1. INDIA: POLITICAL SITUATION:

When the Second World War broke out in Europe, there were Congress Ministries in eight provinces of India; of the other three provinces, Sind had a ministry supported by the Congress, in the Punjab there was the Unionist Ministry, while the political situation in Bengal was very fluid and it may be said that alternate ministries were being formed with the aid of the Congress and the Muslim League. On the whole, the Muslim League was out and the Congress was in.

2. ASPIRATIONS OF THE STATES PEOPLE:

With the span of time states' people were politically awaken and they were identifying themselves with the nation's aspirations. However it is true that politically speaking there were two Indias, i.e. British India, governed by the Crown and the Indian States under the suzerainty of the Crown and still for the most part under the personal rule of the Princes. There were about 562 principalities which did not form part of the British India. Interesting feature
of the states was the wide variety as regards their size, revenue and general importance. Out of 562 states, as many as 454 had collectively an area of less than 1000 sq. miles and 452 had a population of less than a million. It is only about 30 among them that possessed the area, population and resources of an average British Indian district. On the other hand there were as many as 15 states with territories under a square mile each. Three of these could not boast of a population of even 100 souls. As many as 202 states had an area of less than 10 sq. miles each. In spite of these staggering disparities, the term 'state' was applied to all these territories.¹

The revenue figures of the states, as known from Public Accounts, showed the same disparity. As many as 19 States had a revenue of Rs. 1 crores or more a year, 7 had revenue ranging between 50 lakhs to one crore and the figure descended gradually till in the case of petty principalities it showed a revenue approximating to an artisan's average wages.²

The administrative set-ups of the states varied equally greatly. There was a very wide difference in the

² Govt. Publications; White Paper on Indian States; 1948; p. 4.
degree of administrative efficiency reached by the most advanced and the most backward. According to official records of the Chamber of Princes, 60 states had set up some form of legislative bodies by 1938. In several others, schemes for associating the people with the governance of their states were under consideration in 1945-46. In most cases, the development of representative institutions did not approximate to the growth of self-governing institutions in the provinces. For example, Hyderabad, the biggest and the most important Indian State, never had a popularly elected legislative assembly till the day it was taken over by the Central Ministry of States in 1948.

The truth is that neither the princes nor the Paramount Power or for that matter any apologist of the princely order could ever claim any progressive or modern trend in the States. In his official report, Sir Harcourt Butler was himself obliged to say: "There are states patriarchal or quasi-feudal which still linger in a medieval atmosphere, and states which are purely under autocratic administration". The will of the people was at no stage taken into consideration either by the princes or the Paramount Power; the princes because they were too conscious of their own power and authority and did not want to share it willingly with their people, and the

Paramount Power because it was keen on building up the princely territories as an effective check against the national upsurge of the Indian people and wanted to keep the states as a happy hunting ground for British enterprise in the future.

However the states people were far too many and too close to their brethren in British India to remain silent spectators in this game of power. They approached the Indian National Congress and appealed to Mahatma Gandhi, who himself hailed from an Indian State, for help. The Congress had full sympathy with the states people, but it was hesitant to take up their cause directly. At its Nagpur session (December 1920), the Congress had laid down its policy as being one of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the states.

The congress thought that all would be well if British India became self-governing and possessed power to influence the princes, on the one hand, and the British Government, on the other. Another reason for non-intervention of the Congress was that there was no

1. C.Y. Chintamani wrote about the position of the state peoples in his book "Indian Politics since the Mutiny" that "... In the vast majority of states even elementary political rights are denied to the people. They have no right of public meeting, no free press, no representative institutions, no independent judiciary. The princes as a whole have given no evidence of a change of political mentality. Every time they insist upon the retention of absolute power in their hands". Chintamani C.Y.; "Indian Politics since the Mutiny; Kitabistan, Allahabad; 1937; p. 110.
organization in the states worth the name which might be expected to fight for the popular cause and which might maintain proper liaison with the Congress.

