Chapter Five

POLITICS OF THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCES
THE OFFICIAL VIEW

In the summer of 1930, Indian politics was conducted simultaneously on two planes. On the one hand, there was intense political activity in the wake of salt satyagraha and, on the other, concerted efforts were made by liberal leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar to bring about a rapprochement between the Viceroy and Gandhi so that ground could be prepared for the eventual participation of the representatives of the Indian National Congress in the Round Table Conference to be held in London in autumn. These negotiations got under way with the interview given by the then Acting President of the Congress, Pandit Motilal Nehru, to George Slocombe, the correspondent of the Daily Herald (London), in Bombay on 20 June 1930. (1) Through the mediation of Sapru and Jayakar, Motilal Nehru, who had since been imprisoned, and Jawaharlal Nehru, who was in jail since 13 April, were brought from the Naini Central Prison to Yeravda Central Prison to have discussions with Gandhi and other Congress leaders lodged there. After mutual consultation, the Congress leaders wrote to Sapru and Jayakar that no solution would be regarded by them as satisfactory unless it

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1 See Kanji Dwarkadas, India's Fight For Freedom, 1913-1937: An Eyewitness Story (Bombay, 1965), pp. 372-8. Slocombe, through the inadvertence of the Bombay Government, had an interview with Gandhi in jail in May and this had revived hopes that the Congress could participate in the Conference under certain conditions. See S. Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin (Oxford, 1957), pp. 91-92.
recognized the right of India to secede at will from the British Empire and gave to India a "complete national Government responsible to her people" and having jurisdiction over all matters including control of defence forces and finance. The Viceroy regarded these demands as impossible and so in the first week of September the negotiations came to an end without registering any success. (2)

The Simon Report

In the meantime, the long-awaited Report of the Simon Commission was published in two volumes: the first on 10 June and the second on 24 June. It appears that the publication of the Report was deliberately delayed. A British member of the Indian Legislative Assembly had informed the American Consul General in Calcutta as early as February that the Report was undoubtedly already finished despite newspaper reports that Sir John Simon was working 12 hours a day so as to finish it as quickly as possible! He also told the Consul General that the publication of the Report was held back until the current session of the Legislative Assembly terminated in March or April in order to have a period for considering the Report while the Assembly was not in session. From this, the Consul General so very early and so very correctly guessed that "the Report will not recommend Dominion Status for India at a definite time in the near future." The publication of the Report, as such, was being delayed so as to

2 For a full view of the various peace proposals put forward during these negotiations either from the side of the Viceroy or others, see B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress (Bombay, 1946), vol. 1, Appendix IV-A, pp. 635-51.
avoid an outcry against it in the Assembly. (3)

When the first volume of the Report was published, the First Secretary of the US Embassy in London sent a copy of it to the Secretary of State with the comment that the Report "in all likelihood will be regarded as one of the most historic documents of our times." The first volume was a survey of conditions in India and the First Secretary felt that there was little reason to expect that it would serve "to pacify the turbulent elements in India, as there is nothing in it to intimate that either full Dominion Status or complete independence is likely to be granted in the immediate future." He, however, added that it was an "an extraordinarily clear survey of Indian conditions at the present time and an exposition of how great the difficulties are which confront Great Britain in India." (4)

When the second volume of the Report was out, a copy of it also was sent to the State Department by the London Embassy. While sending it, Ray Atherton, the Charge, commented that with the publication of this volume, the first stage of the Indian

3 Consul General in Calcutta (Robert Frazer) to Secretary of State, 21 February 1930, 845.00/657, Records of the Department of State. Even after the publication of the first volume of the Report and Sir Simon's speech on radio on 18 June to explain it, the correspondent of the New York Times reported that one searched in vain for clues to the Commission's recommendations as to the future of India. See New York Times, 19 June 1930, p. 8.

4 First Secretary of US Embassy in London (F. L. Belin) to Secretary of State, 10 June 1930, 845.01/52, Records of the Department of State. In the words of the Commission, the first volume was a survey of the conditions existing in India—"its vast size and varied population, its conglomeration of races and religions, its social divisions, its economic circumstances, and its growing political consciousness." Report of the Indian Statutory Commission (London, 1930), vol. 1, p. 5.
reform problem had ended. (5) This volume contained the recommendations of the Commission. At the central level, it recommended a federal structure comprising both British India and the Indian States but with no responsible executive. At the provincial level, it recommended autonomy and responsible government subject to the overriding powers vested in the Governor. The most conspicuous feature of the report was that it "even refrained from mentioning Dominion Status." (6) American Consul Jarvis from Calcutta reported that as was to be expected the nationalist press and politicians condemned the Report "practically unread." (7)

From London, Sir John Simon, the Chairman of the Commission, took care to send to the British Ambassador in Washington two copies of each volume of the Report with a wish that they be presented to the President and the Secretary of State with his compliments. (8) He also went on radio to answer the advocates of Dominion Status for India, his speech having been re-broadcast in the USA by the National Broadcasting Company. (9)

5 Charge d'Affaires ad interim in London (Ray Atherton) to Secretary of State, 24 June 1930, 845.01/56, Records of the Department of State.


7 Telegram from Consul in Calcutta (Jarvis) to Secretary of State, 25 June 1930, 845.01/53, Records of the Department of State.

8 See British Ambassador in Washington (Sir Ronald C. Lindsay) to Secretary of State, 12 June 1930, 845.01/51 and 26 June 1930, 845.01/54, Records of the Department of State.

The Indian reaction to the Simon Report was instantaneous. Not only the nationalists rejected it, the liberals too were lukewarm towards it. Prominent Muslims also complained that enough safeguards had not been provided for them. (10) This being so and the peace negotiations between the Government and the Congress leaders through Sapru and Jayakar having failed, all eyes turned towards London where preparations were afoot for holding the Round Table Conference even without the participation of the Indian National Congress.

The First Round Table Conference

The US Embassy in London kept track of the developments with regard to the Round Table Conference (11) and regularly reported to the State Department thereon. (12) Until the deliberations actually started on 12 November, the main emphasis of the Embassy in its reports was on the attitude of the three British parties — Labour, Liberal and Conservative — towards the Conference and the related matters. It reported that Sir Austen Chamberlain, one of the leaders of the Conservative Party had demanded the appointment of Sir John Simon on the British Delegation to the Conference while the Prime Minister was of the

10 For the reaction of the various sections of Indian opinion to the Simon Report, see Jarvis to Secretary of State, 25 June 1930, n. 7. See also Coatman, n. 6, pp. 301-2.

11 Hereafter the London Round Table Conference will be referred to as the Conference unless otherwise stated.

12 Since in the National Archives, Washington D.C., no report from the Consulate General in Calcutta after 29 May 1930 and until 17 December 1931 was available, reliance for official view of the Conference has been placed on the reports of the US Embassy in London.
view that such a course would be a mistake. The Embassy official himself felt that the appointment of Sir John Simon would be inexpedient since, notwithstanding his authoritative knowledge of the Indian situation, his connection with the British Delegation might be regarded by the Indian leaders as committing the British Delegation to the recommendations of the Statutory Commission — presided over by Simon — which had been rejected by the Indians. On the contrary, if neither he nor any of his colleagues serving on the Commission were members of the Delegation, the Indian elements were likely to feel that the British delegates were entering the Conference with "completely open minds ready to discuss any proposals which may come before them." (13)

The Conference opened on 12 November with an address by the King-Emperor. The proposals of the Government of India for constitutional reforms were also published the same day. It was claimed that the Government's scheme went a little further than the Simon Commission Report in that it pointed "the way to action that may now be taken to place upon the constitution the first, but definite impress of Dominion Status." (14) The Government's scheme suggested that some of the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council should be chosen from the elected members of the Indian Legislature but did not propose that the Council should be responsible to the Legislature. It also provided for

13 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (James Clement Dunn) to Secretary of State, 1 August 1930, 845.01 Conference/1, Records of the Department of State.

the retention of overriding powers in the hands of the Viceroy in all specified matters for which the British Parliament was responsible. The Viceroy, under this scheme, had the ultimate right to suspend the constitution itself. Ray Atherton, Counsellor of the US Embassy in London, found this document of the Government of India "cautious ... with no high lights about it." The general tone of this document led one to believe, according to him, that it advocated granting of "autocratic" powers to the Viceroy in some respects. In view of this, it was not likely to cause any great anxiety in England but this would not be so in India "since the question of Dominion Status or an All-India Federation has been hedged about with so many reservations." (15)

Atherton referred to the opening address of the King and the speeches of the Indian delegates and reported that the most striking feature of the proceedings was the tone of the speeches of the latter which was that of "one civilization appealing to another for recognition." (16)

As the proceedings went on, the US Embassy officials watched the deliberations in the various Committees of the Conference, e.g., the Federal Relations Committee, the Federal Structure Sub-Committee and the Minorities Sub-Committee. They early noted that the principle of an All-India Federation had been accepted by the large majority of the delegates and the suggestion

15 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Ray Atherton) to Secretary of State, 14 November 1930, 845.01 Conference/8, Records of the Department of State.
16 Ibid.
of a Unitary Government had been "practically abandoned." (17)

One great problem, however, was the Hindu-Moslem deadlock on the question of separate electorate. Atherton believed that not only were the Indian delegates divided on this issue but the British delegates were too. "While Socialist Ministers are inclined to give support to the Hindus, the Liberal delegates under Lord Reading are more favorable towards the Moslem demand for communal representation with, consequently, separate electorates", he wrote. He also pointed out that the Conservatives supported the Liberals on the issue. (18) Towards the end of the Conference, however, he began to emphasize the division among the Indian delegates only on this continuing problem. It was clear to him that the success or the failure of the Conference depended on an "acceptable agreement" between the Hindus and the Moslems on this matter. The worse thing was that the question, in his opinion, went somewhat beyond the control of the Indian delegates. Left to themselves, they could have arrived at an agreement, but the whole matter was "whether it would be such as could be accepted by their supporters in India and defended against

17 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 25 November 1930, 845.01 Conference/12, Records of the Department of State.

