the security."

An accidental circumstance, namely, transfer to Lahore Central Jail brought Badshah Khan into contact with India's leaders. He read Maulana Azad's *Al Hilal*, came into contact with Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru, was drawn into the Congress and later became a member of its Working Committee. These contacts had a great effect on him. Returning to his homeland he told his people : "A revolution is like a flood, it can bring blessings, but it can also bring devastation; it can bring fertility and prosperity but it can also bring ruin." He was anxious for the active involvement of the Pathan people in a constructive movement which would concentrate on education : this was the genesis of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) movement.

The more he saw of Gandhiji the greater grew his respect and affection for him. The Khudai Khidmatgar movement became so popular that the Chief Commissioner of the North West Frontier Province demanded its dissolution. Badshah Khan replied : "Our organisation is purely social; it is not a political movement." The assurance was not considered adequate : where was the guarantee that later it would not be exploited for a political objective ?

The punishment meted out to the members of the movement, in a vain effort to suppress it, offers a depressing commentary on the sadistic side of human nature. Occasionally, a kindly British officer would mitigate the cruelties of prison life. The Inspector-General of Police (a Mr. Smith) had once the courage to protest to the Governor of the Province against the treatment accorded to 'a brave opponent' like Badshah Khan. In contrast was the attitude of the Pakistan Government : he was kept in solitary confinement most of the time, and if sometimes a companion was permitted, he was either a lunatic or had some incurable disease.

My meetings with Badshah Khan were only in Delhi—where he came to my house for a meal and met Sir Stafford Cripps for a private conversation—not in his native Province. But I did have an opportunity, in the summer of 1938, to visit Waziristan

and meet some of the Pathan tribal people who lived there. The circumstances of my visit make a story by themselves.

British bombing of the tribal villages in Waziristan had made big news at that time in Europe, and the *Manchester Guardian* cabled for an authentic report. I knew next to nothing about events in Waziristan, living as I did hundreds of miles away from the region, with no access to direct sources of information. With the editor's approval, I requested Mr. Abdul Qaiyum Khan, then an active member of the Swaraj Party (and later a follower of Mr. Jinnah and an ardent Muslim Leaguer), to do a special article for the *Guardian*. He produced a scathing condemnation of the horrors of bombing innocent Pathan villages in language that I knew was not in the normal style of the paper. I toned it down considerably, with the writer's permission, and in due course it appeared in the *Guardian*, followed, as was inevitable, by a number of critical questions in the House of Commons.

Months later, after I had moved up to Simla, which used to be the summer capital of the Government in the years before the Second World War, I received a telephone message from a British Army Officer from Army Headquarters. "Are you free", he asked me, "to come up to Army Headquarters for a cup of tea with the Chief of the General Staff?" The Chief was Brigadier Auchinleck, later to be a Field-Marshal in charge of the Supreme Command of the Allied Forces for a time in the Second World War. I walked through Simla's thick monsoon mist and found my way to his room. On his table was spread out a big map of the North West Frontier Province and Waziristan. "Why do you send articles written by other people on our Waziristan policy?", he began. "Because (I replied) I know nothing about it and must rely on those who live in that region." "You can go yourself", he told me, and turned the map towards me with places marked all over Waziristan and the Frontier Province—Bannu, Tank, Jandola, Wana, Razmak, Miranshah, Mirali, Kohat, Peshawar.

The details of my visit thus settled, Auchinleck assured me that I was absolutely free to ask any questions, note down my impressions and draw my own conclusions. From Bannu, my first halt, until Kohat, I would be the guest of the Indian Army, but travelling at my own expense from Simla to Bannu.

Thus in the middle of July 1938, I found myself arriving after a hot journey across the Indus Valley at Bannu. I was met by Staff Captain Kulwant Singh (who later retired as a General). His deputy was Second Lieutenant Ayub Khan, who was to become President of Pakistan. At dinner that night in the regimental mess, the Commandant (a senior British Officer) said to me: "You must find time to spend a couple of hours at least at Tank where two British missionary women doctors have been running a fine women's hospital for over a quarter of a century."

At Tank, in the heart of the Mahsud territory, next day, I heard a remarkable story from these two women doctors who spoke fluent Pushtu and knew the region well. They had nothing to fear from the Mahsuds, "the most inveterate and the most treacherous of all the Pathan tribes" as one British writer had described them to be. These women could go freely in a tonga at night to a Mahsud village to look after an ailing woman or a child, with no fear of molestation.

That was understandable in normal times : but what followed in our talk seemed to me incredible. These women were in the habit of going every year to Kashmir for a month to six weeks of the worst part of the summer, returning in the middle of July for another spell of medical work. But one year, while they were still in Kashmir, there was a tribal revolt which sealed off Tank from Bannu. Well past the usual time for the re-opening of the women's hospital at Tank, there was no sign of the medical women proceeding beyond Bannu. The hospital was an indispensable necessity for the tribal people, revolt or no revolt. A truce party went up to Bannu with a strange request from the tribesmen to the Commandant. Could these women accompany the party back to Tank, so that the hospital might reopen for the sake of their women-folk? The doctors were willing to accept the invitation despite the attendant risk and the Commandant saw no reason for refusing them permission. And so they went, the truce remaining effective until they had reached Tank.

My fascinating trip terminated at Peshawar, where I was the guest of the North West Frontier Province's Chief Minister, Dr. Khan Sahib (Badshah Khan's brother) whom I knew earlier in New Delhi as a member of the Swaraj Party in the Central Legis-

lative Assembly. I narrated some of my exciting experiences in Waziristan in an after-dinner talk with him: the sniping from the hills round Razmak, the reactions of the Pathans to British bombing of tribal villages in Waziristan, the remains of Buddhist sculpture almost everywhere in the region, etc. My host, a Pathan in his outlook despite his many years in the West, remarked: "You should see the Health Officer of Peshawar and ask him about a recent incident which nearly cost him his life."

The following day I met this Health Officer, also a Pathan. He indeed had an extraordinary story to tell me. He was sleeping one morning in the open outside his bungalow (it being summer-time) when he was summoned by telephone peremptorily to the Police Station. Unaware of what it was about, he went and saw a sullen-looking Pathan seated in a corner of the Police Officer's room. "Do you recognise that man?", asked the Inspector, pointing to the villager. The Health Officer gave a negative reply.

"But I know you," said the villager, "you saved my life some years ago." There had been a tribal uprising against the British in which this villager had taken part. In the clash with the Indian troops there were casualties, this villager being among the wounded. The Health Officer, who at that time was attached to a medical unit of the Army, had all the wounded—from both sides—removed to the nearest hospital for the necessary attention. And for days he looked after them until they were ready to be discharged. The villager went home after the suppression of the revolt, grateful to the man who had nursed him back to normal health.

And then, years later—as was not uncommon in that part of the world—because of a feud over family property, someone wanted the Army doctor (subsequently posted on civilian duty as Peshawar's Health Officer) to be murdered; and this villager was hired for the purpose. He had gone to the Health Officer's bungalow very early one morning to have a look at the man he was to murder—and recognised in him the saviour of his life. He slunk away as quietly as he had entered the compound. He could have gone home after declining to carry out the foul deed; but to his simple mind that did not seem right. He voluntarily surrendered

himself to the police with a confession, but of course without disclosing the name of the person who had hired him !

Before returning to Simla, after these unforgettable ten days spent among a people governed by a strict code of their own, scornful of danger and death and reckless in their love of independence, I thought that my trip would not be complete without a visit to Badshah Khan's home village of Utmanzai in the picturesque Peshawar valley. Unfortunately he was out on tour and I could not meet him.

Early in 1946 the Khudai Khidmatgars won the provincial Assembly elections with a large majority. Maulana Azad and Badshah Khan were elected by the Frontier Assembly as delegates to the Constituent Assembly.

Despite this clear verdict, however, in the following year a referendum was forced upon the Province, and this too in a form which the Pathans regarded as a gross injustice. The Province was asked to choose whether it would remain in India or join Pakistan. As an option, this choice was an illusion because, being landlocked and cut off from India by the large area of West Pakistan territory, joining with India was really out of the question. Abdul Ghaffar Khan pleaded very strongly that the Pathans should be given the option of self-determination, namely, to form their own separate State if they opted for it in the referendum. Lord Mountbatten was, however, deeply committed to the principle that no Province was to be given the option of standing by itself and he made this clear to Nehru and the Congress leaders. To Badshah Khan's dismay, they accepted Lord Mountbatten's decision without even putting up a fight in favour of Badshah Khan's stand. Badshah Khan comments : "It hurt and grieved me deeply that even the Congress Working Committee did not lift a finger to help us, as we had hoped they would." In view of the indifference of the Working Committee, the question whether the region wanted to remain in India or go to Pakistan seemed to Badshah Khan not only unnecessary but also improper, and he and his followers decided to boycott the referendum.

He contended : "The Congress, which was the representative body in India, not only deserted us but delivered us into the hands of our enemies. To meet them now is like killing all my Pathan

self-respect, ethics and traditions." His only consolation was that Gandhiji was on his side throughout the controversy.

After the creation of Pakistan, Badshah Khan spent 15 years in prison ; in addition, "thousands of Khudai Khidmatgars lost their lives. . . . Though we did not commit any crimes, the treatment that the Pakistan Government meted out to us from the very beginning was more cruel and more unjust than anything we had suffered under the rule of the foreign infidels. The British had never looted our homes, but the Islamic Government of Pakistan did. The British had never stopped us from holding public meetings or publishing newspapers, but the Islamic Government of Pakistan did both. The British had never treated the Pakhtoon women disrespectfully, but the Islamic Government of Pakistan did Pakistan was founded on hatred. It was born not out of love but out of hatred, and it grew up on hatred, on malice, on spite and hostility."

Sir Bertram Stevens

The foundations for a friendly relationship between Australia and India were first laid over a quarter of a century ago in circumstances of unparalleled adversity during the Second World War, by an Australian statesman, Sir Bertram Stevens. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour was followed by spectacular successes in South-East Asia, underlining the need for an agency to co-ordinate the war supplies of the Allied Powers in this part of the world. The establishment of an Eastern Group Supply Council with its headquarters in New Delhi became necessary, and Sir Bertram Stevens, a former Premier of New South Wales, was nominated by his Government as Australia's representative.

During my regular visits to the Supply Council in my professional capacity as a journalist, I realised that Sir Bertram was a man of exceptional drive and foresight. The political deadlock in India frequently figured as a topic of discussion between us which led later to direct contacts being established with Nehru.

With the naval disaster sustained by Britain in South-East Asia in the closing months of 1941, the war situation seriously deteriorated from the point of view of the Allies. Sir Bertram, as an Australian, was quick to see the consequences to his country of the loss of two British battleships off Malaya. Japan's advance towards Singapore could no longer be halted, and Australia was in imminent danger of being cut off from the other Allies. Japan's occupation of South-East Asia meant that it would be a long war—but a 'war of production', as Sir Bertram stressed in a

confidential memorandum, with "time not necessarily on the Allies' side". He was anxious "for a new and quick survey of India's war effort, on the production side particularly, with the new situation in mind and a clear-eyed appreciation that past prejudices and inhibitions must go".

I took the liberty, after obtaining the necessary permission, of showing Sir Bertram's memorandum to Nehru and Asaf Ali. They were struck by its clear analysis of the factors that would determine the duration and the ultimate result of the war.

Each day brought its tale of fresh disasters and retreats. After Singapore's fall without resistance, Sir Bertram reviewed the war situation in a comprehensive memorandum. India's problem, he plainly saw, was "literally one of survival"; and "the way in which she faces it, will perhaps determine for a very long time to come her status among the States and peoples of the earth. The way India stands up to the coming Japanese moral and military onslaught—and perhaps the Nazi attack too—will have decisive effects on the temper and potential of the people of India."