The states people, though they were never in doubt as to which way the sympathies of India's national leaders and the Congress lay, felt disheartened by the formal and official attitude of the Congress. With the encouragement from their Congress sympathisers, the states' people formed an organisation of their own in 1927, called the All-India States People's Conference, to express their legitimate and just aspirations, and to speak out their grievances. Gandhi blessed it, and national leaders in British India supported it. The princes and the British Government began to look upon it as the states wing of the Indian National Congress. The moment it was formed in Poona, the organisation was declared an outcaste by all the princes, so that till 1945 the States People's Conference had to meet and carry out its day-to-day activities outside the territories of states in various places in British Indian provinces.

The turn in the tide of the Congress agitation in British India and the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as its foremost leader, had its natural repercussions on the states people's movement. In spite of the rule of repression, and ruthless terrorising by the Darbars, the states people had now decided to stand on their legs. They began their work by setting up Sewa Samitis, hitkarini sabhas, might
schools, reading rooms and circulating libraries. Efforts were made at times to exploit general dissatisfaction caused now and then among the people on account of favouritism, unmerited appointments and dismissals, faulty administration of justice, the enactment of objectionable laws and sometimes by the foreign voyages of the princes. Every opportunity was availed of for creating public opinion against oppressive laws and personal rule of the princes.

When, however, even these innocuous public institutions, devoted more to social work than to politics, were banned, the states people re-established them outside the states in British India, from where they started a vehement publicity campaign. Bombay, Ajmer, Delhi, Lahore, Madras and Poona became powerful centres from where they ventilated their grievances openly and vigorously, demanding civic rights, exposing the vagaries of princely administrations and condemning the wasteful habits of their rulers.

This was the time when the states people organised praja mandals in their respective states, whose aims and objects were avowedly political. Baroda was probably the first state to have a praja mandal. Its example was soon followed by Bhavnagar, Junagadh, Rajkot and Gondal, etc., in Kathiawad, and Jodhpur, Jaipur, Bikaner, Alwar, Udaipur and other States in Rajputana.
The Praja Mandal started holding meetings and conferences within the states and, when banned there, at other places outside the state for furthering their cause. Very often these conferences attracted political leaders from the British provinces. For a time these ad hoc meets served excellently well the purpose of a public forum for ventilating the grievances of the states people. They were lucky in so far as they never had to strain much for carrying conviction with their audience about the nature and cause of their discontent. For, by their arbitrary and autocratic rule, inept administrations and disgusting wastefulness, the princes had alienated their subjects so much that the people were ever willing to listen to their ruler's detractors.¹

Thus the agitation of states people continued to gather momentum. Though the leaders who organised political conferences deserved full credit for the suffering they underwent and the sacrifices they made, yet there can be no two opinions that the agitation mainly thrived on the misdeeds of certain princes. They provided their adversaries with such glaring instances of high-handedness and tyranny that no sensible man could help sympathising with the states people.

¹. In many cases foreign observers, including quite a few British members of the Indian Civil Service, ridiculed and openly condemned the administration of some of the Indian States. Gwynn, a retired member of the ICS had no hesitation in branding the princely order as a class of unpardonable wastrels. See Handa R.L.; Op. cit.; p. 90.
The new climate of consciousness made large sections of people living in the states sensitive to the anomalous and backward conditions prevailing in the princely territories. The praja mandals and the All-India States People's Conference emboldened them so that they could protest against those conditions and demand better administrations. In cases of oppression and palpable misrule these organisations now and then set up enquiry committees for purposes of investigation and enlisting popular support for their cause. The disclosures which such committees made against the Darbar administrations of Nawanagar (1928), Dhrangadhra (1930), Jhabua (1936), Patiala (1939) and many others were startling enough to turn the printed reports into best sellers. The leaflets and booklets thus published were always in heavy demand. Even if newspapers could not reproduce their contents, they received wide publicity through hand-to-hand distribution among the people.

An official report was brought out by the States People's Conference about the doings of the Maharaja of Patiala and the sufferings of his subjects. Two enquiry committees had collected material and sorted out evidence in this case. The committee which drafted the report and published the findings consisted of N.V. Gadgil, Murlraj Karsandas and Balwantray Mehta. The report was appropriately titled "Indictment of Patiala". Though it was priced Rs. 5 per copy, it had a brisk sale so that the demand soon outstripped the supply. In point of the element of
sensation, utter inconsideration, extravagance and cruelties perpetrated on the people, the reports of other enquiries made by the States People's Conference on Kashmir, Alwar, Dewas, Orissa States, etc., were of equal interest. The rulers as a class had lost much of the traditional respect their subjects used to hold them in. The princes were publicly criticised at all levels - by the political agitators, British Indian legislators, enlightened statesmen in India and England, and even the Viceroy never lost an opportunity to admonish and advise them. From the platform and the Press, popular attention was focussed on the grievances and aspirations of the people of the states. The country was awakened to a sense of responsibility towards 70 million of their brethren living in states, most of them leading a miserable existence. Much sympathy was roused in the provinces for the cause of the states people.