18 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 15 December 1930, 845.01 Conference/16, Records of the Department of State. Two days later, Atherton again referred to this cleavage between Socialist and Liberal-Conservative British delegates, although he noted that the existence of this division did not find reflection either in the statements of the Indian (Hindu or Moslem) delegates or in the columns of the British press. See Atherton to Secretary of State, 17 December 1930, 845.01 Conference/12, Records of the Department of State.
the inevitable attack of the Congress Party." (19) He ventured a shrewd observation in this respect suggesting that the Indian delegates might have already come to such an agreement but preferred to keep it secret for political reasons:

I may add even if the Hindus and Moslems reach no agreement here in London to take back to India (but prefer to make it appear to their countrymen at some later date that the settlement of their question is forced upon them by a pronunciamento from the English Government), it should not be inferred that this present Conference is necessarily a failure, since very well it may be, for example, that such a pronunciamento is based on the Hindu-Moslem agreements reached by these two parties during their present-day discussions in London. (20)

As the Conference drew closer to an end, the Embassy noted the stiffening of the attitude on the part of the Conservative delegates, the Moslem delegates, and the Sikh delegates. In the Federal Structure Sub-Committee, the Conservatives insisted on greater safeguards for imperial and financial matters whereas the Moslem delegates flatly said that they could accept no constitution until a definite and satisfactory solution of the communal problem had been reached. The Sikhs adopted an uncompromising attitude in the Minorities Sub-Committee when they insisted that in the matter of representation of their community in the Punjab legislature no figure lower than 24 per cent of the total would be acceptable to them. (21)

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19 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 6 January 1931, 845.01 Conference/21, Records of the Department of State.

20 Ibid.

21 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 22 January 1931, 845.01 Conference/24, Records of the Department of State.
The Conference came to an end on 19 January 1931 and the Embassy was hard put to it to make a precise evaluation of its results. The First Secretary of the Embassy found it impossible to state definitely whether the Conference had been a success or a failure until opinion both in India and England had had an opportunity to assert itself. He, however, noted that the Conference had provided an opportunity to the Indian and British statesmen to establish personal contacts and exchange views which would certainly be of "great value in subsequent development." Another effect was that it had created "a more favorable world opinion as to the attitude of Great Britain". It had lessened the embarrassment of the British Government in dealing with the existing disturbed situation in India and had "in the mind of the world, and probably in that of India, placed upon the latter the duty of the next move, which is to demonstrate that India can unitedly continue further negotiations." He also hoped that the Conference would have a "quietening effect" on the Indian conditions and prove "at least to have established a modus vivendi" in what had been "a situation of serious menace." (22)

The American Ambassador in London (General Charles Gates Dawes) was of the view that discussions at the Conference were on a high level. Speaking soon after the British Prime Minister at a dinner given by the British India Delegation on 13 January 1931, the Ambassador praised the "ability" and "high purpose" shown by the members and the "courageous and elevated discussion" which

22 Ibid.
took place in the Conference where "facts were not avoided or
minimised but met head on as honest men should always meet them
for the weal or woe of humanity." In view of the momentous nature
of the problem which, he said, the world appreciated, he believed
that the competence shown by the members was "the best possible
augury of their coming success." (23)

The Embassy, however, was conscious of the difficulties
that lay ahead in giving concrete form to whatever consensus had
been achieved in the Conference. The Indian delegates had not
been able to come to a complete agreement and even if they had,
"their conclusions would not represent India as a whole because
of the absence of any representation of the Congress Party."
Secondly, it was also problematic if MacDonald, the British Prime
Minister, represented the views of the Conservative and Liberal
Parties, in fact the British people in general, in his closing
speech at the Conference, Benjamin Thaw, First Secretary of the
Embassy, reported. (24)

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact

The Round Table Conference had met in an atmosphere of
unreality from the very beginning since the largest party in
India — the Indian National Congress — was not represented
there. (25) The US Embassy was conscious that this absence of
the Congress had made the circumstances unfavourable for the

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid. For the Prime Minister's speech, see Government of
India, India in 1930-31 (Calcutta, 1932), Appendix II,
pp. 652-4.

25 See The Earl of Birkenhead, Halifax: The Life of Lord
Conference, more so because the Congress, it felt, was doing its best to "disparage the labors of the Conference". It reported that the "extremists" were apparently in the control of the Party, "with such resultant acts of terrorism and unrest as has forced the Viceroy to reimpose the lapsed press ordinance and the ordinance for the repression of agitation for the non-payment of taxes." (26) But at the end of the Conference and on the basis of what an Indian delegate had told him, Atherton hoped that the "extremists" would adopt a more sympathetic attitude towards the results of the Conference. (27) So, when Gandhi and his colleagues were released on 25 January 1931 unconditionally following a remarkably conciliatory speech of the Viceroy before the Indian Legislative Assembly on 17 January, Atherton felt that although the Indian situation was uncertain, yet the tension had been relieved to some extent. (28) Gandhi still held the centre of the stage. His request to the Viceroy to grant him an interview for a "man to man" discussion of the matters connected with civil disobedience movement of constitutional reforms had, according to Atherton,

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26 Chargé d'Affaires ad interim (Ray Atherton) to Secretary of State, 30 December 1930, 845.00/692, Records of the Department of State.

27 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 22 January 1931, 845.01 Conference/25, Records of the Department of State.

28 The Viceroy had said: "However mistaken any man may think him to be, and however deplorable may appear the results of the policy associated with his name, no one can fail to recognise the spiritual force which impels Mr. Gandhi to count no sacrifice too great in the cause, as he believes, of the India he loves." Government of India Press, Speeches of Lord Irwin (Simla, 1931), vol. 2, p. 319.
improved the outlook for peace. (29)

As the Gandhi-Irwin talks got under way on 17 February there was much speculation both in India and England as to the likely outcome of the negotiations. Benjamin Thaw, First Secretary of the Embassy, was not sure about the motives which led Gandhi to start the talks. "It may be that Gandhi is merely manoeuvring for position, with the idea of putting the Government of India in the wrong, so that the work of the Round Table Conference can be thrown overboard....", he ventured. But in view of Gandhi's warning to his followers against violence and his declaration that his talks with the Viceroy had been conducted in the friendliest manner, Thaw did not feel that the foregoing assumption about Gandhi's motives was yet justified. In any case, the important fact was, he noted, that the Viceroy and Gandhi had met and discussed matters, "thus opening the way for next stage in the work of the Round Table Conference." (30)

The talks were prolonged and the prospects of a settlement changed from day to day. Ray Atherton reported that although the Congress Working Committee had given unfettered authority to Gandhi to conduct the negotiations, the mere continuance of the conversations tended to stiffen the attitude of his (Gandhi's) more extreme supporters, increasing the likelihood that he would overplay his hand. Atherton also noted that the Services, including the Police, in India were not at all pleased to see their future so

29 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 17 February 1931, 845.01 Conference/30, Records of the Department of State.

30 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 21 February 1931, 845.00/705, Records of the Department of State.
completely in Gandhi's control and that the attitude of the Moslems toward the talks was also becoming increasingly hostile. (31)

Suspense about the outcome of the talks was cleared with the announcement of the agreement between Gandhi and Irwin, more popularly called the "Gandhi-Irwin Pact", on 5 March. Under the Pact it had been arranged that civil disobedience would be effectively discontinued and the Government would take reciprocal action. It was also stipulated that the Congress would participate in the further discussions that were to take place on the scheme of constitutional reform. As regards the scheme, its essential elements were stated to be federation, Indian responsibility, and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India for such matters as defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations. (32)

The Consul at Calcutta sent a telegram to Washington saying that this settlement was made possible "largely" by the courage and the patience of the Viceroy and was welcomed by responsible elements both among the British and the Indians, although the latter called it a "truce" rather than a "final settlement". He also attested that the agreement had "greatly strengthened Gandhi's position and influence" in the country. (33)

31 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 3 March 1931, 845.00/706, Records of the Department of State.
33 Telegram from Consul at Calcutta (R. Y. Jarvis) to the Department of State, 6 March 1931, 845.00/700, Records of the Department of State. Birkenhead wrote, "... Gandhi's greatest reward was in the blaze of glory that followed the signing of the instrument, when he was followed everywhere as in the great days of satyagraha by worshipping crowds." See Birkenhead, n. 25, p. 302.
Aftermath of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact

A section of the Conservative Party in England led by Winston Churchill was vocally opposed to the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations from the very beginning. Churchill told a meeting of the West Essex Conservative Association on 23 February 1931 that it was "alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well-known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal Palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor." (34) He continued his tirade when the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was announced leading to a bitter controversy between him and Stanley Baldwin, the leader of the Conservative Party, as to the attitude of the Party towards the intention of the Government to proceed with the preparation for the second session of the Round Table Conference on the issue of constitutional reforms in India.

The US Embassy keenly followed this controversy and its vicissitudes. Benjamin Thaw expressed appreciation of Baldwin when, at a crucial stage of the controversy, it was clarified that the Conservative Party was opposed not to the Round Table Conference as such but only to the proposal of holding it in India. "The course which Mr. Baldwin chose ... does give some real promise of the difficult and complicated Indian problem ....", wrote Thaw.