With Singapore as the new headquarters of the Japanese battle fleet, an early attack on India seemed almost inevitable. The Anglo-American naval forces stationed at Sourabaya in Java, ill-equipped in comparison and exposed to large-scale attack, would then have been in a desperate position. Gloomy as the prospect seemed, it would be much worse, Sir Bertram feared, with Rangoon and Lower Burma under Japanese occupation. Bengal would then become vulnerable, and "Calcutta and Jamshedpur would feel the first brunt".

Sir Bertram's assessment left no room for complacency. With Rangoon gone, "communications with India (would be) gravely imperilled, and it is only a question of how complete a blockade of Madras, Calcutta, Vizagapatam, Colombo, Goa, Bombay and Karachi the Japanese can establish. Raiders—not merely submarines but big cruisers—can range the East and West coasts."

Bleak as the short-term prospect seemed to be, it appeared even more sinister in an over-all analysis of the war situation. The secondary threat to India, in Sir Bertram's view, "less immediate, but no less grave, (lay) in Germany's push into Iran *via* Turkey and from the Caucasus".

From this assessment he went on to consider India's position—and her responsibility—thrown as she was, by Japan's sudden thrust into Malaya and Burma, into the front line. He held:

India is the key to the future. If India were to fall, with all her resources and man-power, to an unscrupulous and clever enemy, the following results would follow: (i) India would never get her freedom, never cash in on her efforts to master western ideas of democracy, social conscience and individual rights; (ii) her man-power would be used, sooner or later, to help Japan or Germany crush the western races in Australia, Africa and America and to destroy Soviet Russia and to wear China down and destroy China's 'New Life' and Asiatic renaissance: a vista for India of unending suffering, degradation, toil, bloodshed and drainage of vital human resources.

If the fall of Singapore lengthened the war by three years, the fall of India, in Sir Bertram's view, would lengthen it by thirty at the least. India, he said, "is not only the key to the British Empire, it is the key to civilization at the moment." What, then, he asked, should be the positive steps taken to retrieve a position which had become desperate?

The strategic problem is to turn Australia and India into impregnable fortresses containing powerful arsenals. India is in a far weaker position than Australia, and to her the enemy is therefore more likely to turn, true to a policy of probing the 'soft spots' first—irrespective of the strategic advantages which have been sketched above... The immediate problem is to arm as many Indians as possible, and rush troops and material to threatened spots—such as Ceylon—and once they are there, to lead them to resist to the last man.

From the long range point of view the obvious plan seemed to him to be the development of India's indigenous production. Beyond India's existing capacity, he was convinced, there must be developed new capacity to supplement what already existed in

some cases; and in other cases, to start new lines or to duplicate, triplicate and quadruplicate existing installations. In steel, not only were new furnaces needed to treat all India's pig-iron—a large proportion of which was sent to Britain for steel-making—but also increased fabricating capacity was needed. India was hopelessly deficient in foundries, machine tools, and manufacturing capacity.

I gave Sir Bertram's memorandum, which contained much that was stimulating and instructive, to Nehru. He was deeply impressed with its sound approach and constructive suggestions. When Sir Stafford Cripps arrived with the British proposals in March 1942 for a war-time settlement, and serious difficulties arose over the transitional arrangements regarding defence, I was asked by Nehru to obtain from Sir Bertram a precise statement of the constitutional arrangements in a full-fledged Dominion like Australia in regard to defence.

Sir Bertram drew up a note, which both Nehru and Asaf Ali described as 'invaluable', to point out that Australia was represented by a Minister in the War Cabinet in Britain. His principal task was to keep his Government informed of high imperial strategy and generally to represent Australia's views in the British War Cabinet. Australia was also represented in the Pacific War Council in Washington so that she could influence Allied policy in the Pacific and have a voice in shaping high imperial strategy; all this was in addition to being in complete control of her internal defence arrangements.

While carefully refraining from expressing any views on the controversy which threatened a deadlock in the Cripps' negotiations, Sir Bertram presumed that if India's Defence Member was not an Indian and was directly answerable to the War Office and not to the Viceroy, obviously there would be no such thing as collective responsibility in the Indian Cabinet. Whatever might be the ultimate compromise, India, he thought, should be represented on the Pacific War Council and in the War Cabinet in London, adding, as a suggestion, that "the Indian representatives should be clothed with the same powers as the representatives of Australia".

Discussing the point whether a formula could be evolved to

satisfy the requirements of the situation, Sir Bertram thought that some of the statements made by Sir Stafford Cripps in New Delhi had created a barrier to the surrender of ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the war on Britain's part; but he presumed that India's demand did not go so far as to claim immediate power to accept such full responsibility. Short of it there were a number of important questions on which Indian public opinion "needed to be roused to the requisite point of enthusiasm for the war effort".

His own formula for the solution of the deadlock on defence was in the following terms :

Agree that the Commander-in-Chief be responsible for certain major questions. Let this agreement be entered into now, binding on the basis of its urgency and importance. For example, at this particular juncture, it would be impossible to effect major changes of policy in certain directions. The War Office could not be expected to hand over to India any of the major questions affecting strategy outside India; neither could it be expected to export to India plants and equipment ordered at the caprice of the new Indian Defence Member; but if the right man be chosen and there is a tacit understanding before he is appointed, no practical difficulties should arise, particularly if those questions of policy, that now agitate the mind of the average Indian, are settled beforehand.

At the same time, Sir Bertram stressed, certain important factors were at stake beyond India's defence. Before Britain could surrender control of the Indian war effort to a new Government in India, she was bound to consider the reactions of her three important allies—Russia, China and the U.S.A.

The subsequent correspondence between Maulana Azad, the Congress President, with Sir Stafford Cripps and Nehru's personal statements on the controversy, which finally wrecked the Cripps Mission, afford clear evidence of the extent to which these two Congress leaders were materially assisted in formulating their defence proposals by the views expressed by Sir Bertram Stevens in his note. The failure of the Cripps Mission brought to a sudden end Sir Bertram's efforts to bring Australia and India closer together in a better-planned and more efficient war effort.

Mrs. Besant's Parting Message*

TO MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN INDIA

[As I have to see H.E. the Governor tomorrow, 15th June, 1917, I think it safer to print it today, lest I should be interned and unable to speak.

ANNIE BESANT]

"These are the times that try men's souls." Thus spoke one who faced the fiery furnace of trial, and who faltered neither in faith nor in courage. It is ours today to face a powerful auto-cracy, determined to crush out all resistance to its will, and that will is to prevent India from gaining self-government, or home rule, in the reconstruction of the Empire after the War.

The National Congress has declared, in conjunction with the All-India Muslim League, that India must be lifted from the position of a Dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire. To that end they drafted a scheme of reforms, which proposed that the Legislative Councils should be much enlarged and elected on as broad a basis as possible, with a four-fifths majority of elected members and that control of taxation and expenditure—the power of granting or refusing supply—should be placed in the hands of this Legislative Council. This is the feature of the scheme specially selected by H.E. the Governor of Madras for reprobation, and although it had been planned—in consonance with the practice of the civilized—by the most responsible public

* Please refer to page 45 of the text.

men in the country, and accepted by the great mass of popularly elected delegates at the Lucknow National Congress and the Muslim League in 1916.

The difference of opinion between the Governor of Madras and the large majority of educated Indians is a small matter : but the resolution to crush home rule by force is a very serious one. It is practically proposed to strangle by violence the political educative propaganda which the Congress ordered its own Committees, the Home Rule Leagues, and other similar public bodies to carry on. We are therefore faced by the alternative of disobeying the mandate of the country or that of the Governor of Madras, an alternative which has been faced in the past by all countries which suffer under autocracies, and which India—the last great civilized country to be subjected to autocracy, save those under the Central Powers in Europe—has now to face. For myself, as a member of the All-India Congress Committee, I elect to obey the mandate of the country, in preference to that of the Governor of Madras, which has no moral justification behind it, which outrages British law and custom, and imposes an unwarrantable, and, I believe, an illegal, restriction on the fundamental Rights of Man. I know that this resolution of mine, setting myself against the strongest autocracy in the world in the midst of a disarmed and helpless people, will seem to most an act of madness, but by such acts of madness Nations are inspired to resist oppression. Others will scoff at it as an easy martyrdom, deliberately courted; they have already done so, to discount it beforehand, they who would not face exclusion from Government House, let alone the loss of liberty, the seizure of property, and the exclusion from public life, which has been my one work and joy for forty-three years. When I was twenty-five I wrote, anonymously, my first Free-thought pamphlet, and within a year, as I refused to attend the Sacrament I had ceased to believe in, I was turned out by my husband from his home. I did not then, and do not now, blame him, for the position of a Vicar with a heretic wife was impossible, and his friends urged him to the step. At twenty-six at the end of July, 1874, I joined the National Secular Society, for the first time heard Mr. Bradlaugh lecture on August 2, and received my certificate of member-

ship and had an interview with him a day or two later. On August 30, I wrote my first article in the *National Reform* and continued to write in it regularly, till he died in 1891. My real public life dates from my first public lecture on 'The Political Status of Women', for the Co-operative Institute in August, 1874.

Since then my life has been given wholly to the service of the public, as I have seen service, so that the deprivation of the liberty to render service is the greatest loss that can befall me. I know that the selfish and the unpatriotic cannot realize this, but those who have a similar *Dharma*—they will understand. Apart from the joy of service, life has no attractions for me, save the happiness that flows from a few deep and strong personal attachments. To surrender liberty and touch with those I love is to me worse than death. But to live free and with them, a coward and dishonoured, a traitor to *Dharma* and to India, would be hell. I take the easier path.

Those who rob me of liberty will try to blacken me, in order to escape shame for themselves. The Defence of India Act was never intended to be used to prevent public political speech, free from all incitement to, or suggestion of, violence, and accompanied with no disturbance of any kind. My paper could have been stopped by the Press Act, by forfeiture of security and confiscation of the press. But the Government is afraid to face the High Court, which has already pronounced its former procedure to be illegal. An autocracy is ever afraid of law, and hence the Government takes the step of shutting me up—a cowardly course—and hopes to prevent any public protest by striking down all who resist it. The Defence of India Act is being used to suppress all political agitation of an orderly character, so that the Government may pretend to England that India is silent and indifferent.

If any attempt be made to justify my internment by pretence of my entering into or cognisance of any conspiracy, or communication with the enemy, I fling the lie in the slanderer's teeth. I know that some postcards with my portrait, purporting to come from Germany and said to be seditious, have been sent to friends. I have been told of them, but have not seen a copy. They may

have been fabricated in Germany, or by the C.I.D. here, but I have nothing to do with them.

If it be said that I have carried on a 'campaign of calumny' which I utterly deny, the fault lies with Lord Pentland, who could, once again, have forfeited my security and confiscated my press. But then his Advocate-General would have had to prove it in Court and before the Privy Council, and that he could not do. It is easy for a Governor, if he has no scruples, to calumniate a person from the safe security of a Council meeting at Ooty, and then to lock up the calumniated. Such is the natural course of an irresponsible autocrat.

Such men, to protect themselves, as we saw in the case of Sir Reginald Craddock, having silenced their victims, proceed to blacken and defame them before the world. How else can they justify themselves? When the dry facts as to poverty, starvation, over-taxation, illiteracy, are stated, they are 'calumny'. To say that the average life period in India is 23.05, that in England it is 40, in New Zealand, 60, is 'calumny'. To publish a table of literacy in England, Japan, Russia, Baroda, and British India is 'calumny'. To show that the raised assessment on land in one district was balanced that same year in the increased debt of the *rai-yats* to the sowcars is 'calumny'. To show by these and many other facts that the autocracy in India is not even efficient is 'calumny'. To quote ancient books to show the state of the country in the pre-British days is 'calumny'—if it shows wide-spread prosperity and wealth; if it tells of raids and wars, then it is history.