The first session of the All-India States People's Conference which was held on the 17th December, 1927, in Bombay, was attended by more than 1500 people. Of these 750 were members of the Reception Committee, the rest being delegates and visitors representing more than 70 states. The presidential address and the welcome speech of the Chairman of Reception Committee explained the aims and objects of the conference and thereafter gave typical illustrations of the autocracy and corruption that prevailed in the states. It was said in the presidential
address that: "A large vision of Indian political destiny has permeated all classes of people throughout India and on this main question there is and there can be absolutely no differences between the people of British India and the Indian States. A free, strong, united self-governing and self-supporting India is our aim and ideal. In familiarising the people of the states with our national ideals your services are, therefore, invaluable and this Conference is doing its best to bring the states into general harmony with the political developments in British India".¹

Thus the first session brought on surface the popular demand for responsible government and civil liberties in Indian States. The representatives of various states gave expression to their views regarding the difficulties and problems the states people were facing. Jaya Narayan Vyas, D.V. Gokhale, Amritlal Thakar, Jammalal Bajaj, Manaklal Kothari, Ram Narain Chaudhri, Raghavendra Rao, Prof. G.R. Abhyankar, etc., were the notable persons who spoke in the conference.

The second session of the All-India state people's conference was also held in Bombay in 1929. It was presided over by the famous Indian journalist and a leading liberal leader, C.Y. Chintamani, Editor of the 'Leader' of Allahabad. Prof. Abhyankar was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Prominent among those who attended this session were

1. Presidential Address of Diwan Bahadur M. Ramchandra Rao at the All-India States' Peoples' Conference held at Bombay in December, 1927, p. 2.
Mahatma Gandhi, N.C. Kelkar, Ramchandra Rao, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Satyamurti, Jamnalal Bajaj, K.F. Nariman, Vaman Rao Naik, Sardul Singh Kaveesher, Srinivas Iyengar etc. The conference had attracted worldwide notice, which was evident from the fact that not only eminent Indians unattached to any political group but also a number of labour and liberal MPs from England had sent their messages of sympathy and wished the conference success. Among such foreign well-wishers were Lord Oliver, Col. Wedgewood Benn and Rutherford Polak, C.Y. Chintamani, in his Presidential address made it clear that in any federal scheme the states people will have to be given the same rights and sense of participation as the people living in British India. He criticised the Paramount Power and the princes for their obstructive attitude in the matter of constitutional reform in the states on the one hand and in the all-India sphere on the other. He laid the utmost emphasis on establishing the rule of law in the states and fostering among their people the sense of security and genuine loyalty, which in the present circumstances could hardly be expected there. Chintamani said: "... so-called British and the so-called Indian Indian together make up one whole-the India we love and revere and ought to serve- India one and indivisible, the holy land which has been the inspiration of men for ages

past and will be for ages to come.¹

The third session of the All-India State People's Conference was again held in Bombay. It was presided over by Ramnarain Chatterjee, Editor of the Modern Review and the Chairman of the Reception Committee was Lakshmi Das Raoji Tairsee. Those who attended represented a cross-section of public opinion in India, prominent among them being, Subhash Chandra Bose, Smt. Kamla Nehru, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Shri and Smt. K.M. Munshi, Balwantray Mehta, Yusuf-Meharali and many other leading lights of the Indian States. The 4th session of the Conference was also held in Bombay under the Presidency of Shri N.C. Kelkar and attended by prominent public men from the states and British India.