It was generally recognized that sooner or later there must be a resumption of the Round Table Conference. Thaw felt that by insisting that the Government must first take preliminary steps and that the Conference, when held, should be held in England and not in India as the Government had planned, Baldwin had "in reality greatly simplified the Government's task, since the inevitable pitfalls of a meeting in India are avoided and at the same time the co-operation of all parties here [in England] is virtually assured." (35)

But after the debates in the House of Commons on 13 May, Thaw noted that there was a "steady drift of Conservative sentiment toward the views of which Mr. Churchill is the extreme exponent." This tendency, according to him, was at times obscured by the inherent dislike of many conservatives for Churchill's rather violent outbursts, but that it was gaining strength became more and more apparent in the light of the Government's failure to announce any definite programme for the continuation of the work of the Conference. (36)

The US Embassy in London was also watching the developments on the Indian scene. The Indian National Congress met in Karachi in March which, while endorsing the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, also passed a resolution stipulating that if the Congress was represented at

35 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 16 March 1931, 845.00/708, Records of the Department of State. For Baldwin's stand, see G. M. Young, Stanley Baldwin (London, 1952), pp. 142-63.

36 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 15 May 1931, 845.00/714, Records of the Department of State. See also his Despatch No. 2120, 17 July 1931, 845.00/725.
the Round Table Conference, its delegation would work for the achievement of complete independence for India so as, in particular, to give "the Nation control over the Defence forces, External Affairs, Finance, fiscal and economic policy...." The Congress also authorized Gandhi to represent it at the Conference with the addition of such other delegates as the Working Committee might appoint to act under his leadership. In addition, the Congress declared that any constitution which may be agreed to on its behalf should provide for the fundamental rights of the citizens of India including such rights as freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, cultural and religious rights of the minorities, equality before law, etc. The resolution also stipulated that the State shall own or control key industries and services and ensure living wage and healthy conditions of work to labour. (37)

The First Secretary of the Embassy while evaluating the resolutions of the Karachi Congress felt that they amounted to repudiation of the safeguards envisaged in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He, however, noted the "skill" with which Gandhi "managed" the Congress making it possible for the Congress representative to participate in the coming Round Table Conference. He also noted that Gandhi with some other delegates will have full authority to negotiate at the Conference. "... the triumph of Gandhi was complete.... " he reported. As regards domestic policy, the fundamental rights resolution moved by Gandhi himself indicated that "if the Congress Party ever dominates the future Government

37 For the resolutions of the Karachi session of the Congress, see All India Congress Committee, The Indian National Congress 1930-34 (Allahabad, n.d.), pp. 59-69.
of India, it will adopt a policy on broadly socialistic lines...." (38) Subsequently, he noted that Gandhi would be the sole Congress representative at the Conference and that the predominance of his influence was even greater than it was before the settlement with the Viceroy. (39) The Embassy, however, was conscious of the fact that, in England, Gandhi, on the one hand, was assailed as a subtle plotter intriguing to bring about the downfall of the British Empire, while, on the other, he was praised for patiently pursuing the only course which could hold it together. This led Ray Atherton to record that whatever place Gandhi may ultimately occupy in history, "there are few men alive whose motives and influence give rise to such sharp contrasts of opinion", as of Gandhi's. (40)

As before, the communal tangle in India continued to engage the attention of the US officials. The All-India Moslem Conference had met in New Delhi in the second week of April but they failed to come to a definite decision as to the instructions to be given to the Moslem delegates to the Conference, although they again emphasized the gravity of the communal problem. The First Secretary of the Embassy felt that this very emphasis on the fundamental differences in India and the difficulties inherent in composing them showed at least that "it is not lack of British goodwill which

38 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 2 April 1931, 845.00/710, Records of the Department of State.

39 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 17 April 1931, 845.00/711, Records of the Department of State. See also Despatch No. 1945, 15 May 1931, 845.00/714.

40 Counsellor of the Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 21 May 1931, 845.00/715, Records of the Department of State.
stands in the way of self-government in India but rather the fact that the conflicting elements there have not yet demonstrated that they can possibly reach the necessary degree of agreement among themselves." (41) He noted that Gandhi's efforts to settle the communal question before he left for the Conference had reached a deadlock on the issue of separate or joint electorates. This had rendered useless the "complete authority" which Gandhi had "so skilfully secured for himself to speak for the Congress and to negotiate in the name of Congress" since the Conference would not be able to go forward without a settlement of the Hindu-Moslem problem. He also alluded to the communal riots which had erupted between Hindus and Moslems following Irwin's agreement with Gandhi and reported that they had virtually destroyed the effect of the Conference as far as Moslems were concerned leading to the realization that "matters will only be aggravated by dealing further with the Hindu majority before consulting with and making adequate concession to the Moslem minority." This, he felt, was apt to be lost sight of because of the predominant position of Gandhi on the Indian scene. (42)

Another dimension of the Indian problem was the attitude of the Indian Princes towards the Conference. The Chamber of Princes meeting in New Delhi on 19 March had authorized its representatives to carry on negotiations begun at the last Conference. The Princes were accredited, the First Secretary noted, with the realization

41 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 17 April 1931, 845.00/711, Records of the Department of State.

42 Ibid. For the attitude of the Moslems see, K. K. Aziz, Britain and Muslim India (London, 1963), p. 123.
that since in British India effective power would soon pass to Indian hands, their existence depended upon what term they could make with the Indian nationalists. They were also conscious that by joining the Indian Federation at the beginning their influence and protection would be "infinitely" greater than it would be if they waited to join while nationalists increased their strength, or remained outside altogether. (43) Later it was found that the Princes were split on this issue adding one more complication to the whole question. (44)

Whether Gandhi would attend the Conference was a moot question and there was live speculation about this both in England and India. There were charges and counter-charges by the Congress leaders and the Government of India against one another with regard to the alleged violation of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Congress demanded the appointment of an impartial tribunal to investigate the allegations of the breaches and to interpret the terms of the settlement but the Viceroy refused whereupon Gandhi informed the Viceroy that there was no point in his going to London to attend the Conference. This, according to Ray Atherton, threw the whole matter into such an atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty that even a postponement of the Conference, which was earlier planned to meet soon after 5 September, was rendered possible. But he could not see how such course would improve the situation. At the same time he was conscious of the fact that if the meetings of the

43 First Secretary of the Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 27 March 1931, 845.00/709, Records of the Department of State.

44 Chargé d'Affaires ad interim (Ray Atherton) to Secretary of State, 19 June 1931, 845.00/713; also 30 June 1931, 845.00/720, Records of the Department of State.
Conference were held as scheduled, "the absence of any representative from the Congress Party, and particularly the absence of Mr. Gandhi, will throw the same shadow of impracticability across any conclusions which may be reached" at the Conference as was the case when some tentative conclusions had been arrived at by the first Conference. He was, however, sure that this did not mean any inability of the British Government "to take, as intended, the basic decisions on Indian policy which sooner or later will have to be taken in London", although it did mean that the Government would be greatly hampered if it attempted to carry them out. (45)

Soon after, there was renewal of correspondence between Gandhi and the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, which led to a meeting between the two on 25 August. Gandhi had gone to Simla for the purpose accompanied by leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel which fact elicited some interesting comments from Benjamin Thaw, Jr., the First Secretary of the Embassy. He felt that Gandhi's "choice of companions may have been dictated more by a desire to keep them under his immediate influence than by any wish for their advice." "It is also possible", he speculated, "that his [Gandhi's] request for a renewal of the discussions with the Viceroy was partly due to pressure from Congress managers, whose anxiety to avert the publication of any statement by the Government of India showing how often the Congress itself has failed to observe the Delhi Pact is quite comprehensible." He provided a still further explanation of Gandhi's eagerness to meet the Viceroy. "... it
seems fairly clear that he went to Simla for renewed discussion because he was made to realize that political opinion in India condemned his failure to sail for England as planned and was strongly in favor of his taking part in the Round Table Conference", he wrote. (46) The Viceroy had told Gandhi that the refusal of the Congress to be represented at the Conference would amount to the failure of one of the main objects which the Delhi settlement [Gandhi-Irwin Pact] had intended to secure. Thaw was happy to note that "the most hopeful sign on the clouded horizon [of India] is this latest indication that Gandhi's supporters now desire to secure it." Gandhi decided to attend the Conference. (47)

The Second Round Table Conference

As a result of the Simla talks, Gandhi sailed from Bombay on 29 August reaching London on 12 September to attend the Conference. Meantime, there was a change of Government in England, the Labour Government having been replaced by a National Cabinet consisting of four members of the Labour Party, four members of the Conservative Party and two members of the Liberal Party with Ramsay MacDonald as the Prime Minister. Benjamin Thaw, Jr., noted that this involved no change in the plans for the resumption of the Conference. On the other hand, this may prove to be a change for the better since the introduction of a reform bill in the Parliament was almost a certainty in which case the coalition of the three

46 First Secretary of the US Embassy in London (Benjamin Thaw, Jr.) to Secretary of State, 28 August 1931, 845.01 Conference/36, Records of the Department of State.

47 Ibid.
parties in the Cabinet would ensure its enactment without any substantial changes in the Parliament. (48) It was also noted that this Conference was coinciding with a crisis in British politics under the shadow of drastic provisions of the budget entailing additional taxes which had detracted public opinion from the Indian problem to the internal financial problem. This again, in the opinion of Thaw, might prove to be anything but a handicap to the work of the Conference which, in this situation, might pursue its discussions in a "calmer and more helpful atmosphere" than was the case during the last Conference.