Let them talk as they will; they "come and go, impermanent". But Lord Pentland—a good but weak man, driven into tyranny by strong and ruthless men—will have to answer for his actions before the Indian public, before the British Democracy, before history, which records the struggles for liberty, and before God. Will his conscience be as clear as mine?

I hear, but gossip is unreliable, that to avoid internment I shall be told either to go to England or to promise to abstain from political speaking and writing. I shall do neither: I do not run away from a struggle into which I have led others, and leave them in the middle of the field. Our work has been wholly constitu-

tional; there has been no threat, no act of violence; in nothing has the law been transgressed. We believed that we were living under the Crown of Great Britain, and had the constitutional right of speech and law-abiding agitation for reforms in the system of government under which we live. Still, we were aware that we were living under an autocracy, which first punishes and then issues orders forbidding the act punished, and we took the risk; for the risk was personal, whereas the suppression of free speech means secret conspiracy leading to revolution, in which many suffer. I have often pointed out that in India liberty and property can be confiscated by Executive Order, and that therefore no man is safe; an Executive Order forfeited my security and deprived me of another 10,000 rupees. Now an Executive Order deprives me of my liberty. It is well. The world will learn how India is governed, and that while England asks India to fight against autocracy in Europe, and drains her of her capital to carry on the War, England's agents use all the methods of autocracy in India, in order to deceive the world into the idea that India is well governed and is content.

What is my crime, that after a long life of work for others, publicly and privately, I am to be dropped into internment? My real crime is that I have awakened in India the national self-respect which was asleep, and have made thousands of educated men feel that to be content with being 'a subject race' is a dishonour. Mr. Lloyd George said truly that Ireland's discontent was not material, it was due to the wounding of national self-respect, and therefore could not be cured even by prosperity. I have made them feel that to live under an autocracy, to dance attendance on Governors and Collectors, to be ruled and taxed without their own consent, to be told that they were not fit to govern themselves, to see young Englishmen in the public services of their country preferred to experienced Indians, to have highly-paid Imperial Services for foreigners lording it over less well-paid Provincial Services for 'natives'—'natives' being the natural owners of their own land—that these and a hundred other like things were intolerable and should be ended. Life does not consist in money and clothes, in motor cars and invitations to

Government Houses. Life consists in liberty, in self-respect, in honour, in right ambition, in patriotism and in noble living. Where these are absent, life is not worth living. It is not the life of a man in the image of God, but of a brute, well fed by his owner.

Appendix II

Dr. Subramania Aiyar's Letter to President Wilson*

MADRAS (INDIA)

24TH JUNE, 1917

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT WILSON
HONOURED SIR,

I address this letter to you as Honorary President of the Home Rule League in India, an organisation voicing the aspirations of a United India as expressed through the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League. These are the only two bodies in India today which truly represent the political ideals of that nation of more than three hundred million people, because they are the only bodies created by the people themselves.

Over five thousand delegates of these two popular assemblies met at their annual convention in Lucknow last December, and they unanimously and co-jointly agreed upon identical resolutions, asking His Majesty the King of Great Britain, to issue a proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of British policy to confer self-government on India at an early date, to grant democratising reforms and to lift India from the posi-

* Please refer to page 76 of the text.

tion of a Dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing Dominions.

While these resolutions, Honoured Sir, voiced India's aspirations, they also expressed her loyalty to the Crown. But though many months have elapsed, Great Britain has not yet made any official promise to grant our country's plea. Perhaps this is because the Government is too fully occupied with the heavy responsibility of the War.

But it is the very relationship of the Indian Nationalist movement to the War that urges the necessity for an immediate promise of home rule—autonomy—for India, as it would result in an offer from India of at least five million men in three months for service at the front, and of five million more in another three months.

India can do this because she has a population of three hundred and fifteen million—three times that of the United States, and almost equal to the combined population of all the Allies. The people of India will do this, because then they would be free men and not slaves.

At present we are a subject nation, held in chains, forbidden by our alien rulers to express publicly our desire for the ideals presented in your famous War Message: "...the liberation of peoples, the rights of nations great and small, and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their ways of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty."

Even as conditions are, India has more than proved her loyalty to the Allies. She has contributed freely and generously of both blood and treasure in France, in Gallipoli, in Mesopotamia, and elsewhere. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for India, said: "There are Indian troops in France to this day; their gallantry, endurance, patience and perseverance, were shown under conditions new and strange to them." Field-Marshal Lord French said: "I have been much impressed by the initiative and resource displayed by the Indian troops." The London *Times* said, concerning the fall of Baghdad: "It should always be remembered that a very large proportion of the force

which General Maude has guided to victory are Indian regiments. The cavalry which hung on the flanks and demoralised the Turkish army and chased it to the confines of Baghdad must have been almost exclusively Indian cavalry. The infantry which bore months of privation and proved in the end masters of the Turks, included Indian units which had already fought heroically in France, Gallipoli and Egypt."

If Indian soldiers have achieved such splendid results for the Allies while slaves, how much greater would be their power if inspired by the sentiments which can arise only in the souls of free men—men who are fighting not only for their own liberties, but for the liberties of mankind? The truth is that they are now sacrificing their lives to maintain the supremacy of an alien nation which uses that supremacy to dominate and rule them against their will.

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the official Government in India utterly failed to get a response to its recent appeal to Indians to volunteer for military service. Only five hundred men came forward out of a possible thirty million.

It is our earnest hope that you may so completely convert England to your ideals of world liberation that together you will make it possible for India's millions to lend assistance in this war.

Permit me to add that you and the other leaders have been kept in ignorance of the full measure of misrule and oppression in India. Officials of an alien nation, speaking a foreign tongue, force their will upon us; they grant themselves exorbitant salaries and large allowances; they refuse us education; they sap us of our wealth; they impose crushing taxes without our consent; they cast thousands of our people into prisons for uttering patriotic sentiments—prisons so filthy that often the inmates die from loathsome diseases.

A recent instance of misrule is the imprisonment of Mrs. Annie Besant, that noble Irish woman who has done so much for India. She had done nothing except carry on a law-abiding and constitutional propaganda for reforms; the climax being her internment, without charges and without trial, shortly after printing and circulating your War Message.

I believe His Majesty, the King, and the English Parliament

are unaware of these conditions, and that, if they can be informed, they will order Mrs. Besant's immediate release.

A mass of documentary evidence, entirely reliable, corroborative and explanatory of the statements in this letter, is in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hotchner, who would esteem it a privilege to place it at your disposal. I have entrusted this letter to them because it would never have been permitted to reach you by mail. They are loyal Americans, editors, authors and lecturers on educational and humanitarian subjects who have been deeply interested in the welfare of India. They have sojourned here off and on during the last ten years and so have been eye-witnesses to many of the conditions herein described. They have graciously consented to leave their home in India in order to convey this letter to you personally in Washington.

Honoured Sir, the aching heart of India cries out to you, whom we believe to be an instrument of God in the reconstruction of the world.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

S. SUBRAMANIAM

Honorary President of the Home Rule League in India;
Co-Founder of the National Congress of India in 1885;
Retired Judge and frequently acting Chief Justice of
the High Court of Madras;
Knight Commander of the Indian Empire,
Doctor of Laws.

Appendix III

Appeal by Liberals*

The following appeal was issued by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other liberals in December 1940 :

Men of good-will, anxious for a friendly settlement of India's problem which would be consistent with her dignity and honour, cannot but view with profound misgivings the recent decisions of the Congress as well as of the Muslim League. The inauguration of civil disobedience in the near future on the one hand and plans for the dismemberment of India on the other are both courses which may lead to bitterness and internal strife on a vast scale, and prove disastrous to the cause of a lasting solution based on the conception of a united and free India.

The Viceroy's categorical assurance that the goal of British policy in India is Dominion Status in accordance with the Statute of Westminster to be attained after the shortest possible period of transition, satisfies the essence of the Congress demand for independence. The definition of the term 'Dominion' by the Imperial Conference of 1926 as 'autonomous units', "equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of domestic and external affairs" and "freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations" should dispose of all fears that such a status would deny to India opportunities for her fullest development and self-expression.

* Please refer to page 92 of the text.

Moreover, no one can visualise, at this juncture, developments in the international situation during the course of the war. One thing, however, may be regarded as certain : at the Peace Conference, the reconstruction of the world on a basis that would eliminate the menace of recurring wars is bound to receive the greatest prominence. In such a task the solution of the Indian problem cannot be isolated or relegated to the back-ground. On the eve of changes which may revolutionise the whole course of human relationships, it seems futile to discuss the present distinction between Dominion status and complete independence, or to define India's post-war attitude towards the British Commonwealth and the rest of the world. Nor is it wise to press forward, at a time when the world is weary of disintegration and strife, schemes for the partition of India, exposing her to the dangers of internal weakness and aggression from beyond her frontiers. We would earnestly suggest, therefore, to the leaders of the Congress as well as of the Muslim League that they should regard the authoritative declaration of His Excellency the Viceroy as being the best solution in existing circumstances.

The more fruitful course, in our view, would be to obtain practical guarantees from His Majesty's Government that the transition to such a status will in reality be of the shortest possible duration; and in the meanwhile, to secure the confidence of the Muslims and other minorities so that discussions of India's future Constitution may take place in an atmosphere of goodwill.

At the same time, the demand for a declaration in favour of a Constitution to be framed by a body truly representative of the people seems to us to be not only just, but has the support of past practice in all the countries which have achieved Dominion status. There is substance in the criticism that the offer of mere consultation with the leaders of various parties and interests as a preliminary to an alteration of the Constitution is inconsistent with India's rapid approach to the status of a self-governing Dominion.

Before, however, such an organisation can usefully function with the active support of the various interests and minorities in India, there are essential details which must be settled by consultation among the leaders. The assurances which have repeatedly

been given by the Congress that the Constitution would contain safeguards acceptable to the minorities themselves as adequate and satisfactory, will have to be implemented before the constitutional proposals can be deemed to have India's sanction.

There are problems in which Britain is vitally interested, such as defence, British commercial interests and the Indian States, which are generally regarded as capable of solution on the basis of an agreement or treaty between the two countries, subject to periodical revision.

Such a solution should prove acceptable to all who are anxious for the peace and progress of India. It takes into account the demand for the application of the principle of self-determination, the legitimate requirements of the minorities regarding their position in a self-governing India and issues from which Britain feels she cannot disassociate herself in meeting India's demand for freedom.

While there is still time for calm deliberation, we venture to appeal to the major parties in India and to the British Government to evolve a basis of agreement which, we are confident, is possible, notwithstanding many discouraging indications on the surface.

We would, therefore, suggest to His Excellency the Viceroy to lose no time in summoning a conference of the Premiers of the eleven provinces to evolve a provisional settlement of the various issues now before the country. The credentials of such a conference, composed of responsible men who can claim to represent their respective provinces cannot be questioned in any quarter, and out of their deliberation may emerge a solution acceptable to all parties.

A Constituent Assembly for India^{*}

I gave Sir Stafford Cripps on 12th December, 1939, the following memorandum on a Constituent Assembly to be set up in India after the war :

At the end of the war there should be a general election for the provincial Assemblies in all the provinces with the main issue of framing a Constitution on the basis of complete freedom subject to agreed reservations which may be incorporated in the draft proposals and made renewable at the end of five or ten years.

The provincial Assemblies are constituted in the following manner : Madras has 215 seats, Bombay 175, Bengal 250, the United Provinces 228, the Punjab 175, Bihar 152, the Central Provinces 112, Assam 108, the North West Frontier Province 50, Orissa 60, and Sind 60, making a total of 1,585. One-tenth of this number, counting half and over as one and omitting less than half, would give a body of 160 delegates. Madras would have 22, Bombay 18, Bengal 25, the U. P. 23, the Punjab 18, Bihar 15, the C. P. and Assam 11 each, the N.W.F. Province 5, Orissa and Sind 6 each, making a total of 160. Interests and communities will be represented in the following numbers :

General	66
Scheduled Castes	15
Muslims	48
Backward tribes	3

^{*} Please refer to page 135 of the text.