Thus the regular sessions of the conference created a new atmosphere among the state people. Lectures given in the Conference and discussions made in it surcharged the atmosphere. Presence of national leaders in the sessions of the Conference raised the hopes and aspirations of the state people. It brought awareness and political consciousness among them. They vigorously identified themselves with the national aspirations. Literature published by the Conference played important part in bringing this

¹ Presidential Address by C.Y. Chintamani at the Second Indian States' Peoples' Conference held in Bombay on 25th and 26th May, 1929; p. 4.
political awareness among the state peoples.

Books and Pamphlets:

The All-India State People's Conference published many books and pamphlets which popularised the cause of the states people. This literature filled a great void and prepared the ground for the future struggle. All sections of public opinion of the country started sympathise with the state peoples' grievances after reading this literature. Following few publications of the Conference deserve special mention which represents aspirations of the state people.

1. The book named 'Fears, prejudices and professions' giving an interesting analysis of all that the princes had claimed and demanded at the Round Table Conference and in their statements bearing on the Indian federation. The theory of direct relationship with the Crown which led to the belief that there were two Indias, was condemned and rejected outright.

2. The book 'Naoanagar of Prince Ranjee' gave the inside story of the administration of the Jam Sahib of Navanagar. It was descriptive and analytical and written in an elegant style. It focussed attention on the dark nooks and recesses of Jamnagar and purported to expose the vaunted boast of a ruler who called himself an enlightened administrator.
3. "Indian Princes under British Protection" was written by P.L. Chudgar of Rajkot. It gave in a nut shell a comprehensive account of the complex problems of the native states.

4. "Problems of Indian States" was scholarly written by Prof. Abhyankar.

The fifth session of the All-India State people's Conference was held at Karachi in 1936. It was presided over by Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and was attended, among others, by the Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru and an ex-Congress President, Rajendra Prasad. In this conference Dr. Pattabhi said that the Congress was not justified in leaving the states people to their fate and advocated for the open support of the congress for the states people. The very presence of the Congress President and the holding of the session under the presidentship of a front-rank congress leader like Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya did much to bring the Congress leadership closer to the states people's movement.

Ludhiana Session of the All-India state people's Conference was held at Ludhiana on 15th and 16th February 1939. By now, almost in every Indian State, big or small, political organisations had begun to raise their voice in favour of responsible government and the grant of civil liberties. Agitations in big states like Hyderabad, Kashmir, Travancore and Mysore had spread the message of
freedom and in a way they demonstrated the futility of repression. No doubt, the Congress had always been in sympathy with these people's demand for self-government, but their sympathy had now changed into administrative expediency. They could not allow Indian states affair to be exclusive preserve of the Political Department functioning from New Delhi. Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Indian National Congress and the most dynamic congress leader had been elected President of the Ludhiana session. In his presidential address he said: "The freedom of the people of the states is a big enough thing, yet it is a part of the larger freedom of India, and till we gain that larger freedom, it is a struggle for us... It is our great good fortune that in this struggle we have the backing of the National Congress and the support of its leaders."  

Thus Congress had changed its policy of non-intervention in Princely States, because there was "all around awakening among the people of the states and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights." It was true that the people of the States were politically awakened. They were no longer a burden and a deadweight keeping India back. What these awakened people wanted was responsible government.

1. Presidential Address at the All-India States' People's Conference held at Ludhiana on 15th and 16th February, 1939; p. 9.
That the Congress wanted to include the States' people in its fight for freedom was made clear in the resolution passed by the Tripuri-session of Congress on March 12, 1939. It declared: "... The great awakening that is taking place among the people of the states may lead to a relaxation or to a complete removal of the restraint which the congress had imposed upon itself, thus resulting, in the ever increasing identification of the Congress with the States' people."

Furthermore, the status of the states in free India was classified as the resolution went on to say: "... The Congress desires to reiterate that its objective, complete independence, is, for the whole of India, inclusive of the States, which are integral parts of India and which cannot be separated, and which must have the same measure of political, social, economic and religious freedom as a part of India."