From 14 September Gandhi began to attend the meetings of the Conference. Roy Atherton summarized his speech in the Federal Structure Sub-Committee and opined that apparently his attitude was that as a free agent India might come into a partnership with Great Britain which must be dissoluble at the will of either party since otherwise it would imply no real freedom. Having stated his case in this way, it was assumed, Atherton reported, that rather than force matters Gandhi would let the discussions take their course in the hope that the divergence of views might prove to be less than it seemed and that by mutual goodwill, commonsense, and intelligence a satisfactory adjustment could be reached. However, the Moslem delegates, he noted, showed signs of an unwillingness to discuss the important problems until after the Minorities Sub-Committee met. The Chairman, therefore, allowed the time to be taken up by comparatively minor points relating to the form of a

48 Ibid.
Federal Constitution, methods of election to the Indian Federal Legislature, etc. (49) Later Gandhi asked the British Government to give the Federal Structure Sub-Committee a lead by placing their own cards on the table so that the proceedings might be terminated in fair time. Atherton reported that this plea of Gandhi for concrete proposals in the shape of a draft constitution for the Conference to consider, "seems to have taken the British delegates by surprise but there is no indication that it will have much effect until the Minority Sub-Committee gets to work, in view of the Moslem attitude that a settlement of the communal problem must be reached before other matters are considered." (50)

Subsequently the Military Attache' of the US Embassy (London) reported that Gandhi had admitted his failure as a member of the Minorities Sub-Committee to reconcile the Hindu-Moslem differences and tried "to pass the buck" to the British Government alleging that the Committee was not representative and, as such, it was bound to disagree. Thereafter, making shrewd remarks, the Military Attache wrote:

The conclusion of this office is that the members of the Indian Conference, given plenty of rope by the British Government, have hanged themselves....

It is the opinion of this office that a failure of the Conference, unless it is followed by serious rioting and disorders in India, will provide a source

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49 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 22 September 1931, 845.01 Conference/43, Records of the Department of State. Earlier he had reported that the Moslem suspicion of the partiality of the British Labour Government towards the Hindus had not been lessened by the decision of the Government to reconvene the Federal Structure Sub-Committee in advance of the meeting of the Minorities Sub-Committee. See his dispatch, 14 August 1931, 845.01 Conference/35, Records of the Department of State.

50 Ibid.
of satisfaction to the British Government in power after the approaching election. (51)

At this point the US Embassy in London sought to find out for itself where exactly Gandhi stood. A member of the Embassy met Gandhi and the substance of their discussion was reported to the Secretary of State by Ray Atherton. Gandhi had reportedly told the American official that he looked for no solution to India's future at the present Conference. (52) Atherton stated that the Conference had reached a deadlock on the communal problem despite Gandhi's lead to resolve it. He pointed out that other Indian delegates to the Conference had refuted Gandhi's allegation that the failure was due to lack of representative character of the British India delegation since most of them were nominated by the Government instead of being elected by the Indian people. According to him, Gandhi's other contention that the communal settlement was made more difficult because the delegates did not yet know in detail what kind of constitution the British Government would ultimately sponsor for India, "seems to have more weight". At the moment, however, it only served to emphasize the completeness of the deadlocks; "the deadlock in the Conference," he wrote, "rests on the proposition that the details of the Federal Constitution cannot be decided upon until a common settlement is reached and that no such settlement can be reached until those details are known." Nevertheless, the situation showed the "wisdom" of the

51 Military Attache' (London), Report No. 3/177, 9 October 1931, 845.01 Conference/55, Records of the Department of State. Reference to the approaching election is to the General Election held on 27 October which resulted into a landslide against Labour.

52 Ray Atherton to Secretary of State, 12 October 1931, 845.00 FR/201 with 845.01 Conference/54, Records of the Department of State.
British Government:

... the situation shows the wisdom of the British Government's policy in allowing the delegates from India to demonstrate their inability to agree among themselves, and throws into bold relief the obstacles which India herself must overcome before she can expect to receive the large measure of self-government which Great Britain is willing to give her. At the same time, it emphasizes the necessity of the safeguards upon which the British Government contends that any change must be contingent. (53)

A week later, Atherton refuted the contention of some in London that the British Government would be glad to see the Conference break up. This argument, he felt, was unsound because "it fails to take into account the earnest and sincere efforts which the British Government has made and is still making to bring about agreement in India...." (54) However, the Military Attaché of the Embassy repeated his previous assessment on this question. Writing on 16 November, he said: As "indicated in a previous report, the inability of the Indians to agree is probably by no means a source of disappointment to Imperial authorities...." He fortified his contention by pointing out that "the recent intervention in Kashmir by British white troops in a Moslem-Hindu imbroglio was a timely event well exploited in the British press." (55)

53 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 13 October 1931, 845.01 Conference/51, Records of the Department of State.

54 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 20 October 1931, 845.01 Conference/53, Records of the Department of State.

55 Military Attaché (London), Report No. 31362, 16 November 1931, 845.01 Conference/65, Records of the Department of State. Kashmir was a Princely State in India whose ruler was a Hindu although Moslems constituted the majority of the population. There were disturbances in the State during November and the British troops, at the invitation of the Maharaja (the Ruler), had intervened.
Atherton the Kashmir incident was a further proof that peace and order in India depended in the last analysis, until at least the communal question was settled, upon the British rule and British troops. (56)

The Conference was now coming to a close. The Minorities Sub-Committee had finally reported its inability to come to an agreed settlement of the communal problem. "The impossibility of agreement ... on this particular question," according to Ray Atherton, "should show the Indians taking part in the Conference that, by and large, it is they, and not the British, who cannot agree how the new India is to be governed." He further said that while it was evident that "the British Government will not cease in her efforts to find a formula, the Conference itself proves beyond further argument that she cannot go faster than India herself." (57)

The Conference closed on 1 December with a statement by the Prime Minister. Atherton gave a summary of the whole statement and expressed the view that the present Government had not budged from the position the previous Government had taken on the question of constitutional reform in India, namely: an all-India Federation; responsibility of the Executives — both Central and Provincial — to the Legislature, and statutory safeguards for a transitional period. He did not regard that the Conference was a complete failure despite the fact that the expected full measure of success could not be attained. In his view, the Hindu moderates were

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56 Counsellor of the US Embassy in London (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 10 November 1931, 845.01 Conference/58, Records of the Department of State.

57 Charge d'Affaires ad interim (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 1 December 1931, 845.01 Conference/66, Records of the Department of State.
apparently pleased by the rejection of the idea of granting self-government to the Provinces before the establishment of a degree of responsibility at the Centre, and the Moslems were not unmindful of the concessions which had been made to them by the decision that the North-West Frontier Province would be given the status of Governor's Province and Sind would be constituted into a separate Province. The Prime Minister had also made it plain that the method of conferences and committees would be continued in an effort to frame the basis for a constitution. By this, according to Atherton, the Prime Minister had shown both to the British and the Indians that the Government had no intention of allowing matters to drift. (58)

THE NON-OFFICIAL VIEW

Appraisal of the Simon Report

As already noted, the appointment and the work of the Simon Committee was one of the factors which was responsible for the revival of American interest in India towards the end of the 'twenties. So, when the Report of the Commission was published, the American press took note of it.

The Literary Digest aptly gave the quintessence of the recommendations: "Not Independence, nor yet Dominion Status. But an 'elastic', All-India Federation, to foster 'progressive realization of responsible government,' under British grip." (59)

58 Charge d'Affaires ad interim (Atherton) to Secretary of State, 5 December 1931, 845.01 Conference/67, Records of the Department of State. For the Third Round Table Conference, see Chapter VII, p. 344.

It also very correctly said that the tenor of much American press comment on recommendations of the Commission was evidently influenced by the information furnished in the report's first volume since a host of editorials repeated details regarding the size and complications of the Indian problem.

The *New York Times* was so impressed with the first volume that it found in it nothing but an "anxiety to discover the truth and to set it forth in all its legitimate implications." It rebuked the Indian nationalists for attacking the report as insulting to India. In its opinion, it was "an extraordinary case of taking offense where none was intended, and of reading into the report things which are not there." (60) The *Baltimore Sun*, too, found it "impossible to feel after the first half of the report that less than a brilliant and sincere effort is being made to bring satisfactory order out of almost maddening complications." (61)

When the second volume of the report was out the *New York Times* found it clear that "the Commissioners had approached their heavy and complicated task with kindly recognition of the aspirations of the people of India." (62) The *New York Herald Tribune* described the recommendations as "momentous". It was true that, under the recommendations, the Secretary of State for India, the Governor General, and the Governors had retained much of

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their previous power. But it was also true, it said, that the Indians had received "enlarged opportunities of participation which should enable them to give the world some idea of their capacity for self-government." (63)

It, however, struck many of the American journals that whatever the sincerity of the approach, the solution offered by the Commission had come too late. The New York World commented: "Perhaps the solution it offers comes too late; Britain would be in a happier position if she had started this machinery ten years earlier." "It would have been excellent twenty years ago", wrote the Philadelphia Record. (64) Echoing the same type of sentiment, the Review of Reviews said: "It would seem to be the misfortune of Britain in India, as in Ireland and, indeed, as in America a century and a half ago, to give too little and to give that little too late." (65) Some of them also noted that the Commission had ignored some relevant features of the Indian situation. The Boston Globe remarked:

The important, if intangible, element of human desire for liberty is not ignored, but its explosive power is. And that element is quite vital to the situation in India to-day as it was in 1775 in this country, in 1789 in France, and in 1917 in Russia. (66)

The Chicago Tribune noted the depth of the divergence between the approaches of India and Great Britain towards the problem of Indian self-government. The Commission had recommended

64 Both New York World and Philadelphia Record quoted in Literary Digest, n. 59, p. 11.
66 Quoted in Literary Digest, n. 59, p. 11.
extensions of suffrage, more preparation for a greater degree of self-government, and slow approaches to the eventual establishment of a federated India. But the Indians wanted a native government with full powers which could not exist alongside a British government with superior powers as envisaged in the Commission's report. Thus the Indians wanted one thing and the British another and the two were not reconcilable. (67)

The publication of the Simon report increased the disappointment of the liberals. The New Republic guessed that the effect of the first volume of the report was likely to be "extremely unfortunate" since it only gave a summary of the difficulties assumed to be in the path of Indian self-government. "All this is old story", it curtly remarked. (68) The Nation found the second volume "utterly inadequate." (69) The Commission had refused to fix a definite date for dominion status which was bound to inflame the Indians rendering the proposed Round Table Conference futile. A long struggle was now inevitable. "Indeed, we believe it puts the final seal upon the long struggle which began with Gandhi's march to make salt and, for better or worse, will not end until the Indian peoples are in complete control of their own destiny," it confidently affirmed. (70) Exclaiming

69 S. K. Ratcliffe had given prior notice to Villard that the second volume of the Report was expected to be "very conservative" and that "a great row in India must follow." Ratcliffe to Villard, 13 June 1930, Villard Papers.
that "The report says not a word about dominion status! Not a word!", the Christian Century declared that the Commission had failed to deal with the vital issue in India. (71)

The Conference Without Gandhi.