Sikhs	4
Anglo-Indians	1
Europeans	3
Commerce, Industry, Mining and Plantations	6
Indian Christians	2
Landholders	4
Universities	1
Labour	4
Women	3
	<hr/> 160 <hr/>

It is a matter for consideration whether this Assembly or Convention should have the right to co-opt a very small number in order to give representation to certain interests or to distinguished individuals who may not be elected in the usual way.

A body so constituted cannot be objected to from any point of view. So far as the British Parliament is concerned this body will owe its existence in the ultimate to the provincial electorates. The various communities and interests will be represented in it strictly in accordance with the existing proportions in the various provincial Assemblies. Muslims will have 30 per cent of the seats, even if they do not secure any from amongst the seats allotted to interests like women, labour, commerce and industry.

Procedure and the manner of reaching decisions will have to be settled before the Assembly starts work. The following suggestions seem to be worthy of consideration. All general proposals should be carried by a majority vote. Safeguards for the rights of minorities must have, in addition, a majority of the votes of their own delegates. For instance, safeguards for the Muslims should be carried by 81 votes, of which at least 25 should be Muslims. The same consideration would apply to the scheduled castes.

If the above procedure is followed, it is conceivable that deadlocks may arise if the safeguards proposed by the Assembly

as a whole do not receive the support of a majority of the delegates representing the minority concerned.

If a compromise is not immediately reached, the Assembly should adjourn its sitting for a period of about three months. During this period the proposals and the counter-proposals should be published and opinions of all sections gathered. When the Assembly re-assembles, it is possible that the interval has brought about a change in the situation. But assuming that the deadlock continues, the Chairman of the Assembly should have the right, to be exercised at his discretion, of dissolving the Assembly and asking the members of the provincial Assemblies to go through a fresh election. This procedure amounts to an appeal from the delegates to their immediate electors.

It is conceivable that this new Assembly will take a different view of the deadlock and overcome it. But if it should continue, the question arises as to what should be done. If after three efforts, which would be spread roughly over a year, no solution has been reached, there should be a fresh *general* election; in other words, a referendum of the primary electors. The same process should be gone through after a fresh election of the National Assembly elected by the new members of the provincial Assemblies. If in spite of these efforts, a settlement has not been reached, then the matter should be referred to a tribunal which may consist of one or more persons acceptable to both sides and the award of the tribunal should be binding.

This should satisfy the Congress demand that a body consisting of the representatives of the people of India and having behind it the sanction of the largest possible electorate should draft the Constitution, and also the minorities. The question of procedure is important, and there should be a preliminary agreement in regard to what procedure should be adopted by the National Assembly. If agreement is reached in regard to procedure, the constitution and size of the National Convention (or Assembly), the British Government should have no objection to convening it immediately after the war. It is agreed on all sides that the new Constitution for India should contain satisfactory provisions for the protection of important minorities which will be regarded as adequate by the minorities themselves.

In regard to certain problems, such as defence, the Indian States and British financial and commercial interests, it is essential that agreed solutions between His Majesty's Government and the representatives of India should be incorporated in the draft Constitution to be framed by the Constituent Assembly.

These problems could be discussed without any avoidable delay by the Governor-General by inviting the Premiers of British Indian Provinces and a few representatives of the States to form a committee which will examine and report upon these problems.

Broadly speaking, this was the procedure adopted in Ireland in 1921. The Irish Parliament functioning as the Irish Constituent Assembly drew up a Constitution on the basis of Dominion Status. There were, however, certain reservations which were binding on the Constituent Assembly. The reservations were first incorporated in a treaty signed by the representatives of Ireland on the one side and His Majesty's Government on the other, and terms of the treaty were embodied as transitory provisions in the Irish Constitution.

To sum up, the steps I visualise are : (1) a Conference of the eleven Premiers of the British Indian provinces to settle the details of the National Convention to be convened at the end of the war. This will not deal with the communal problem (except for the period of the war) but only settle the preliminaries as to how the National Convention would function.

(2) A general agreement being reached on this to ensure that the National Convention will have the co-operation of all parties, the British Government should then make a declaration to the effect that, subject to agreements between the representatives of India and the British Government in regard to defence, the Indian States and British commercial and financial interests, the National Convention would draw up a Constitution for a free India.

(3) Then the Viceroy will expand the Executive Council and convert it as far as is practicable within the limits of the present Constitution into a responsible Cabinet.

(4) The Premiers of the eleven Provinces and the popular leaders of the Executive Council will proceed to examine, with representatives of the States and of the British Government, the reservations in regard to defence, Indian States and British interests,

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which will be incorporated in a treaty to be signed by these representatives.

(5) At the end of the war, there will be a general election in the provinces. The main issue will be India's right to frame a constitution for herself through a National Convention subject to certain reservations incorporated in an Indo-British treaty. The parties to the treaty on the Indian side being the Premiers of the eleven Provinces and the popular leaders in the Viceroy's Executive Council, it follows that the election will *not* be fought on party lines, that is Congress versus Muslim League, etc., but will be fought by all those who stand for this procedure with the reservations and those who are opposed to it.

The Cripps Proposals*

The terms of the proposals made by Sir Stafford Cripps in March 1942 were as follows :

- (a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.
- (b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the Constitution-making body.
- (c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the Constitution so framed subject only to :
 - (1) The right of any Province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides. With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that herein here laid down.

* Please refer to page 136 of the text.

- (2) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the Constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities; but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in the future its relationship to the other member States of the British Commonwealth.
- (3) Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation.
- (d) The Constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities :

Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the Constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of the representatives of British India as a whole, and with the same powers as the British Indian members.

- (e) During the critical period which now faces India until the new Constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as

part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral, material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the people of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

‘Quit India’ Resolution of 8th August, 1942*

Resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, Bombay, 8th August, 1942.

The All-India Congress Committee has given the most careful consideration to the reference made to it by the Working Committee in their resolution dated 14th July, 1942 and to subsequent events, including the development of the war situation, the utterances of responsible spokesmen of the British Government, and the comments and criticisms made in India and abroad. The committee approves of and endorses that resolution and is of the opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification, and have made it clear that the immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom:

The Committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration of the situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts and conveys to the Russian and Chinese people its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom. This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who

* Please refer to page 138 of the text.

sympathize with the victims of aggression to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failure. It is not by adhering to such aims and policies and methods that failure can be converted into success, for past experience has shown that failure is inherent in them. These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and colonial countries and the continuation of the imperialist tradition and method. The possession of empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power, has become a burden and a curse. India, the classic land of modern imperialism, has become the crux of the question, for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm:

The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not only affect materially the fortunes of the war, but will bring all subject and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations, and give these nations, whose ally India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of British Imperialism and the taint of that imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations.

The peril of today, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination. No future promises or guarantees can affect the present situation or meet that peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses. Only the glow of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the War.

The All-India Congress Committee, therefore, repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British Power from India. On the declaration of India's independence, a provisional Government will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the

trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom. The provisional Government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite Government representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary function must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with its allied Powers, and to promote the well-being and progress of the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially all power and authority must belong. The Provisional Government will evolve a scheme for a Constituent Assembly which will prepare a Constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all the sections of the people. This Constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one, with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in these units. The future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression. Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it.

The freedom of India must be a symbol of and prelude to the freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch Indies, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any colonial power.

While the All-India Congress Committee must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a world federation would ensure freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all backward areas

and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. On the establishment of such a world federation, disarmament would be practicable in all countries; national armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary, and a World Federal Defence Force would keep the world peace and prevent aggression.

An independent India would gladly join such a world federation and co-operate on an equal basis with other nations in the solution of international problems.

Such a federation should be open to all nations who agree with its fundamental principles. In view of the war, however, the federation must inevitably, to begin with, be confined to the United Nations. Such a step taken now will have most powerful effect on the war, on the peoples of the Axis countries, and on the peace to come.

The Committee regretfully realizes, however, that despite the tragic and overwhelming lessons of the war and the perils that overhang the world, the Governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step towards world federation. The reaction of the British Government and the misguided criticism of the foreign Press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted, though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and to enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need. The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of China and Russia, whose freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardize the defence capacity of the United Nations. But the peril grows both to India and these nations, and inaction and submission to a foreign administration at this stage is not only degrading India and reducing her capacity to defend herself and resist aggression, but is no answer to the growing peril and is no service to the peoples of the United Nations. The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response, and the criticisms made in many foreign quarters have shown an ignorance of India's and the world's need, and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom, which is significant of a mentality of domination and racial superiority which cannot

be tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause.

The All-India Congress Committee would yet again, at this last moment, in the interest of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian Government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji, and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom. They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committees can function. When this happens, every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to independence and deliverance of India.

Lastly, while the All-India Congress Committee has stated its own view of the future governance under free India, the All-India Congress Committee wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that by embarking on a mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole of India.

Interim War-Time Solution to the Indian Problem*

On 12th October, 1942, I drew up the following memorandum on the political situation in India, taking as my starting point the statement of Mr. Amery (Secretary of State for India) that any modification of the Cripps Plan generally acceptable in India would receive serious consideration at the hands of the British Government.

The main points of the Cripps plan are : (1) Self-determination for India as expressed through a Constituent Assembly; (2) formation of a Constituent Assembly on an elected basis so far as British India is concerned; (3) a treaty between the British Government and the Constituent Assembly to deal with (a) all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility; (b) the protection of racial and religious minorities.

The following modifications are suggested in the light of criticisms made during and after the Cripps negotiations.

1. A Boundaries Commission will recommend the re-alignment of provincial boundaries, taking into account linguistic, racial, religious and other factors. The report of the Commission to be placed before the Provincial Legislatures concerned and implemented after it has been tested at a general election.

2. A Minorities Commission will recommend certain general principles for the protection of all minorities.

* Please refer to page 139 of the text.

Note. [The principle of self-determination will apply to new provincial units constituted on the basis of the Boundaries Commission's report.]

The Constituent Assembly will come into being after these two bodies, namely, the Boundaries and the Minorities Commissions, have made their respective reports.

Note. [If as a result certain predominantly Muslim areas become new provincial units, the objection of the Muslim League that the Cripps plan denies to the Muslims the right of self-determination falls to the ground.]

The Constituent Assembly will proceed on the basis of a federal form of government for all-India (subject to the exercise of self-determination by Provinces and States). But the federal list must be curtailed to the minimum and the right given to federating units to decide on which other subjects above that minimum they will federate.

Note. [The advantages of this course will be two-fold : (a) in the first place, predominantly Muslim areas will be free to accept, if they so choose, the bare minimum degree of federal control and administration; (b) secondly, there is nothing to prevent the other provinces from deciding upon having for themselves a strong federal centre.]

The procedure to be adopted by the Constituent Assembly, the manner of reaching decisions and of resolving any deadlocks that may arise may be left to be determined by a body consisting of the Premiers of the Provinces and the Members of the Executive Council.

In regard to the States, the Political Adviser to the Crown Representative may be an Indian Prime Minister of a major State, with the rank of an Executive Councillor. Treaties with the States should be revised at once, bearing in mind the constitutional changes imminent after the war. All States should be encouraged to introduce the elective principle in their legislatures and to accept certain minimum standards of administration. Problems relating to the States may be brought up before the Executive Council by the Governor-General for consultation, though the final decision will be that of the Governor-General alone, acting in his capacity as the Crown Representative.

Before the Constituent Assembly meets, the method of choice of representatives of the States may be settled between the Government of India and the States with the assistance of the Political Adviser who will be (if the suggestion made above is accepted) a member of the Government of India.