3. NATIONAL DEMAND:

The resolution on "National Demand" moved by Mr. Jai Prakash Narain expressed in emphatic terms that the British...
Government must recognise the forces of Indian nationalism because:

"The Congress has for more than half a century striven for the advancement of the people of India and has represented the urge of the Indian people towards freedom and self-expression. During past twenty years it has engaged itself on behalf of the masses of the country in struggle against British Imperialism, and through the suffering and disciplined sacrifice of the people, it has carried the nation a long way to the independence that is its objective".1

These words make it clear that the spirit of Indian nationalism was the important factor which the British Government had to consider in solving the Indian political problem. It is also clear that India's national aspiration at that time was the withdrawal of the British, and a constitution made by the people of India themselves. However, on the eve of the Second World War Muslim leadership and the princely order were a solid opposition to Indian nationalism while the great national organization was threatened by a serious internal crisis. India's inability to present a united front at this juncture weakened her capacity to have a free deal with the British Government. Congress President for the year 1938, Subhas Bose, had advocated vigorous, if necessary, violent resistance for wresting power from England.2 The Rightists led by Rajaji, Sardar

Patel, Rajendra Prasad were devoted to the Gandhian cult and did not appreciate the idea of taking any step which prejudiced England's stand against fascism. They were prepared for a compromise with Britain in terms of honourable co-operation. Jawaharlal Nehru also ideologically supported Britain against fascism.

4. **STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF INDIA**:  

India had strategic importance, as a contributor of food, war materials and soldiers, in the Allied war effort against the Axis powers. Geographically she stood at the centre of the greater half of the British empire, from the cape of New Zealand. Strategically she formed the first reserve not only against the immediate threat to the Allied position in the Middle East but against any threat to the Allied position in the Far East.

5. **FORCED INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR**:

On September 3, 1939, Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, declared India to be a belligerent country without consulting Indian political leaders of any group or party, inspite of the promise of the Government that it would consult them before committing India into war. He proclaimed that war had broken out between His Majesty and Germany and that "a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India is threatened".1

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The same day he promulgated the Defence of India Ordinance and assumed the widest possible powers. The British Parliament hurriedly passed an amendment to the Government of India Act of 1935 authorising the Governor General to override any of its provisions. India thus became a belligerent without the consent of her representatives in the Central and Provincial Legislative Assemblies. The action of the Viceroy ran counter to the spirit of democracy. Since the popular and responsible ministeries were in charge of the Provincial administration, he was expected to consult them on such a vital issue. But it was taken away from Indians, which they had gain after the continuous struggle of several years, instead of taking any positive step to meet Indian Aspirations. Even before the declaration of war Indian troops had been sent to Singapore and Egypt without the consent of the Assembly, and with the declaration of war India was declared a belligerent country, as though India had no voice or will or aspiration of her own and could have none. In fact, this was India's forced involvement in the war.

6. **ATTITUDE OF THE CONGRESS LEADERS:**

Emotionally some of the Congress leaders were eager to join the battle for democracy against Fascism and some others had sympathy with Allies. On the 6th September, Mahatma Gandhi, after meeting the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, issued a press statement saying that inspite of differences
between India and Britain on the question of Indian independence, India should co-operate with Britain in her hour of danger. He wrote:

"As I was picturing before him (Viceroy) the Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down." On 9th September he again wrote: "I am not just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled".

Following the above statements of Gandhi, many leaders began to make public declarations to the effect that though they demanded freedom for India, they wanted Britain to win the war.

The enthusiasm of the nationalists for the Allied cause was unmistakable. Nehru went a step further and made it quite clear that in his view India should offer not only sympathy but unconditional support to Britain. On 8th September, after a hurried return from China, Nehru declared: "We do not approach the problem with a view to taking

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advantage of Britain's difficulties. In a conflict between democracy and freedom on the one side and Fascism and aggression on the other, our sympathy must inevitably lie on the side of democracy". He, therefore, desired that his mother land should be given every opportunity, to play her full part and throw all her resources into the struggle for a new order.¹

Even in May 1940, after the Fall of France, Nehru wrote to Rajendra Prasad: "I think it would be wrong for us at this particular moment when Britain is in peril, to take advantage of her distress and rush at her throat".² He repeated the same sentiment in public speech at Lucknow; but no sympathetic notice was taken in the Government Circle, towards India's goodness.