The negotiations between the Nationalist leaders and the Liberals in India in the summer of 1930 to settle terms on which the Congress could participate in the First Round Table Conference in London had raised hopes in America that these events might lead toward some sort of an "armistice" between the Government and the Nationalists. (72) But the negotiations failed and there was a setback. "GANDHI 'ASKS FOR THE MOON' — The right to secede!" Thus was summed up the reaction of the American editors by the Literary Digest. (73) The New York Times, in clear terms, blamed the "impossibilist position of GANDHI and his associates" for the failure of these talks. (74) The Birmingham News went so far as to say that "if the political spiritual leader of twentieth century Hindus had been born an American in the deep South, he might have been a revered and devoted preacher part of the time, but during hours of leisure he would have made an extraordinarily cunning and successful horse-trader." (75)

75 quoted in Literary Digest, n. 73.
When the Conference met in London, the American press took considerable interest in its deliberations. It was true that the Nationalists were not present at the Conference, but, conceded the New York Times, it was "impossible to think of proceedings at the conference being at every moment uninfluenced by the Nationalist movement." Gandhi was present in spirit there. Whatever the decisions of the discussions, they certainly would not be rushed into legislation; on the other hand, they would serve as the basis of negotiations with Gandhi and his followers. (76) Another factor which was taken note of was the declaration of the representatives of the Indian Princes that they were willing to join an All-India Federation provided there were adequate safeguards. The Moslems' demand of a Dominion Status for India was also impressive. "To the old argument that the claims of the Indian Nationalists must be reconciled with the demands of the Indian princes, it is sufficient answer that the princes at the conference are taking straight Nationalist. The still more popular argument that ancient feuds between Moslem and Hindu make Indian nationhood impossible, loses force in the face of the Moslem demand in the Conference for Dominion rule," wrote the New York Times. (77) It was, however,


not oblivious of the fact that divisions in the ranks of the Indians did exist. They were reflected in the demands of the Princes, the Moslems, and the Depressed Classes for adequate safeguards for their respective interests. They were serious enough to suggest that India was not yet ready to operate a complete system of home rule. So, a few days earlier this paper had advised:

The dizzy variety of race, language, religion and class in India constitutes a perfectly valid reason why India should not be permitted to enter upon full nationhood without the apprenticeship of dominion status. But at the same time it seems clear that the delegates to the Conference, irrespective of race, creed or class, are convinced that this apprenticeship must be begun in earnest and without loss of time. (78)

As the proceedings went on, the New York Times admired the zeal with which the delegates addressed themselves to the issues thrown up at the Conference which, it felt, indicated that an acceptable scheme of Indian Government could be found out. (79) The Cleveland Plain Dealer, however, sounded a note of caution when it pointed out that the only question which agitated the British mind was as to whether the "great personages" meeting in London really exercised any large influence in India, the fear being that the anti-British movement might have gone so far "under the leadership of humble men that all the potentates acting in unison would be powerless to halt it." (80)

79 "Steady on India", ibid., 15 December 1930, p. 20.
80 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 16 November 1930, quoted in Harnam Singh, n. 61, p. 250.
Towards the end of the Conference, the American press, in general, grew optimistic about its achievements. "On none of the great issues commanding the attention of the world has the new year brought such notable good cheer at the outcome of the Indian Conference", remarked the New York Times. The establishment of the solidarity between the Indian Princes and the people of India — even if nothing else would come out of the Conference — would be "a notable achievement." If Gandhi remained irreconcilable, this solidarity might be disrupted. But the gains to be had for the taking were so impressive that he, in the opinion of this paper, might well hesitate from rejecting them. (81)

It maintained its spirit of optimism when the British Prime Minister concluded the Conference. "The new Constitution for India, outlined at the London Conference, is not dominion government, but a long step towards it", was its verdict. (82) The New York Herald Tribune felt that this draft constitution had gone very much farther toward a self-governing India than anything which the British had previously dared to offer. The Los Angeles Times, the Kansas City Star, the Richmond Times Dispatch, and the Christian Science Monitor, all hopefully noted the achievement of the Conference. (83) The Chicago Daily Tribune also noted the "hopeful plan for a new government to be further considered by the British and later offered", but it gave the credit for this to the

83 See Harnam Singh, n. 61, pp. 257-61.
Indian Nationalists who by passive resistance and boycott of British goods and by sitting behind the bars of the jails had forced the British Government to adopt an attitude resulting into the proposals which emerged from the Conference. (84)

Liberal opinion continued to be sympathetic towards Gandhi and his followers. The *New Republic* blamed the attitude of the British Government for the failure of the peace negotiations between Gandhi and the Indian liberal in the summer of 1930. The British Government, by declining to accede to Gandhi's conditions for a cessation of the civil disobedience, had "assumed the responsibility for continuing the struggle against Indian nationalism for an indefinite and probably bitter fortune." (85) It at the same time marvelled at the power of Gandhi. "Gandhi in jail, must be consulted by his keepers. He is at present the master of the situation; this is in itself the answer to much of the criticism of the nationalist movement by supporters of the British raj", wrote this journal. (86) *The Nation* too felt that Britain had lost its battle in India and the undeniable fact was that "the great government of England has gone hat in hand to the silent prisoner in jail of Poona to ask what he will and whether through him shall come peace. Only through him can it come." (87)

84 Chicago Daily Tribune, 23 January 1931, quoted in Ibid., p. 263.
86 Ibid., 64 (3 September 1930), p. 58.
87 The Nation, 131 (3 September 1930), p. 234.
When the conference concluded these journals noted that some concessions had been given by the British Government but the big omission was that no definite pledge for dominion status had been given. These concessions might have been effective if given earlier, but at the moment they had come too late to accomplish their purpose. (88) In any case, peace in India depended on whether Gandhi and his followers could be convinced that the Conference had granted the "substance of independence" which they were fighting for. The Christian Century felt that the situation in India had gone far past the point "where any mere form of words, no matter how satisfying their sound, can persuade the nationalists to abandon their resistance." (89) But a week later, it surveyed the results of the Conference more optimistically, being particularly impressed by MacDonald's final speech at the Conference. The outcome of the Conference, according to this journal, was an "enormous advance toward Indian self-government" when compared to the position which existed under the 1919 Act. Now everything depended on how Gandhi and his associates reacted to it. (90)

Delhi Parley and "the Might of Weakness"

Gandhi was released on 25 January 1931 and a section of the American press was agog with the speculation as to what might be his new moves? "What will be the next momentous step of this sixty-one-year old, ninety-six-pound, bird-seed-eating man?" was

the question the **Literary Digest** asked. It furnished also the answer: "Whatever demands he may make, his methods are known in advance. His two-edged sword is non-cooperation and non-violence. Where force would lose, his gentleness wins. He symbolizes the terrific might of meekness." (91) The Baltimore *Evening Sun* expressed the views of many American newspapers when it remarked that Gandhi's release "marks another victory for the most curious sort of fighter this generation has known". (92)

Freening of Gandhi and the removal of ban on the Indian National Congress was generally taken to be a sane step on the part of the British Government. It was realized that no constitution could be easily operated in India if the Nationalists continued to boycott it. Hence the steps taken were necessary after the London Conference. Now the burden of proof was on Gandhi and his followers. "For an apostle of liberty to reject liberty through evolution and to insist upon liberty through force is an anomalous position. Yet in it Gandhi apparently finds himself", was the opinion of the *New York Times*. This paper was also conscious of the larger implication of Gandhi's release in that "A peaceful settlement between the British and Indian peoples might well be the signal for a worldwide effort to wrench loose from the mire of economic depression and a consequent state of general moroseness." (93) The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* felt the British Government had done "something so eminently sane" that one wondered

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92 Quoted in *ibid*.

why it was not done before. (94) There were, however, critical comments also. The Los Angeles Times was apprehensive that the communists might take advantage of the situation and riots and bloodshed might be the result. The Philadelphia Inquirer took a sombre view of the situation. The prisoners who had been released were not simply political. They had committed or incited the commission of serious crimes and disorders. They had not hesitated to use even assassination as a weapon. So, it warned, to set them free was in effect "an assurance that they can continue their agitation with impunity." (95)

Soon there were talks between Gandhi, the "seditionist" and Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, and a section of the American press dramatically presented the course of the negotiations. The New York Times noted that the representative of the King-Emperor, the ruler of 300,000,000, before whom "men bow and women courtesy was closeted with an aged, toothless native", dressed in a coarse cotton cloth. "The Viceroy was waiting for him." Usually when the Viceroy entered a room, men rose and did not speak until they were spoken to. "But", in this case, "these formalities were dispensed with" and "the tall, sad-faced Viceroy and the mahogany-colored living skeleton [Gandhi] addressed each other as 'my friend'." (96) The Associated Press despatch, reproduced in the

94 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 27 January 1931, quoted in Harnam Singh, n. 61, p. 317.