For the duration of the war, it is generally agreed that there need be no major constitutional changes. But two were regarded as practicable during the Cripps negotiations : (a) the abolition of the provision for a minimum of three Members of the Executive Council with at least ten years' service under the Crown in India; (b) the abolition of the India Office and the transfer of its duties to the Dominions Office.

The Executive Council will generally function under the existing Constitution amended in the above two respects. Certain conventions should however be established : (1) the rules of executive business will be revised by the Governor-General in consultation with the new Government of India; (2) the Governor-General need not preside over all meetings of the Executive Council; (3) the Governor-General need not meet Secretaries of Departments, except with the knowledge and consent of the Members; (4) the Governor-General will give an assurance that he will normally accept the advice of a majority of the Executive Council, the language used for conveying this assurance being identical with that contained in the Governor-General's statement on behalf of the Governors of all Provinces under similar circumstances in June 1937.

The composition and personnel of the Executive Council may be decided by the Governor-General in a small conference of representative leaders.

After the formation of the Executive Council, the rule-making powers under the Constitution should be examined in order to make the Central Legislature a more popular body reflective of public opinion.

Note. Section 63(A) of the Government of India Act, 1919, lays down that the Council of State shall consist of not more than 60 members nominated or elected in accordance with rules made under the Act, of whom *not more* than 20 shall be official members. It does not say that *at least* 20 shall be official

members. There is, therefore, nothing to prevent the disappearance of the official *bloc*, apart from Members of the Executive Council and such Parliamentary Secretaries as may be appointed.

Section 63(B) gives the composition of the Legislative Assembly. But rules made under the Act may increase the number of members and vary the proportion which the classes of members bear to one another; the only two conditions being that at least $\frac{5}{7}$ shall be elected members, and at least $\frac{1}{3}$ of the other members shall be non-official members. These rules can be made by the Executive Council with the sanction of the Secretary of State. The points to be considered are whether the official element from the Assembly may be removed entirely (apart from Members of the Executive Council and Parliamentary Secretaries); or, in the alternative, the Provincial Assemblies under the new Constitution may be empowered to elect (a) either the number of members provided for each Province, for the Federal Legislative Assembly; or (b) one tenth of its own number. The strength of the Central Legislative Assembly will then be either 250 according to (a), or 160 according to (b).

Section 64 : Rules may be made for terminating the terms of office of nominated members of the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. There should be room for certain important interests which at present are either completely unrepresented or very inadequately represented : e.g. industrial labour, scheduled castes, agricultural labour and women. Nominations may be made by the Governor-General (after consultation with the Government) in accordance with recommendations made by recognised organisations of the interests mentioned above.

Section 67(A) regarding the Indian budget lays down that proposals for the appropriation of revenue relating to certain heads of expenditure are not liable to the vote of the Legislative Assembly, nor open to discussion by either Chamber unless the Governor-General otherwise directs. A convention should be established so that the Governor-General places no such restrictions upon the powers of the two Houses of the Legislature. No power of certification under Section 67(A)(7) will however remain, so as to make section 41(2) effective.

This memorandum I submitted to some prominent individuals such as Sir Mirza Ismail, Sir Ardeshir Dalal, the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar.

Sir Mirza Ismail

Sir Mirza Ismail replied that he approved of the proposal for the appointment of a Constituent Assembly provided its size was kept small. He also favoured a federal Constitution for India with an Indian appointed as Political Adviser, though he need not necessarily be Minister of an Indian State. Any Indian with the necessary experience, he considered, should be eligible. In addition, he proposed that such a Political Adviser should be a Member of the Executive Council and take part in all discussions affecting the States.

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar wrote : "I am at some disadvantage in not having at hand the details of the Cripps plan.

"There is no objection to a Boundaries Commission to recommend the realignment of provincial boundaries if it is absolutely necessary. But I am not in favour of embarking upon any redistribution of provinces, especially at this juncture and during the transitional stage. It will be a difficult job and will take considerable time. It will be desirable to leave things in *status quo* during this period.

"There is no objection to a Minorities Commission to recommend the general principles for the protection of minorities.

"What are the matters and areas to which the principle of self-determination should be applied?

"In paragraph (1) it is stated that the report of the Boundaries Commission should be implemented after it has been tested at a general election. This necessarily means a considerable interval of time and considerable expenditure.

"How is the Constituent Assembly to be formed? Is it to be ultimately based on the principle of universal suffrage or in some other manner; and how is it to be formed in the case of the Indian States? Taking the case of South India, are we to have four

linguistic provinces, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kanarese? Are we to have Dravidasthan or a Rayalaseema? •

“Are there going to be any such fundamental conditions as that any provincial unit must be financially self-supporting?”

“In the re-alignment of provincial boundaries, should we attempt to include areas speaking the same language and contiguous to each other, even if they form part of an Indian State?”

“With regard to the minorities, what is the minimum population required to constitute a minority?”

“What is the range of powers and functions to be assigned to the Constituent Assembly? Is there to be any limitation upon such powers and functions and how long is the Constituent Assembly to be allowed to function?”

“I am opposed to any compromise on the basis of a partition of India into Hindustan and Pakistan. The political integrity of India must be preserved at all costs.

“I am not in favour of varying the list of federal subjects.

“Personally I am in favour of a strong Central Government.

“The official *bloc* in the Council of State or the second Chamber may be abolished. The principle of nomination of a certain number of persons may be desirable as furnishing a means of attracting men of experience who may not and will not be able to come in on the basis of election. But, on the whole, I would abolish the principle of nomination by the Government also as inconsistent with democracy.

“As regards the restrictions on the discussion of the budget, the restrictions now existing seem to be on the whole reasonable, especially the rule that no additional expenditure can be proposed.

“What is the extent of representation to be granted to the States in the Constituent Assembly and how are the representatives to be appointed and by whom? Is it by the ruler or by some elected or other selecting body in the State?”

“It is essential that in any scheme of constitutional changes the creation of barriers of trade and commerce should generally be avoided.

“There is no objection to the other proposals contained in Shiva Rao's memorandum.”

The Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri

The Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri wrote :

“Poor old Wilson ! Before he died European statesmen had reduced his well-meant self-determination to a mockery. Our Congress friends with their childlike slogans have taken it up. It means the ruin of Indian politics. By right of secession, they mean the right of non-accession at the beginning and that of secession later. I hate both aspects. Self-determination is veritable poison. No self-determination for us among or us please.

“Gandhi will give self-determination in his India to every village : Rajagopalachari, otherwise impatient of Congress ideas, has swallowed the baneful idea. Jinnah rejects Cripps’ brand because it is territorial and wants it converted into communal.

“Shiva Rao wants a Commission to break up and remould India as a preliminary to constitution-making. The principle of distribution is not one but complex. It will be a generation before the boundaries are fixed. They won’t ever be. If they seem to be they will breed perpetual quarrels.

“As if these were not enough, he proposes a variety of schedules. The wretched Princes have now the option. The second part of the Act being in abeyance we don’t know the chaos that will overwhelm us. Shiva Rao’s new Act will give the option apparently even to our Princes. His gift to future India ! (Pandora’s Box). Shiva Rao is among our soberest men. Think where he may have been now pushed by constant intercourse with crazy men !

“Other proposals are not so productive of mischief. But each one being so in a measure the totality of confusion will give work for a generation. Shiva Rao won’t look at what you (T.R. Venkatarama Sastri) write. By now he has conferred with his compeers and settled the main lines of his Utopia. He will brush aside what Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar and I have to say. When he has read your remarks, he will heave a sigh before putting them by.”

Sir Ardeshir Dalal

Sir Ardeshir Dalal (at one time a Member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council) offered the following comments :

"I am somewhat doubtful about the advisability of the proposed *Boundaries Commission*, as it is likely to give rise to a good deal of bickering and ill-feeling, which had best be avoided in these troubled days. You state that the principle of self-determination will apply to the new provincial units constituted on the basis of the *Boundaries Commission Report*. If by self-determination you mean the right of any provincial unit to declare itself a completely sovereign body and to refuse to join the Federation even for such purposes as Defence, Foreign Relations, Customs etc., then I think the work of the *Boundaries Commission* will certainly be fraught with the gravest danger to the unity of India. Under the Cripps proposals, unless at least forty per cent of the representatives of the provinces as now constituted desire the question of non-accession to be referred to the plebiscite of the provinces, it would not arise at all. In the Provinces as now constituted, the risk of non-accession is comparatively small, especially in the case of the important provinces of the Punjab and Bengal. If, however, the provinces were constituted on racial communal lines with say a Mohamedan enclave in the Punjab and a predominantly Mohamedan East Bengal, the likelihood of such newly constituted provinces refusing to accede to the Indian Federation or desiring to form a separate Muslim Federation of Pakistan is very much greater. On these grounds, whatever the theoretical arguments on behalf of new boundaries may be, I would prefer to avoid the experiment. If, on the other hand, you do not propose to concede the principle of self-determination to the full, as your note at the top of page 2 of the memorandum leads one to suppose, but only mean that the choice is between acceding to the Federation with the bare minimum of subjects on the Federal list and of adhering to it with a larger number of subjects listed as federal, there would be no serious objection to the proposed *Boundaries Commission*; but such a suggestion is not likely to meet the wishes of the Muslim League. If the right of self-determination is to be conceded to the Provinces and States, I prefer the Cripps' proposals as they stand. Personally, of course, I would prefer to see a strong united India, as even a united India will not be able to stand on its own legs for purposes of defence for some time to come unless it entered

into a close mutual alliance either with Great Britain or with Russia and China.

Postulating such a united India, I am entirely in favour of curtailing the federal list to the bare minimum as you suggest and leaving all the rest together with the residuary powers to the federating units.

"In the case of the existing British Indian Provinces, it may create some complications if it was left to the discretion of each Province to federate on certain items and leave the others provincial, but that is a comparatively subordinate issue. The question of the States is likely to give rise to serious difficulties. As you say, the treaties with the Indian States should certainly be revised at once. But giving the right of self-determination on the Cripps lines to the States, when they have not got even a proper machinery for representation, is likely to lead to confusion, as it would be open to them to constitute themselves into independent States or to remain in relation of subordination to the British Government as at present. If they could not be induced to introduce the elective principles in their legislatures, I would not admit them into the Constituent Assembly at all. I would leave them alone until the force of circumstances compelled them to join the Federation.

"As for the Minorities Commission, I agree that the fundamental rights of minorities should be guaranteed inalienably in the future Indian Constitution, such guarantee being safeguarded by any body corresponding to the defunct League of Nations which may come into existence as a result of the Peace Treaty or by the United Nations or by America, Russia, China and Great Britain. I am not sure that a Minorities Commission is required for the purpose of drafting such a charter for the minorities, but if it is, I would have no objection to the formation of such a Commission. In any event, I do not think that a Constitution exactly on the lines of the British parliamentary form of government is suited to the needs of India. It should not be beyond our wits to devise a Constitution which would ensure proper representation for minorities and provide for their development and progress.

"Before a Constituent Assembly is held there should, of course,

be new elections. The procedure to be adopted by the Constituent Assembly, the manner of reaching decisions and resolving deadlocks may be left, as you suggest, to a body consisting of the Premiers of the Provinces and the Members of the Executive Council, but before that is done the present Executive Council will have to be replaced by a body more representative of the people.