The Congress leaders, out of loyalty to the anti-Fascist cause, did not prevent the recruitment to the

1. The Statesman, 10 September, 1939; quoted in Coupland, Op. cit., p. 214. Nehru was implacable in his opposition to Nazism and Fascism. He visited Europe in 1938 and declined the invitation of Hitler to visit Germany as on a previous occasion he had turned down the request of the Italian Duce to meet him. On his return to India he pressed the Congress to despatch a medical mission to China much against the will of Bose, the President, who did not want India to incur the hostility of Japan. Moraes, Frank; Jawaharlal Nehru; 1956; pp. 252, 270, 274.

2. These lines and Nehru's speech are quoted by Azad in his letter to Nehru dated May 25, 1940. Azad did not agree with Nehru. Nehru J.; A Bunch of old letters, Asia Publishing House; 1958, p. 434; Azad was stating the popular view.
army and soon large number of Indians were given commissions. They were all educated, and served in the army without any crisis of conscience, for, though like most educated Hindus, they too were generally nationalist minded, the Congress leaders never asked them to give up their career in the army and uninterrupted recruitment went on till the end of the war. This is all the more strange because the Congress passed resolutions at Haripura (February, 1938) and Tripuri (March, 1939), declaring British foreign policy as one of deliberate betrayal of democracy, and refusing to permit the manpower and resources of India to be exploited in the interests of British imperialism.

From the above mentioned facts it is clear that Gandhi and Congress were doing everything possible in order to arrive at a compromise with Britain, but in the words of Subhas Bose: "His (Gandhi's) goodness was mistaken for weakness and the British Government went on exploiting India for war purposes to the best of its ability". 1

7. CONGRESS ATTITUDE:

The Congress Working Committee refused to be led by the emotional approach of Gandhi and Nehru, and the latter fell in with their views. One of the major political parties, the Indian National Congress took the gravest view

of the Viceroy's actions, and **Congress Working Committee declared on 15th September, 1939: "India cannot associate herself with a war said to be for democratic freedom, when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited as she possesses is taken away from her. "The Committee invited the British Government" to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims were in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular how these aims are going to apply to Indians to be given effect to at present".¹ The All India Congress Committee, on 10, October, endorsed the Working Committee's stand and demanded that, "India must be declared an independent nation and present application must be given to this status to the largest possible extent".²

It was a sad experience of the Indian people that even though the people of India had helped the British Government in the World War I, they did not give any substantial political powers to India after the First World War. Therefore, the Indian political leaders wanted to know from the Viceroy what were the British war aims and how did they apply to India? But the Viceroy did not state them.

¹ Statement issued by the Congress Working Committee on September 15, 1939. Mitra; The Indian Annual Register, 1939, Vol. II, pp. 226-8.
² Resolution passed by the All India Congress Committee on October 10, 1939, IAR, 1939, Vol. II, p. 231.
The Congress was keen to assist the Allies but it sought India's participation in the war as an equal of other powers, responsible for her defence. The expression 'to the largest possible extent' is significant. It suggested a radical alteration in the present constitutional arrangements but some sort of provisional national government was to be set up immediately. The spirit of the government was to undergo a change. For future an assurance was to be given that India would be allowed to determine her government through a constituent Assembly without external interference. The resolution made it clear as to why the Congress insisted on these conditions. The victorious powers in the last war had floated their war aims when the time came for their application. In his message to the News Chronical Pandit Nehru also said that a declaration on the above lines would make the people of India enthusiastic for a war which was not their.\(^1\) Mahatma Gandhi characterized the resolution of the Working Committee as a manifesto addressed not only to the Indian people and the British Government and the British people but also to the nations of the world including those that are exploited like India.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Mitra; *Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. II, p. 384.
\(^2\) Tendulkar D.G.; *Mahatma*, Vol. V. Times of India Press; Bombay pp. 204-205.
The Indian political leaders believed that the British Government would at least give to India a Dominion Status, if not the complete independence. But the Government was not even willing to state their war aims. On the other hand, they expected to get men and materials from India without the support of the Indian political leaders.