Literary Digest, gave a vivid picture of the "fantastic setting" in which these "midnight pourparlers" occurred and "the puny white-clad figure of Gandhi emerged from the huge stone gate of the Viceregal Palace, resembling a spectre in a dream rather than a human being." (97) To the New York Times, the prolonged interview between Gandhi and the Viceroy was proof enough that the Nationalists, for all practical purposes, had not boycotted the London Conference. "Not only were they very much present at London in the spirit, but they are now continuing the work of the conference in the flesh." (98)

When the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was announced, the terms of the settlement were scanned. The Los Angeles Examiner counted concessions made by both sides. (99) The Literary Digest too took note of them and regarded the permission given to the villagers on the coastline to collect salt for their own use as "one of the most striking features of the agreement." It recalled that the civil disobedience movement had begun with Gandhi's "salt rebellion". (100) The New York Times was of the opinion that in the Pact Great Britain seemed to have conceded the least and won the most. "But the bargain is not really one-sided," it immediately added. "If Great Britain gets more than Gandhi, it is because Great Britain had


99 See Mackett, n. 95, p. 205.

100 "Half a League Onward Toward Peace in India", Literary Digest, n. 97.
already made her greatest concessions. These are all embodied in the London round-table scheme." (101) The Atlanta Constitution, the Christian Science Monitor, and the St. Louis Globe-Democrat expressed appreciation that the talks had paved way for peace in India. (102)

A section of the press was once again impressed with the tremendous force Gandhi represented. The New York World Telegram ranked Gandhi among the greatest revolutionary leaders of all time, and wrote:

A revolutionary is judged by his power to move mountains. Gandhi has done that. Not by force like Lenin and others, but by spiritual force. He fights as Jesus fought. (103)

The New York World Telegram pointed out that only one year ago Gandhi had marched to the sea to make salt in defiance of all the might of the British Empire and the wise men of the Western world had predicted that Britain could not and would not bow to the will of an unarmed brown man. Only a week ago this still seemed impossible. But look at the truce:

That Gandhi does make the seemingly impossible come true is clear from the terms of the truce which he has signed with the British Viceroy.

...Gandhi has won his first great battle in the war for India's liberation from alien rule. His people will continue to make salt by the sea, breaking the British monopoly. His 27,000 followers imprisoned for civil disobedience will work free. He will dominate the negotiations for home rule, which were futile in London and Delhi without him.

102 See Harnam Singh, n. 61, pp. 325-6.
Britain must deal with him, for he is India.

And if Britain in the end does not grant his demands one gesture from his emaciated hand will unleash again the gigantic boycott which wipes out British trade at his command.

Saint or devil, Gandhi's personal power probably is unequalled in all the world today. (104)

The Boston Globe also spoke very high of the "soul force" of Gandhi. It described him as "This imperial conqueror" and pointed out that although the "practical, businesslike, hard-headed, beef-eating Briton" took little or no stock in soul force, "yet the soul force as wielded by this little old man caused such Britons to lose so many millions of pounds sterling in their business during the past 12 months that they are glad to have their Indian Viceroy make yesterday's truce." It further warned: "Let there be no mistake about this. We are here in the presence of the ultimate revolution, one which is destined to make Russia's little effort look pale and anaemic." (105) The Los Angeles Times highlighted Gandhi's victory as unprecedented in history:

There was a certain King Pyrrhus whose defeat of the Romans has become historic. It looks as though Mahatma Gandhi has done even better than Pyrrhus. (106)

The Gandhi-Irwin settlement was well-taken by the liberal press also. The New Republic regarded it as "a tremendous forward step" and debunked allegations made in certain circles in India as well as in the USA that Gandhi had betrayed his own

104 Ibid. Emphasis added.
105 Boston Globe quoted in Unity, 107 (23 March 1931), pp. 50, 64.
106 Los Angeles Times, 6 March 1931, quoted in Harnam Singh, n. 61, p. 325.
principles. (107) The Nation, in the beginning, had misgivings about the conciliation of the logically irreconcilable positions of the two parties in the negotiation: "The Nationalists, with their avowed aim of sovereignty, can scarcely withdraw their demands. The Empire, being an empire, can scarcely grant them." (108) However, when the terms of the agreement were known, it felt that Britain had made important concessions and now "the real combatants" would meet at the London Conference. That was "a step forward". (109) When the talks were still on Unity's cup of joy was full to the brim. "We can think of nothing more delightful than the spectacle now before us of MacDonald dancing feverishly to Gandhi's piping in a desperate endeavor to find steps which will fall into harmony with the music of India," it wrote. (110) At the termination of the talks, its editor-in-chief, Rev. John Haynes Holmes, sent a cable to Gandhi congratulating him for the settlement as also making specific inquiry as to the bearing of the terms on the main objects sought by the civil disobedience campaign. He received the following reply from Gandhi:


Thanks. Nothing on important issues you mention was settled, but door kept open for raising these questions. Congress enters conference with determination to gain these points. The settlement is provisional, and if Congress position cannot be reached through conference, Congress might have to readopt method of suffering and civil disobedience. (111)

This cable reassured Rev. Holmes and he commented that Gandhi, the supreme master of the situation, "has granted to the Empire a provisional settlement" upon the basis of which he might consolidate and conserve whatever gains had been achieved in London. Upon the same basis, he might prepare and organize his campaign for the further and decisive gains which must be achieved before India was free and his work completed. So, Gandhi was the victor. "It was he who granted the truce to the Viceroy...." (112)

The Christian Century came out with a long editorial article under the caption: "Gandhi's Triumph." (113) It found difficulty in choosing words which would be adequate to pay tribute to the victory which Gandhi had won. "It has been the strangest, yet the most marvelous, victory in modern history. It has been not a victory of Indian nationalism over British imperialism, but of spiritual compulsion over the pretensions of materialism. It has

111 Published in Ibid., 107 (23 March 1931), p. 51. In its issue of 16 March 1931, p. 35, this journal had published another cable from Gandhi: "Have followed with gratefulness your efforts on behalf of India. If India comes to her own, it will be the largest contribution to world peace. As a satyagrahi civil resister, I should strive for peace, as I must hold myself in readiness for war."

112 Ibid., 107 (23 March 1931), pp. 53-54.

been as much a victory over the soul of India as over the might of Britain", the journal affirmed. (114) Gandhi had also set up before the eyes of all mankind an "unshakable testimony" that the desires of all the oppressed peoples could be likewise achieved without any bloodshed. "Gandhi has proved, to a doubting generation, that the sermon on the mount is no idle dream", was the exultation of this Christian journal. It also paid tribute to the Labour Government for having been "honestly desirous of meeting the wishes of India". It did not fail to shower praise over Lord Irwin, "a very great man". (115)

There were, however, critical notes too. To M. E. Tracy of the San Francisco News, Gandhi appeared to be the only man alive in the world who could get away with the idea that progress lay in setting the clock back. He noted that Gandhi could not have been able to do this in any other country except India. (116) And the Philadelphia Inquirer was very harsh on the Viceroy. Echoing the British conservative press, it charged that "the Viceroy, no doubt unwittingly, has done much to impair the British prestige" by signing the truce with Gandhi. He had approached "the chief of the rebels [Gandhi] as if he were the representative of an independent power...." Treating with rebellion against constituted authority was, in its opinion, always "a dubious experiment." (117)

114 Ibid., p. 367.
115 Ibid., p. 369.
116 Quoted in Mackett, n. 95, p. 205.
117 Philadelphia Inquirer, 5 March 1931, quoted in Harnam Singh, n. 61, pp. 328-30.
The Second Conference: Hopes and Disappointments

Gandhi's final round of talks with Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy, in Simla, which enabled him to attend the London Conference, his "wild dash" to the railway station to catch the train for Bombay, (118) the scene at the railway station where "Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru gesticulated at too importunate admirers and Vallabhai [sic] Patel stood with folded arms in the background while a crowd of local Congress adherents swayed, cheered, and threw flowers regardless of the rain sweeping in from the mountains," (119) and his sailing from Bombay to London were picturesquely described by the American press. As regards the last, the Baltimore Sun ran the following headlines:

GANDHI SPURNS CABIN ON LINER
SLEEPS ON BENCH WITH CAT
BATHES IN $5,000 SUPPLY OF WATER FROM SACRED GANGES,
WHILE COMPANIONS MOLD BRAHMIN GODS FROM MUD (120)

The importance of the second Round Table Conference with Gandhi's participation was realized by the press. The London correspondent of the Chicago Tribune felt that this Conference would witness "the shrewdest battle of political wits" and the

118 See Literary Digest, 110 (12 September 1931), p. 12. Describing the "wild dash" to the railway station, this journal reproduced a Simla despatch which said: "His [Gandhi's] remaining teeth chattered as the small car bumped along, and, with his shaved head and odd dress, he looked anything except an international figure of great power."


120 Baltimore Sun, 4 September 1931, quoted in Harnam Singh, B. bl. p. 332. An article "Gandhi's Diet of Goat's Milk", in the New York Times, 4 October 1931, Part 6, p. 20, too stated that an admirer had contributed $5,000 so that Gandhi might have, for drinking and bathing purposes, a weekly supply of water from the Ganges.
correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune asserted that nearly half of the human race (including the Indians, the British and the populations of India's neighbouring countries) must fall under the influence of the forces which would be liberated by the success or failure of this Conference and as such "it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of these gatherings or to overestimate their significance for the world at large." (121) Reinhold Niebuhr, the noted theologian, wondered "whether there has been a more historic moment in the centuries than this visit of Gandhi in London." (122)

The New York Times soon realized that the main problem at the Conference would be the status of the minorities under the new Constitution. (123) It was also clear to it that the plea of the submerged millions, the depressed classes, could not be ignored at the Conference which was pledged to act for India in a spirit of justice and equity. (124) It critically took note of the activities of the "hard shell" Tories - the "backwoodsmen" - including Winston Churchill who, encouraged by the results of the October general election in England, were trying to torpedo the scheme drawn up by the first Round Table Conference and endorsed by the parties represented in the House of Commons. But it felt that the major

121 Both reproduced in "India's Frail Warrior Versus the British Empire", Literary Digest, 110 (26 September 1931), pp. 5-6.
difficulty still lay in the failure of India's own delegates to agree, and "of India's most prominent delegate [Gandhi] to follow the path of strict consistency." Dilating further on this point, it said:

It is late in the day for GANDHI to protest against keeping control of army and foreign affairs under the proposed Federal Constitution in British hands. That was agreed upon in London last year and virtually agreed upon in GANDHI's negotiations in India. Tearing up articles in this fashion would give aid and comfort to the British die-hards. (125)

When the Conference ended, the New York Times did not say outright that it was a failure. In a pessimistic tone, however, it pointed out that it was on the question of minority safeguards that the discussions broke down. So the deadlock was between Indians and Indians. It was now chiefly in Gandhi's hands "whether India is to have her new Federal Constitution or an era of civil strife and repression." No reasonable person, in its opinion, could maintain that it was once more a case of "perfidious Albion troubling the Hindustanee waters for her own fell purposes". (126) The Philadelphia Inquirer went a step ahead and regarded Gandhi to be, from the first, the chief obstacle to any amicable arrangement with the British Government. In contrast to these generally expressed pessimistic tones, the New York Herald Tribune and the Christian Science Monitor tried to maintain a facade of optimism. The former, while disputing that the Conference was a total failure, held that the real question was how far the way might be kept open

126 "India's Status", ed., ibid., 6 December 1931, Part 3, p. 14
for further progress. The latter listed two important achievements of the Conference: (i) it had shown that a plan for creating a federated India inclusive of British India and the Native States was practicable and (ii) it had strengthened the growing faith of Indians in British statesmanship. (127)

The Christian Century found the Conference a failure but refrained from assigning the blame for it in clear terms. It found justice in both the charges: that the Hindus and Moslems showed no willingness, as between themselves, to make sacrifices for the total good of India and that by the very composition of the delegations the British Government had encouraged the parasitic Princes and the aristocratic Moslems. Whatever that may be, the storm clouds hung low over India. "If the storm breaks, it may sweep over all the world", it sombrely warned. (128) The Nation found that instead of generosity on the part of the British Government, the discussions merely revealed that India's major demands were to be ignored. True, MacDonald was insisting that the Conference was not a failure. "But Mr. MacDonald's capacity for seeing fruits on thistles is notorious....", it sarcastically commented. (129) Unity too found nothing in the Prime Minister's concluding speech which could meet Gandhi's demand of a free India — "nothing even to fulfil the solemn pledges made to the Mahatma by Lord Irwin when the former consented to sign the truce

127 See Harnam Singh, n. 61, pp. 338-43.
and go to London." (130)

**Gandhi and the Americans: Continuing Reciprocal Interest**

It has already been noted that Gandhi was interested in American opinion on India. He continued to take interest during the period covered in this chapter. The day he signed an agreement with Lord Irwin, he talked to correspondents of newspapers, including American newspapers, and appealed to the Indian Princes, moderate groups, and Englishmen for aid. Appealing to the Americans he said:

> I should like to appeal also to the people of the great American Republic. I know this struggle, based as it is upon truth and non-violence ... has fired the imagination of the Americans and excited their curiosity. From curiosity they have progressed to tangible help and sympathy. On behalf of the Congress and myself I can say we are truly grateful. (131)

As indicated earlier, Gandhi reiterated his feelings of gratefulness in his cable to Rev. John Haynes Holmes and explained his position under the settlement with Lord Irwin so that no misunderstanding should creep in the minds of his American friends. (132) On 30 April, he gave an interview to James A. Mills of the Associated Press during the course of which he gave the American people message of greeting and friendship. He said:

> I appreciate all the interest and sympathy that America has shown in our struggle, and I hope we shall be able to retain the friendship and

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131 *New York Times*, 6 March 1931, p. 10. See also *Sitaramayya*, n. 2, p. 446.

132 See p. 258.
goodwill of the American people to the end of our struggle. (133)

From London, he sent a cable to Sailendra Nath Ghose on the occasion of his [Gandhi's] sixty-third birthday celebration in New York in which he again thanked the people of the United States for their "increasingly sympathetic attitude" toward the cause he was fighting for. (134)

Reciprocal interest of Gandhi and the Americans was shown in other ways also. The day after his arrival in London, at the insistent request of his American friends and the representative of the Columbia Broadcasting Company, he went on radio to address the Americans for about 26 minutes. He told them that personally he would wait, if need be, for ages rather than seek to attain the freedom of his country through bloody means. This had international bearing and that was why he had no hesitation whatsoever in inviting all the great nations of the world to give their co-operation to India in its struggle for freedom. He at the same time enlightened his listeners as to the great weaknesses of his country: the Hindu-Muslim division, the practice of untouchability, etc. "... it is a matter of deep humiliation to confess that we are a house divided against itself, that we Hindus and Mussalmans are flying at one another," he frankly told them. (135) He also spoke of the poverty of India and concluded by making a moving appeal: "May I not, then, on behalf of these semi-starved millions, appeal to the

133 See Indian Review, 32 (June 1931), p. 354.
conscience of the world to come to the rescue of a people dying to regain its liberty?"

The speech was heard in the United States over the National and Columbia Broadcasting systems on 13 September and the next day detailed reports appeared in a large number of American newspapers. It also drew laudatory comments. To the New York Times Gandhi's was an original plea. Usually the national spokesman most certainly stressed the fact that millions stand behind him united in their common aspirations. "But it is the disunity of India that the Mahatma chose to emphasize." This disunity of India was the main historic argument that had been employed against the nationalist aspirations. "To be confronted with them in a plea for Indian nationhood is at first startling. But the more lasting effect is one of straightforwardness and sincerity," commented this paper. (136) "After listening to his calm avowal of faith in the weapons of the spirit as stronger than physical force," said the New York World Telegram, "it is not difficult, even for Occidentals, to understand his unique control of the semi-starved millions of India." It did not seem probable to this paper that Great Britain with all its fighting ships and men could much longer keep India under subjugation. The Macon Telegraph went a step ahead. "With all his goat's milk and loin cloths and handlooms and inner voices", it declared, "there shines out from Gandhi the leading spirit of the world." (137)

137 Both quoted in Literary Digest, 110 (26 September 1931), p. 6.
In 1931 there were some suggestions that Gandhi should visit the USA after the Round Table Conference. While in London, Gandhi revealed that he had received invitations signed by many leading Americans including Adolph Ochs, publisher of the *New York Times*; Alfred P. Sloan, Chairman of the General Motors Corporation; Charles H. Tuttle, former US Attorney General; Robert M. Hutchins, President of the Chicago University; John Dewey, philosopher; Prof. Seligman of the Columbia University; Jane Addams, a leading social reformer and head of the Hull House; and Rabbi Wise, the Jewish leader. He was pressed to make the trip also by a number of Americans who visited him there. But Rev. John Haynes Holmes, in whose opinion he placed the greatest reliance, held the view that his visit to the United States at this time might trigger off "a vast explosion of vulgar curiosity and ribald jesting". He would be ridiculed, misinterpreted and exploited. (138) As such, he advised Gandhi that time was not yet ripe for his trip to the USA. Obviously Gandhi was in a dilemma. He announced:

If these latter [those who had invited him] can convince Holmes I ought to go to America I shall be glad to reconsider my decision. I have a great affection for the American people and I feel sure that I have a great many friends across the Atlantic, and I don't want to sacrifice that friendship. (139)

In America renewed efforts were made to get Gandhi there. (140)

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139 The *New York Times* published this news on 9 October 1931 at the top of the first page under a two-column headline: "Gandhi to Visit US if We Take Him Seriously; Holmes's Warning of Ridicule Deters Him." See also Daily News, 9 October 1931, p. 52.

140 See Unity, 108 (30 November 1931), pp. 182-3.
The *Daily News*, in an editorial entitled "COME ON OVER MAHATMA," conceded that there would be a lot of curiosity about his personal habits. But it did not see how he can object to that. If Gandhi wanted to remove all possibility of ridicule, all he would have to do was to tell the Americans that they were materialistic, dollar-chasing, spiritually blind, and things like that. "We love such talk from visiting foreigners. We eat it up, paying generously for the privilege." "So come on over, Mahatma, and we'll tell the welcoming committee to shine up their silk hats," wrote this paper. (141) The *New Republic* also advised that "many thousands of Americans who are neither exploiters nor curiosity seekers, Americans of whom foreigners know very little, are deeply in favor of his visit to this country." (142) Rev. F. Fisher had a trans-Atlantic telephonic conversation with him on this matter. Fisher urged Gandhi to accept the invitation. (143)

To make the invitation effective, two small girls, Mariam and Lilabati Ghose, daughters of Sailendra Nath Ghose, accompanied by their mother, sailed for London on 14 October, carrying messages from various societies in Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and other cities. (144) Sailendra Nath Ghose, in fact, sought the good wishes of President Hoover also for the success

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142 *New Republic*, 68 (21 October 1931), pp. 244-5.
143 *New York Times*, 18 November 1931, p. 16.
144 *Washington Star*, 15 October 1931.
of the mission of these girls. (145) But Rev. Holmes, who was in London meeting Gandhi, was unconvinced, and he kept on advising Gandhi not to go to the USA at this time. (146) Consequently, Gandhi received Ghose's wife and daughters with all affection but did not agree to undertake the trip. (147)

Thus Gandhi's suggested trip to the USA did not materialize. However, he showed his concern for American opinion again when he sent his message to America through Milton Bronner, European Manager of NEA Service, just on the eve of his departure for India on the conclusion of the Conference. Published in the Scripps-Howard newspapers, the message read:

My message to America as to what India wants now is this; India wants now that India has wanted all along — independence in your American sense of the term; not whittled or shackled independence but the real thing, with such safeguards as Indians deem proper, fitting and honorable. (148)

145 Telegram from Sailendra Nath Ghose to President Hoover, 12 October 1931, 845.01 Conference/48, Records of the Department of State. It is interesting to find that much earlier than Ghose, F. D. Ellis, former American Missionary to India under the Presbyterian Board, on learning that Gandhi anticipated a visit to the USA following the London Round Table Conference, had written to the Secretary of State that Gandhi should be discouraged from undertaking this visit because his visit would not tend to foster cordial relations between the USA and Great Britain. F. D. Ellis to Secretary of State, 30 April 1931, 845.00/712, Records of the Department of State.