“As for the constitution of the Government pending the major constitutional changes, I am personally in general agreement with your suggestions, but I do not think they will meet with the approval of the two major political parties in the country. On the question of Defence and the conduct of the war by the Commander-in-Chief under the War Cabinet and the Pacific Council, there can be no difference of opinion. If the rest of the Government is left to a completely Indianised Council, if the India Office is abolished and a convention is agreed to by which the Governor-General will not exercise his veto except in matters urgently concerning the defence and safety of India, I see no reason why the Congress should not accept office. There may be difficulty in persuading the Muslim League to do so if they still feel that the question of Pakistan would be prejudiced. The Muslims may be given equal representation with the Congress pending the settlement of the major constitutional issue, in the Centre as well as the Provinces if that will induce them to come in. The Government, in short, will be coalition government both in the provinces as well as in the Centre. If, however, the Muslims insist upon additional guarantees regarding Pakistan, there may be trouble. I would not be prepared to go beyond the Cripps formula in that respect. Personally I feel that if the future Constitution of India is so devised as fully to safeguard the rights, liberties and culture of the minorities by a charter guaranteed by a future and better League of Nations and if the fullest autonomy is given to the federating units reserving only the minimum essential subjects for the Federation, there should be no objection on the part of any patriotic Indian to join the Federation, whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian or a Sikh.

“As we know, the whole trouble with the Muslims is caused by the apprehension that in this communal-minded country it

would not be possible, for some time at least, to form governments on party lines as understood in the West. The parties that come into power will not be divided on political or economic principles such as a democratic, a labour or a conservative party in which Hindus and Mohamedans will be all represented, but the numerically predominant community, namely the Hindus, will have a more or less permanent lease of power. A rough and ready remedy for this would be to provide in the future constitution that for a period of time, say ten years, there should be coalition governments in the provinces as well as in the centre in which the Mohamedans should have a certain percentage of representation which need not be exactly in proportion to their numbers; they will have to be given a certain weightage. Such a system would not be strictly according to the principles of democratic parliamentary government and the Mohamedan ministers would still be more or less the creatures of the predominant majority. The alternative is to cut away from the system of parliamentary government on British lines and to devise a Constitution more suited to Indian conditions. The trouble arises from the fact that nobody seems to envisage a Constitution other than on British parliamentary lines and as a result the minorities are even prepared for a vivisection of India rather than agree to such a Constitution. After all, parliamentary government on British lines has only been a moderate success in Great Britain and has failed in an increasing degree in other countries. I think it should be one of the principal duties of the Non-Party Conference to lay down the broad principles of an alternative Constitution which would get rid of this haunting fear in the hearts of the minorities and rally them to the banner of a strong and united India."

An Asian Federation : Nehru's Views*

After discussing the possibility of the holding of an Asian Conference in India, I asked Jawaharlal Nehru on December 25, 1945, to clarify his views on the Asian federation.

He had on his table Owen Lattimore's *Solution for Asia* which he was reading with profound interest. He was in touch with the leaders of the Indonesian freedom movement and also with Aung San, the young leader of the Burma Anti-Fascist League.

"Do you think", I asked him, "that a federation of Asian countries is practicable as the next step?" Nehru had been advocating such a scheme in his speeches to vast audiences in various parts of India. "That", he observed, "is a possibility in the near future. But much depends on the development on right lines of the United Nations Organisation. If the U.N. is really based on the elimination of Imperialism and Colonialism, I see some hope for it as the beginning of a world order. Otherwise, and inevitably, various large groups will be formed for self-defence and mutual help."

"There is at present", continued Nehru, "a considerable feeling in the countries of Asia in favour of holding together and co-operating for their own protection against outside aggression. If, unfortunately, future conflicts should arise leading to a disastrous war, Asia is almost certain to be one of the main centres.

* Please refer to page 140 of the text.

Apart from war, there is economic penetration which is bound to produce resistance. These considerations, as also old cultural bonds, are drawing India and her neighbours close to one another."

This statement, I pointed out, did not quite answer my question whether an Asian Federation was immediately capable of realisation. Nehru said, "I cannot be definite beyond a point. A close union of the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean, both for defence and trade purposes, is almost certain to emerge. In any such closer union India is bound to play a very significant part, both because of her intrinsic importance and her strategic position. No system of defence of these areas, from the Middle-East to South-Eastern Asia, can be effective without India's intimate participation." In all matters of trade policy too, he continued, "India, which is likely to be industrialised rapidly, must develop contacts on either side."

"Looking back to the past," Nehru continued, "one of the principal results of the British occupation of India was to cut her off almost completely from the rest of Asia. Our land routes were closed and almost our sole contact with the outside world for a long time was by sea with Britain. A great change is now taking place, partly because of new alignments and partly because of the development of air communications. The last war has helped bring China, South-Eastern Asia and the Middle East right near India."

"A new consciousness has arisen in South Asia," he went on, "and old memories of past contacts have revived. But the main incentive at present is to hold together." At this stage Nehru took out a map of South Asia and spread it out on the table. He said, "Whatever the future development of the United Nations Organisation might be, these Asian countries (putting his finger on Egypt with the remark, "in this one must include Egypt") will look to one another more and more. Some form of common organisation dealing with defence, trade and possibly other subjects seems to be an inevitable development."

"What *other* subjects have you in mind," I asked him. "A certain cooperation in foreign policy," he answered. "The time has come when the representatives of all these Asian countries should meet and confer."

That morning the Indian papers contained long reports of the discussions in the U. N. General Assembly in London. The Indian delegation had not even claimed a place for India in the Security Council. "What do you think of it?" I asked him. "There is a strong feeling in Asia," he said, "that the interests of Asian countries are being overlooked. Recent events in Indonesia and Indo-China have been bitterly resented in India and elsewhere in Asia; what is happening in Iran has also been viewed with great disquiet." "I realise", he added, "that in many of these countries there are reactionary and semi-feudal regimes which must change. But the way of changing is not to convert these countries into colonies or puppet States."

Nehru then outlined the likelihood of a Conference of representatives of these Asian countries meeting to discuss their common problems. No definite and precise conclusions, he thought, could be reached in the first Conference and in any event not as long as India cannot freely function. But he preferred India as the most suitable venue for the Conference.

"What could be its effect on India's internal problems?" I asked him. I drew his attention to the fact that both in the countries of the Middle East and in Indonesia there were large Muslim populations. On the aggregate the Hindus of India would be a minority in comparison with the Muslim populations of South Asia. Nehru made it clear that he did not believe in the bogey of a Pan-Islamic movement sweeping over South Asia. "On the other hand," he declared, "any form of closer association or union of these countries of the Middle East, India and South-Eastern Asia would go a long way towards removing the fears and suspicions of the Indian Muslims."

"Such a union, of course," he continued, "must be based on the complete freedom of each country. India has nothing to fear from any other country in Asia and these countries should not fear any intervention or dominance by India, whether in the political or in the economic sphere."

"Supposing", I said, "India develops her industries rapidly, is there not a danger of an economic domination?" "No," said Nehru, with emphasis. "India's future policy is opposed to any exploitation of other markets or resources of peoples in

other countries at the expense of the peoples of those countries. Both my party (the Congress) and the National Planning Committee have made it perfectly clear that we are not going to encourage Indian capitalist elements in Burma, Ceylon, East Africa or elsewhere at the expense of the inhabitants of those countries."

"How about the danger", I asked him, "of such a movement developing an Asian racial outlook?" That Nehru regarded as almost impossible. "It will not and cannot have any aggressive or racial character; nor will it be opposed in any way to America or the Soviet Union or any other power or group of powers. Towards the two main powers of the world it will cultivate the most friendly relations. The Soviet Union will touch it right across Asia, and America has already many and growing contacts." "Don't you see", Nehru said, "the fact that such a union will consist of many different kinds of peoples and races will prevent it from developing any narrow racial standpoint or aggressive outlook? When imperialism and colonialism have been liquidated any feeling that there may be against Europe or America will naturally disappear."

Nehru added : "It is admitted now that the governments in all these countries should be democratic, with an increasing tendency towards socialisation. Naturally, a closer union of these democratic countries must be in itself democratic. Any development of trade or industry will have to avoid the kind of colonial exploitation that we have had in the past. There will, of course, be growing international trade but each country would, as far as possible aim at a measure of self-sufficiency."

Gandhi-Nehru correspondence with Roosevelt*

*[Extracts from the U.S. Government's Official Publication
"Foreign Relations of the United States : Diplomatic Papers"
1942—Vol. I]*

Within three days of Cripps's departure from New Delhi after the failure of his mission, Nehru wrote a personal letter to President Roosevelt, the text of which is reproduced below :

"Dear Mr. President,

I am venturing to write to you as I know that you are deeply interested in the Indian situation today and its reactions on the war. The failure of Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to bring about a settlement between the British Government and the Indian people must have distressed you, as it has distressed us. As you know we have struggled for long years for the independence of India, but the peril of today made us desire above everything else that an opportunity should be given to us to organize a real national and popular resistance to the aggressor and invader. We were convinced that the right way to do this would have been to give freedom and independence to our people and ask them to defend it. That would have lighted a spark in millions of hearts which would have developed into a blazing fire of resistance which no aggressor could have faced successfully.

* Please refer to page 203 of the text.

If that was not to be as we wished it and considered necessary for the purposes of the war, the least that we considered essential was the formation of a truly national government today with power and responsibility to organize resistance on a popular basis. Unfortunately even that was not considered feasible or desirable by the British Government. I do not wish to trouble you with the details of what took place during the negotiations that have unfortunately failed for the present. You have no doubt been kept informed about them by your representatives here. I only wish to say how anxious and eager we were, and still are, to do our utmost for the defence of India and to associate ourselves with the larger causes of freedom and democracy. To us it is a tragedy that we cannot do so in the way and in the measure we would like to. We would have liked to stake everything in the defence of our country, to fight with all the strength and vitality that we possess, to count no cost and no sacrifice as too great for repelling the invader and securing freedom and independence for our country.

Our present resources may be limited for the industrialization of our country has been hindered by the policy pursued in the past by the British Government in India. We are an unarmed people. But our war potential is very great, our man power vast and our great spaces as in China would have helped us. Our production can be speeded up greatly with the cooperation of capital and labour. But all this war potential can only be utilized fully when the government of the country is intimately associated with, and representative of, the people. A government divorced from the people cannot get a popular response which is so essential; much less can a foreign government, which is inevitably disliked and distrusted, do so.

Danger and peril envelop us and the immediate future is darkened by the shadows of possible invasion and the horrors that would follow, as they have followed Japanese aggression in China. The failure of Sir Stafford Cripps' mission has added to the difficulties of the situation and reacted unfavourably on our people. But whatever the difficulties we shall face them with all our courage and will to resist. Though the way of our choice may be closed to us, and we are unable to associate ourselves with the

India's Freedom Movement

activities of the British authorities in India, still we shall do our utmost not to submit to Japanese or any other aggression and invasion. We, who have struggled for so long for freedom and against an old aggression, would prefer to perish rather than submit to a new invader.

Our sympathies, as we have so often declared, are with the forces fighting against fascism and for democracy and freedom. With freedom in our own country those sympathies could have been translated into dynamic action.

To your great country, of which you are the honoured head, we send greetings and good wishes for success. And to you, Mr. President, on whom so many all over the world look for leadership in the cause of freedom we would add our assurances of our high regard and esteem.

Sincerely yours

(Sd) JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.

April 12, 1942.

*The Acting Secretary of State to the Personal Representative of
the President in India (Johnson)*

Washington, April 15, 1942—9 p. m.

Your 180, April 13, 6 p.m. Please communicate to Pandit Nehru the substance of the following message from the President :

“The President greatly appreciates your letter dated April 12 which he has received through Colonel Johnson. He has been deeply gratified by the message which it contains. He feels sure that the people of India will make every possible effective effort to resist Japanese aggression in every part of India. To the utmost extent of its ability the Government of the United States will contribute towards that common cause.”

WELLES

Mr. Mohandas K. Ghandi to President Roosevelt

Sevagram, via Wardha (India)

1st July, 1942.

DEAR FRIEND : I twice missed coming to your great country. I have the privilege of having numerous friends there both known and unknown to me. Many of my countrymen have received and are still receiving higher education in America. I know too that several have taken shelter there. I have profited greatly by the writings of Thoreau and Emerson. I say this to tell you how much I am connected with your country. Of Great Britain I need say nothing beyond mentioning that in spite of my intense dislike of British Rule, I have numerous personal friends in England whom I love as dearly as my own people. I had my legal education there. I have therefore nothing but good wishes for your country and Great Britain. You will therefore accept my word that my present proposal, that the British should unreservedly and without reference to the wishes of the people of India immediately withdraw their rule, is prompted by the friendliest intention. I would like to turn into goodwill the ill-will which, whatever may be said to the contrary, exists in India towards Great Britain and thus enable the millions of India to play their part in the present war.

My personal position is clear. I hate all war. If, therefore, I could persuade my countrymen, they would make a most effective and decisive contribution in favour of an honourable peace. But I know that all of us have not a living faith in non-violence. Under foreign rule however we can make no effective contribution of any kind in this war, except 'as helots'.

The policy of the Indian National Congress, largely guided by me, has been one of non-embarrassment to Britain, consistently with the honourable working of the Congress, admittedly the largest political organisation, of the longest standing in India. The British policy as espoused by the Cripps mission and rejected by almost all parties has opened our eyes and has driven me to the proposal I have made. I hold that the full accep-

tance of my proposal and that alone can put the Allied cause on an unassailable basis. I venture to think that the Allied declaration that the Allies are fighting to make the world safe for freedom of the individual and for democracy sounds hollow, so long as India and, for that matter, Africa are exploited by Great Britain and America has the Negro problem in her own home. But in order to avoid all complications, in my proposal I have confined myself only to India. If India becomes free, the rest must follow, if it does not happen simultaneously.

In order to make my proposal fool-proof I have suggested that, if the Allies think it necessary, they may keep their troops at their own expense in India, not for keeping internal order but for preventing Japanese aggression and defending China. So far as India is concerned, she must become free even as America and Great Britain are. The Allied troops will remain in India during the war under treaty with the Free India Government that may be formed by the people of India without any outside interference, direct or indirect.

It is on behalf of this proposal that I write this to enlist your active sympathy.

I hope that it would commend itself to you.

Mr. Louis Fischer is carrying this letter to you.

If there is any obscurity in my letter, you have but to send me word and I shall try to clear it.

I hope finally that you will not resent this letter as an intrusion but take it as an approach from a friend and well wisher of the Allies.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI.

President Roosevelt to Mr. Mohandas K. Gandhi

Washington, August 1, 1942.

My dear Mr. Gandhi,

I have received your letter of July 1, 1942, which you have thoughtfully sent me in order that I may better understand your

plans, which I well know may have far reaching effect upon developments important to your country and to mine.

I am sure that you will agree that the United States has consistently striven for and supported policies of fair dealing, of fair play, and of all related principles looking towards the creation of harmonious relations between nations. Nevertheless, now that war has come as a result of Axis dreams of world conquest, we, together with many other nations, are making a supreme effort to defeat those who would deny forever all hope of freedom throughout the world. I am enclosing a copy of an address of July 23 by the Secretary of State, made with my complete approval, which illustrates the attitude of this Government.

I shall hope that our common interest in democracy and righteousness will enable your countrymen and mine to make common cause against a common enemy.

Very sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

A Note to William Phillips*

There is a widespread conviction in India that the British do not mean to part with power. The promise of independence after the war means little and can rouse no enthusiasm unless it is accompanied by as complete a transfer of power *now* as is possible in the middle of war. Provided there is such a transfer, Congress leaders will be prepared to make large concessions to the Muslim League and to other parties in order to secure general agreement. In fact, they have repeatedly declared that the Congress would even agree to the formation of a real National Government without Congress representation therein, under Mr. Jinnah's leadership.

The first thing essential, therefore, is a fresh declaration by the British Government. It must of course promise India the right to frame her own Constitution after the war on the basis of self-determination and complete freedom. But immediately it must also concede to India the status and functions of a fully self-governing Dominion, like Australia or Canada. The implications of the offer will have to be elaborated: the disappearance of the India Office in London, transfer of Indian affairs to the Dominion office, representation of India through men of her own choice in all the Allied capitals and at the Peace Conference, etc.

The question will arise, in regard to the proposal for the abolition of the India Office, who is to perform the functions now

* Please refer to page 213 of the text.

allotted to the Secretary of State for India? Some of these have already been entrusted to the High Commissioner for India in London. India's sterling balances in London are so large and the balance of trade so much in her favour that there is no likelihood of her wanting to float a loan in London. The Dominion office will deal with the Provisional Government of India in precisely the same manner and to the same extent as it does with a Dominion Government.

The Secretary of State for India is also the final appellate authority for some of the all-India services, particularly the I.C.S. There are legal obligations and commitments in this relationship, which cannot be repudiated by unilateral action. The suggestion may be considered of vesting that final appellate authority in the Federal Public Services Commission and the Governor-General. Those who are not willing to accept this arrangement should be permitted to retire on full or proportionate pensions, according to the length of their services.

If the transfer of power is complete, there should be the responsibility of the Executive to the Indian Legislature. Obviously it cannot be the present Central Legislature. Mr. Rajagopalachari's suggestion is worthy of consideration, namely to substitute in its place the British Indian part of the Federal Legislature, elected in the same way. This would mean an Assembly (lower House) of 250 members elected by the provincial Assemblies, and a Council of State (upper House) of 156 by direct elections.

Will the Muslims agree to responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature? They may, if it be laid down that a vote of no-confidence, to be operative, should have, say, a two-third majority of the Assembly, including therein at least a bare majority of the Muslim members. Responsibility will solve many problems: it will remove the objections stated by Sir Stafford Cripps, reduce the authority of the Governor General to that exercised in the Dominions, and bring into existence a Prime Minister and a Cabinet with collective responsibility.

Another question is, will the Princes agree to these changes? Their objections may be met in this way: there should be a War Cabinet in India, consisting of certain members of the Indian

Government and a representative of the States to deal with all problems connected with the war. Also, the Political Adviser of the Governor-General (who is styled 'Crown Representative' in his relations with the Indian States) should be an Indian, say the Prime Minister of one of the major States with the status of a member of the Indian Cabinet and the right to attend its meetings whenever questions involving the interests of the States arise. Such an arrangement, while leaving the administration of British India in the hands of the Indian Government, will facilitate joint discussions of all-India concern with representatives of the States, and thus make a change to a federal form of Government after the war less difficult.

Yet another problem is in regard to defence. There is already an Indian Defence Member in addition to the Commander-in-Chief. The Constitution, even as it is, does not say that the Commander-in-Chief *shall* be a member of the Executive Council, but only that *if* he is a member his rank and position will be above that of other members. An Indian Defence Member, but with far greater powers than are now assigned to him, must be an essential part of the scheme. No Government will want to interfere with the discretion and authority of the Commander-in-Chief. What the Congress objects to is the subordinate role of the Indian Defence Member. Cannot the Australian example (of having Gen. MacArthur) provide a precedent? There is no reason why, with strategy and military policy unified, any one of the United Nations should not send a Supreme Commander-in-Chief for all the Allied forces operating from India. If there were established in India an Allied Council, (India being represented thereon), the Commander-in-Chief could be made responsible to such a Council, and there would be little objection from the point of view of India.

So far as this aspect is concerned, the political settlement will rest on the assumption that the Dominion Government of India will cooperate fully in the war effort, and there is no question of separate peace with the Axis Powers. Beyond this Britain is not entitled to impose any conditions or to interfere in India's affairs.

Once there is a settlement on these lines, the Congress, the

Muslim League and other parties will come to terms and establish coalitions both at the Centre and in the provinces. Mr. Jinnah will, of course, demand that the British declaration makes one point clear : namely, that the Muslims will have the right of self-determination conceded to them in areas where they are in majority. The Congress and other parties may agree to a compromise such as that the right of self-determination will be exercised, by areas where the Muslims are in a substantial majority, say 60 percent—the right being exercisable by all the voters in such areas, and not by the Muslims alone. Mr. Jinnah is not likely to refuse such a compromise. Even more acceptable from the Congress point of view would be the suggestion that India should work the Constitution for a period of 10 or 15 years and thereafter any area which feels dissatisfied with the provisions may exercise the right of secession in the manner prescribed above. In fact a proposal on these lines was under discussion between Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan and the Congress President in February 1942. I was informed by a common friend that Mr. Jinnah was willing to consider it. But the Cripps offer prevented further discussion.

This note has discussed the possible contents of a renewed British offer in some detail. Broadly speaking, it is a great improvement on the Cripps offer in dealing with the immediate future and goes further than what Nehru and Rajagopalachari were prepared to accept in March last year. Nehru found in April that the Congress rank and file was not willing to agree to all the compromises to which he and Azad had pactically committed the party in their talks with Cripps. Since then, there has been ruthless repression. Also, the crisis in regard to food is acute. The Government of India and the provincial Governments, as constituted, are incapable of tackling the problem with the necessary drive and imagination. The war situation may be more favourable than a year ago in the sense that there is no danger of an imminent attack on India by the Japanese, and no confession of the British inability to defend the country. But the strain on the Government has been extremely heavy during the last few months, bitterness and resentment are dangerously widespread and the British have not today a real friend of influence in the country.

The British declaration need not go into details such as are given in this note. It must be in general terms, promise *immediately* full Dominion status for all practical purposes, and a permanent Constitution after the war, framed by a Constituent Assembly on the basis of self-determination : the only stipulation being that free India will fight with the United Nations and not think of a separate peace.

Such a declaration, with its implications set out in suitable language, will instantly transform the situation. I have no doubt in my mind that Congress leaders would be willing to reconsider their position, since such a declaration would substantially meet the demands of the resolution of the All India Congress Committee. An early meeting of that body should be permitted to consider the revised British offer.

A difficulty may arise here. Such a meeting cannot take place without the withdrawal of the orders against the Congress and the release of all Congressmen. There must be a general amnesty and an appeal that both sides should draw a veil over the recent past. Amery's statements that there can be no negotiations with Congress leaders until they have abandoned their present methods are an obstacle. Mr. Phillips can be of help by interviewing Gandhi, Nehru, and Azad. They will very probably refuse to give undertakings while in detention, but he can ascertain their general reaction to a renewed offer. The Press too will considerably help by appealing to the Congress leaders to review the situation. Mr. Rajagopalachari's services should be utilized for the same purpose.

Assuming that we get this far—a new British declaration and a general amnesty—the Congress leaders may be trusted to make an appeal to everyone to restore normal conditions so that negotiations may commence for a general settlement. At this stage there will be a serious problem. The Viceroy is not trusted by any of the political leaders. Mr. Jinnah has publicly used the term 'double-crosser' to describe him. Mr. Rajagopalachari and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru think his recent speech at Calcutta was meant only to create confusion by stressing India's geographical unity while for Congress leaders he stands completely identified with the present reactionary policy. A new Viceroy coming out

with a new offer would make an enormous difference—perhaps all the difference between success and another failure.

I say this after my observation of the course of the Cripps negotiations. Montagu saw Indian leaders in 1917, almost always in the presence of the Viceroy. Linlithgow resented being left out of the picture. Had Cripps come out as Viceroy for the time being, he would have succeeded in getting his offer accepted.

India must be convinced that the offer is genuine and the British want a settlement, not just propaganda material for Allied consumption to prove the perversity of Indian leaders. Another (and a better) offer, a general amnesty and a new Viceroy will bring about that change. Negotiations must proceed with greater skill than Cripps showed. Party leaders will have to be seen separately in the early stages, but there should also be joint discussions in order to reach agreements. Mr. Jinnah should not be encouraged to think that he can virtually exercise a veto on progress by adopting an uncompromising attitude. Congress leaders would be generous in dealing with Muslim claims and go far to placate Jinnah. But the British should make up their minds to be fair. Many of the points contained in this note—responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature, the composition of the Legislature, the arrangements regarding defence, etc.—(and such other points as the number of Muslims, scheduled castes, etc. in the Executive)—will have to be matters for negotiations between party leaders. In these negotiations, Mr. Phillips' intervention may prove very helpful.