147 Ibid., 23 October 1931, p. 11.

148 San Francisco News, 8 December 1931, p. 2, quoted in Mackett, n. 95, p. 211. Earlier, on 16 October, the American correspondents in London had given Gandhi a vegetarian luncheon where, out of respect for him, nobody smoked or drank. Gandhi was pleased. He frankly talked about the problems of the Round Table Conference but requested the correspondents not to quote him. "It will do you newspaper men good to be silent for once", he, with a twinkle in his eyes, advised them. See New York Times, 17 October 1931, p. 6.
Katherine Mayo Again

When the Indian nationalist movement and Gandhi were getting wide publicity in the United States, Katherine Mayo found it difficult to remain silent. She had kept a watchful eye over the political developments on the Indian scene, especially the relation of the backward classes with the nationalist movement led by Gandhi. (149) She tried to demolish the notion that Gandhi represented these underprivileged men who were allegedly treated as "less than dogs" in Indian society and charged him of hypocrisy in his attitude towards them. (150) She also tried to show that Gandhi was interested simply in opposing the British Government and not the evils which beset India. While he was on his way to Dandi to break the salt laws, the scourge of smallpox, child marriage and untouchability, each in intense concrete form, cried for his attention but he marched on oblivious to such evils. His mission was sedition and sedition alone! (151)

Mayo gave a radio talk on 27 October 1931 (Gandhi had broadcast to America from London on 13 September) over the NBC

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149 Katherine Mayo was in correspondence with Bharat Ram, Vice-President of the Audh Achhut (Depressed Classes) Sabha, Ferozepur Cantt. (Punjab). Her private papers in the Yale University contain several letters by him and several leaflets issued by this organization in India. She was reported to have great pride and pleasure in the fact that her portrait had been placed on the wall of the headquarters of the untouchables in Madras. See Winifred Holt Mather's letter to the editor, New York Herald Tribune, 12 February 1941.


network under the title "India". The occasion was provided by Gandhi’s opposition to the demand of B. R. Ambedkar, representative of the backward classes at the Round Table Conference, for separate representation of these groups in the contemplated Indian legislature. Severely taking Gandhi to task for this, she said:

And today the true relation between Gandhi and the untouchables is thereby suddenly unmasked: Gandhi, when not engaged in political campaign, talks and writes and gestures like a democrat and a social reformer. But once a political campaign is on, his democracy and his social reform ideas blow away together, and you find him in fact the faithful lieutenant of the Hindu oligarch, the Hindu plutocrat, the Hindu slave-master. (152)

In fact, when at the end of the Conference, Ambedkar visited the USA, (153) Mayo undertook to rally political support for him. He was planning to meet Oswald Garrison Villard, the editor of The Nation and one of the foremost admirers of Gandhi in the USA. With a view to paving the way for a fruitful meeting, Mayo wrote to Villard briefing him about the plight of the depressed classes in India, their disaffection with Gandhi, and their faith in Ambedkar. She also appealed to Villard’s soft sentiments for the "under-dog" reminding him of his grandfather:

You must never go to India, unless you want to join that fight of the depressed classes against the caste Hindus. Your grandfather’s grandson could not stay out! And how they need you! (154)

152 Text of the talk in Mayo Papers, Box 29.
154 Katherine Mayo to Oswald Garrison Villard, 16 December 1931, Villard Papers. Villard had a great desire to visit India but he could not make it. Villard’s grandfather, William Lloyd Garrison, was a crusader against slavery in the United States in the 19th century.
Mayo did not confine herself to these activities only. She again came out with a book, *Volume Two* (New York, 1931), in which she maintained that her contentions about child-marriage in India made in her first book *Mother India*, which she regarded as volume one in the series, were fully borne out by the report of the Age of Consent Committee appointed by the Government of India to investigate the matter. A reviewer, Alfred Stanford, commented that this book had made it appear that Mayo's contentions in *Mother India* suffered from understatement rather overstatement! (155)

**Varied View of India**

Some attempts were made in this period at understanding the roots of Indian nationalism and life. W. Norman Brown, in a paper read at a meeting of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, tried to find out the indigenous sources of the national spirit which existed in contemporary India. (156) He disputed the theory, propounded by authors like Sir John Strachey, that there was no such country as India in view of the linguistic, racial, religious, social, and political differences found in the geographical region which went by the name of India. (157) In his


157 See Sir John Strachey, *India: Its Administration and Progress* (London, 1911), edn 4, p. 2. He wrote: "There is no such country, and this is the first and the most essential fact about India that can be learned." Again:

"India is a name which we give to a great region including a multitude of different countries."
opinion, the contemporary unrest in India was "a manifestation of nationality struggling to produce a nation". He found the basic source of this nationality in the stream of Indian culture which, from the early part of the first millennium B.C., had continued unbroken down to the present, although with numerous vicissitudes and modifications. (158)

The motives of the nationalistic movement in India engaged the attention of Alban G. Widgery. (159) He found the motives mainly economic. A large number of Indians had become infected with the spirit of industrialism and commercialism in the wake of the First World War. To continue their gains of the War period it was necessary to have control of the fiscal policy of the Government of India which was not possible so long as the British rule existed. "Here may be found the main motive of the nationalistic movement in the minds of those who, since the war have supplied the bulk of its funds", the author maintained. The author saw nothing wrong in it; the Indian industrialists and commercial circles had as much or as little right to strive for wealth as their counterparts in Britain or America had. There was still another factor which aggravated the situation. It was the existence of "widespread" poverty in India which, the author stated, provided the economic ground forming "implicitly or explicitly the motive for the increased interest of the masses in the nationalistic movement". (160)

160  Ibid., p. 43.
Robert Preston Brooks, Professor of Economics at the University of Georgia, prepared a report on the independence movement in India which he had visited as an Albert Kahn Fellow in the early part of 1931. (161) He surveyed various aspects of the social, economic, and political life of India and agreed with the view expressed in the Simon Report that the most formidable of the evils from which India was suffering had their roots in social and economic customs of long standing in the country itself. Moreover, he did not think that Gandhi, despite reiteration of his belief in non-violence, had much faith in the possibility of a non-violent campaign for independence. (162)

An impressionistic picture of the Indian life was given by Michael Pym in her book, *The Power of India* (New York, 1930). She believed that India's power was spiritual rather than political. She showed little sympathy for the nationalist movement and Gandhi. According to a reviewer, she had tried to create an Indian atmosphere, but what she actually did was to create "a stage India, not a real country." (163) A little more notice was received by Patricia Kendall's book, *Come With Me To India!* (New York, 1931). (164) She reviewed the social, economic, religious and

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162 Ibid., pp. 30, 54.
164 When Patricia Kendall was about to reach Calcutta the Department of State informed the Consulate General at Calcutta that Congressman Fish had requested that all assistance be given to her. Telegram from Department of State to Consulate General (Calcutta), 19 February 1930, 345.1115 Kendall, Patricia/i, Records of the Department of State.
political life of India and put the blame at the door of Gandhi for the disorders and misery which afflicted India. (165)

In a different category were two other books: Welthy Honsinger Fisher, Freedom: A Story of Young India (New York, 1930) and Gertrude Emerson, Voiceless India (New York, 1930). Fisher depicted Indian life by narrating a story woven around a Bengali family consisting of three generations: grandfather, father and mother, and son and daughter. Through her story, the author showed how young India was struggling against old India. She did not paint even the old India in violent colours. In contrast to Mayo's, her book was suffused with a spirit of love rather than hatred.

Gertrude Emerson chose a village for the scene of her study. She lived in that village, mingled with the simple people, and watched them from close quarters. It is these villagers who, she believed, kept alive the essential spirit of India, although poor, simple and illiterate they were. W. Norman Brown, while reviewing the book, opined that at a time when most of the popular books on India treated their subject with passion and prejudice, it was a relief to meet a study that was neither sensational nor sentimental. This book, according to him, was "objective, even if personal, and sober, thoughtful, honest, original; not propagandist but instructive." (166)


To sum up: The Simon Report attracted some notice in the United States and paved the way for greater interest in the Round Table Conferences. These Conferences, keenly observed by many Americans, proved to be occasions for both hopes and disappointments. These Conferences, however, succeeded in at least one respect. They increased the stock of the British Government with the Americans in that the latter, in general, — the exception being the liberals — came to believe that the main impediment to self-rule in India was not the British policy but the Indian disunity. The British were shrewd enough, some American observers recognized, to use the tactic of holding the Conferences to demonstrate to the world that the Indians could not agree among themselves. The Military Attache of the US Embassy in London went to the extent of asserting that the British authorities were privately happy over the failure of the Second Round Table Conference as a result of disagreement among the Indians. In general, the Americans were critical of the attitude of the British Tory die-hards towards Indian constitutional reform.

Gandhi, again, impressed the Americans with his power and influence in India. He was a force which the British Empire — the mightiest in the world — could not but reckon with. It is interesting to note in this context that, like the Indian nationalists but unlike the British officials and publicists, the Americans usually referred to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact as a "Truce" or "Armistice" rather than a "Settlement" or "Agreement."
Gandhi continued to take interest in American opinion. He appears to have been at pains to dispel any misunderstanding of his position by his American friends. But for the advice of Rev. Holmes, he would have undertaken a trip to the United States. He valued American opinion and the American opinion saw significance in his movement.

Some attempts were made by the Americans to understand not only Gandhi, but also India and Indian nationalism. The views varied and, in many cases, reflected the prejudices of the authors. Nevertheless, there was a better understanding of India than before.