The Cripps proposals involved the principle of self-determination for territorial units. Sikandar Hyat Khan is willing to accept it without modification. Jinnah, however, insists upon a plebiscite of all Muslims in the areas concerned. The question is whether there is a compromise possible between these two points of view.

So far as the Congress is concerned, whatever be the attitude of the Working Committee and of the A.I.C.C. in the past, it is clear from the latest resolution passed in Bombay on 8th August, as well as from the correspondence between Maulana Azad and Nehru and Abdul Latif, that it is willing to make the following concessions :

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- (a) For the interim period, provided the British agree to the formation of a real National Government, the task of forming such a Government may be entrusted to Mr. Jinnah;
- (b) In regard to the permanent Constitution, the Congress is prepared to accept the largest measure of autonomy being conceded to the federating units and residuary powers vested in them. If, however, a territorial unit is not satisfied with the basic structure of the new Constitution, and desires secession, the federation will not resort to coercion.

Apart from the demands of the Muslim League, it is inevitable that when the time comes for devising India's permanent Constitution after the war, there will be a general demand for territorial redistribution. Andhra, Karnataka and one or two other areas are almost certain to renew their demands for separation into independent provinces. Therefore, simultaneously with the bringing into existence of the Constituent Assembly, there may be appointed a Boundaries Commission for the redistribution of territorial areas in a free India. The factors to be considered may in some cases be linguistic and in other racial or religious. But in all cases there will have to be a reasonable guarantee of financial self-sufficiency.

It is possible that such a Commission will take into account, among other things, the demand of the Muslim League for the creation of a predominantly Muslim area from the population point of view. If, as is conceivable, the demand of the Sikhs and the Hindus of Ambala and Jullunder divisions for separation from the rest of the Punjab is capable of accommodation, the problem may be simplified so far as the rest of the Punjab is concerned. In any case the principle of self-determination must mean that the right of decision is given to the areas concerned and not to any particular community. Since West Punjab is predominantly Muslim, the difference will not be one of substance, though the enunciation of the principle is important.

If the new Constitution accepts for its basic principles those contained in the Congress resolution referred to above, it is

possible that federating units may not feel the urge to secede. One suggestion in this connection that deserves consideration is whether the federating units, whether provinces or States, should not have the right of deciding the list of subjects regarding which they are prepared to federate, beyond a minimum all-India list such as defence, tariffs, foreign affairs, etc., which must be regarded as essential. The principle has already been accepted in the Government of India Act of 1935 so far as the States are concerned. Therefore, there is no novelty in the suggestion except that it is being proposed also for the provinces. While it is not satisfactory that different units encourage the tendency to urge the division of India, it is the lesser of the two evils. Such an arrangement would enable a majority of the units which would obviously desire a strong federal centre to have it. There is no reason why for the sake of one or two units the federal centre should be made weak for the whole of India.

If, in spite of these concessions mainly to Muslim sentiment, there is apparently a desire for secession the right should be conceded. The question may be discussed, however, whether such right should be exercised at the start or may be postponed for a period of ten or fifteen years during which the federating units will have actual experience of the new Constitution.

In broad principles the suggestion, therefore, is that while the right of self-determination may be conceded, its exercise should leave ample room for negotiations and compromise.

Chiang Kai-shek's letter to Roosevelt, July 1942*

With both sides remaining adamant in their views, the Indian situation has reached an extremely tense and critical stage. Its development in fact constitutes the most important factor in determining the outcome of the United Nations' war and especially the war in the East. The war aims which the anti-aggression nations have proclaimed to the world are two-fold; first to crush brute force and second to secure freedom for all mankind. If India should start a movement against the British or against the United Nations, this will cause deterioration in the Indian situation from which the Axis Powers will surely reap the benefit. Such an eventuality will seriously affect the whole course of the war and at the same time the world might entertain doubts as to the sincerity of the lofty war aims of the United Nations. This will not only prove a great disadvantage to Britain but will also reflect discredit to the democratic front.

At this juncture the United Nations should do their best, when there is yet time, to prevent the occurrence of such an unfortunate state of affairs. Your country is the leader in this war of right against might and Your Excellency's views have always received serious attention in Britain. Furthermore, for a long time the Indian people have been expecting the United States to come out and take a stand on the side of justice and equality. I therefore venture to lay before you my personal views on this question.

* Please refer to page 223 of the text.

Inevitably, Britain will regard the Indian National Congress' recent demand as an attempt to take advantage of her present predicament. The step contemplated by the resolution of the Congress Working Committee, however, still leaves sufficient time and opportunity for the reaching of an agreement. During my recent visit to India, I earnestly advised the Indian people to consider their primary duty to join the anti-aggression front in a common struggle for mankind.

From the point of view of the Indian people, their consistent purpose is to secure national freedom. With this object in view the Indian National Congress, in seeking national independence, is dominated by sentiment rather than by reason. Consequently I believe attempts at repression in the form of either public censure or force, whether military or police, with a view to compelling the Indian people to capitulate, will have the opposite result.

From the psychological point of view of the Indian, he considers that India before attaining her national freedom is not the master of her own vast territory and abundant resources. Just because he owns nothing, he has nothing to be afraid of. Moreover, beyond national independence and freedom he demands nothing of the world. Likewise, the Indian people as a whole only desire freedom for their country and their only expectation is that the United Nations would sympathize with them in their aspiration.

The Indian people are by nature of a passive disposition but are apt to go to extremes. I think that in launching its freedom movement today when Axis aggression is a pressing reality, the Indian Congress must have felt in their hearts a certain amount of anguish. If, however, the United Nations should show them no sympathy and pursue a *laissez-faire* policy and thereby cause them to despair, I greatly fear that following the National Congress meeting in August there is a danger of the situation getting out of control. In case an anti-British movement or some other unfortunate incident occurs in India, the United Nations' war in the East will be adversely affected immediately. For the sake of our common victory the United Nations must seek to stabilize the Indian situation and to secure the Indian people's participation in the joint war effort.

The United Nations depend upon India for her contribution to the war, whereas the Indian people have little need to depend upon the outside world. From their own point of view their movement for independence and freedom is not something new that has come into existence after the outbreak of the war. Hence they do not stop to think whether their movement will have any harmful effect on the world situation. This being the case, they have no hesitation in taking whatever steps they may think necessary in furtherance of their national movement. Whether they are right or wrong is immaterial. The fact remains they have now already become irresponsive to even well-considered public opinion or a realistic analysis of India's real interests. Once they abandon hope of an amicable settlement, they are liable to take any risk without hesitation even to the extent of sacrificing themselves and others.

The only way to make them reconsider their course of action is for the United Nations, and especially the United States which they have always admired, to come forth as third parties and to offer them sympathy and consolation. This will help them to regain their sense of proportion and strengthen their faith that there is justice in this world. Once the situation is eased it can be stabilized and the Indian people, grateful to the United Nations for what they have done, will willingly participate in the war. Otherwise the Indian people in despair will have the same feeling towards other members of the United Nations as towards Britain; and when this comes to pass it will be the world's greatest tragedy in which Britain is not the only loser.

So far as Britain is concerned, she is a great country and in recent years she has been pursuing an enlightened policy towards her colonial possessions. She is one of the principals in this war against aggression. On the other hand, India is a weak country. With this unprecedentedly extensive war in progress, naturally things cannot be handled in the ordinary manner. It is my opinion that, in order to uphold the British Empire's prestige and to safeguard her real interests, the British should unhesitatingly show extraordinary courage, forbearance, farsightedness and resolution by removing the causes which tend to aggravate the

situation. In this way the deceptive Axis propagandists will have no occasion to take advantage of these causes.

Should, however, the situation be allowed to drift until an anti-British movement breaks out in India, any attempt on the part of the British to cope with the crisis by enforcing existing colonial laws or by resorting to military and police force, will only help to spread disturbances and turmoil. The greater the oppression, the greater the reaction. Even if such measures should prove effective in curbing the non-violent movement, the spiritual loss and blow to the United Nations will far exceed that resulting from any reverse in the field. Such a situation will particularly be detrimental to Britain's interests.

There is no doubt a section of the Indian people which, having lost their sense of proportion, is asking, if India will never attain freedom, what choice does she have between Britain and the Axis Powers? This mistaken idea the United Nations should of course do everything possible to correct. On the other hand, the wisest and most enlightened policy for Britain to pursue would be to restore to India her complete freedom and thus to prevent Axis troops from setting foot on Indian soil. If Britain would reorientate her present attitude and spirit, I firmly believe that not only will Indian sentiment towards Britain undergo a radical change for the better, but Britain's action will have an ameliorating effect on the whole situation. Therefore, I earnestly hope that the United States would advise both Britain and India in the name of justice and righteousness to seek a reasonable and satisfactory solution, for this affects vitally the welfare of mankind and has a direct bearing on the good faith and good name of the United Nations. The United States, as the acknowledged leader of democracy, has a natural and vital role to play in bringing about a successful solution of the problem.

In saying so I have not the slightest intention to arouse attention by exaggerated statements. The war aims of the United Nations and our common interests at stake make it impossible for me to remain silent. An ancient Chinese proverb says : "Good medicine, though bitter, cures one's illness; words of sincere advice, though unpleasant, should guide one's conduct." I sincerely hope that Britain will magnanimously and resolutely accept my

words of disinterested advice, however unpleasant they may be, and believe that they are voiced in the common interests of the United Nations.

In view of the critical situation and in view of China's responsibilities as a member of the United Nations, I have ventured to offer you my views. This despatch is strictly confidential. It is only for Your Excellency's personal reference. I hope Your Excellency will give the minutest consideration to such practical measures as will break the existing deadlock and avert a crisis. I shall persevere in my efforts. My only feeling is that the United Nations should lose no time in adopting a correct policy towards the Indian situation and in striving for its realization, so that our entire war effort will not suffer a major setback. I ardently hope Your Excellency will favour me with your sound judgement.

Roosevelt's Reply to Chiang Kai-shek

President Roosevelt wrote to General Chiang Kai-shek (through T. V. Soong) shortly after the commencement of the civil disobedience campaign in India in the following terms :

I have been giving, as you will of course realize, the utmost consideration and thought to your message regarding the Indian situation, which reached me through Dr. T. V. Soong on July 29.

I fully share the opinion you express, for the sake of our common victory, that the Indian situation should be stabilized and the participation of the Indian people should be secured in the joint war effort. I likewise agree that only the Axis Powers would reap the benefit if India should start a movement against Britain or against the United Nations and that such an eventuality would seriously affect the whole course of the war.

I know, however, that you will understand the difficulty which is presented to me in your suggestion that this Government should advise both the British Government and the people of India 'to seek a reasonable and satisfactory solution'. The British Government believes that proposals which it has proffered to the peoples of India should permit of an adjustment fair to both sides, which should result in more active participation by

India in the war effort in support of the United Nations, postponing until victory comes any final steps to be taken to meet the desire for independence of the Indian people.

Furthermore, the British Government feels that suggestions coming at this moment from other members of the United Nations would undermine the authority of the only existing government in India and would tend to create that very crisis in India which it is your hope and my hope may yet be averted.

Under these circumstances, I feel that it would be wiser for you and for myself to refrain from taking action of the kind which you had in mind for the time being. This does not preclude further consideration at a moment's notice of some of the steps which you have suggested, should the course of events in India in the next week or two reach a more serious stage. You may be certain that I will have all of your suggestions fully in mind and that I deeply appreciate the constructive and frank communication which you have made to me. Please continue to communicate with me at any moment with regard to any of the matters affecting the common cause to which our two countries are dedicated.

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