8. ATTITUDE OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE:

Another important political party, the Muslim League, also refused to co-operate. On 18, September, 1939, The Muslim League, speaking for the Muslims of India, declared: "If full, effective and honourable co-operation is desired by the British Government it must create a sense of security and satisfaction among the Musalmans", and no constitutional advance in India should be made without the approval of the Muslim League. "which is the only organization that can speak on behalf of Muslim India". ¹

9. ATTITUDE OF THE FORWARD BLOC AND ANTI-COMPROMISE CONFERENCE:

After the Munich Pact, in September, 1938, Subhas Bose had begun an open propaganda throughout India in

order to prepare the Indian people for a national struggle, during the coming war in Europe. After the difference of opinion on this issue with other Congress leaders Subhash Bose had resigned from the Presidentship of the Congress and he had formed a radical and progressive party with a view to rallying the entire Left Wing under one banner. This party was called Forward Block. "The immediate objective of the Forward Block was an uncompromising struggle with British Imperialism for winning India's independence. To this end, all possible means should be employed and the Indian people should not be hampered by any philosophical notions".¹

For Subhas Bose, on September 3, 1939, "The much expected crisis had at last come. This was India's golden opportunity".²

Forward Bloc took the line that the Congress had since 1927 repeatedly declared that India should not co-operate in Britain's war and that the Congress should now put that policy into practice. The members of the Forward Block also declared openly that they did not want Britain to win the war because only after the defeat and break-up of the British Empire could India hope to be free.

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² Ibid., p. 28.
Forward Bloc had a tremendous mass appeal and its popularity began to increase by leaps and bounds. Forward Block organised periodic demonstrations to project National Aspirations of the people for instance in October, 1939, an anti. Imperialist Conference was held at Nagpur which was a great success. In March, 1940, the All India Anti-Compromise Conference was convened by the Forward Block and the Kisan Sabha. This Conference decided to launch immediately a fight over the issue of the war and of India's aspiration of independence. During the National Week in April (April 6 to April 13), 1940, the Forward Block commenced, all over the country, its campaign of civil disobedience. Prominent members of the Bloc were gradually put in prison.

In the initial stages, the British Government permitted anti-British and anti-war propaganda of the Forward Block because, "... the British Government was afraid that if drastic measures were taken against the Forward Block, it would provoke the Congress and the public in general, to launch a campaign of passive resistance against the British Government."

1. Ibid.; p. 29. Subhas Bose, who had been 'on parole' after his hunger strike on December 6, 1940, disappeared mysteriously from his house on Elgin Road in Calcutta. He first went to Germany and then to Japan and raised a National Army (Azad Fauj) to liberate India from British subjection.
Subhas Bose did not agree with Gandhi and his followers' activity or rather inactivity. Though he was the leader of rival group, his survey of the political situation seems to be a fairly accurate.

10. **STAND TAKEN BY HINDUMAHASABHA**

The Working Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha met at Bombay on September 10 to consider the war situation. It urged co-operation between India and England and to make such co-operation effective urged"... the introduction of responsible government at the Centre, revision of the Communal Award, modification of the Arms Act to bring it on a level with that prevailing in England and expansion of the Indian Territorial Force".\(^1\)

To appreciate the attitude of Indian political parties, it must be remembered that in other parts of the British Commonwealth such as Canada and South Africa, the decision for joining the war was taken by the respective parliaments. Irish Free State declared neutrality. It would have been better for the Viceroy to have consulted the national elements in India.

11. **BRITISH DIPLOMACY**

Though there was much opposition towards Britain for the forced involvement of India in the war, yet, to begin

with, there was a considerable amount of sympathy and support for Britain. The non-Congress Ministries, of the Punjab, Bengal and Sindh pledged their full support to Britain, and their action was upheld by the legislatures. The Indian States, of course, were solidly behind the Government. Among the Political parties, the National Liberal Federation and Hindu Mahasabha offered unconditional support to the Government. Though the Congress refused to co-operate, sympathy of its leaders was with Allies. In fact, Congress did not start any active thing to prevent the co-operation of Indian in the war. Muslim League High Command did not offer to support Britain, it had done nothing to prevent the Ministries of Bengal and the Punjab from doing so.

After the brake out of Second World War, the Viceroy of India, for a month held discussions with fifty political leaders including Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah, to ascertain the views of the cross-sections of the people in the country. At the end he on 17 October, 1939 reiterated the British resolve to advance a partnership between India and the United Kingdom within the empire, to the end that India might attain her due place among the great dominions, and proposed that His Majesty's government would at the end of the war be prepared to regard the Act of 1935 as open to
modification in the light of Indian views, and that full weight should be given to the views of the minorities. To secure the association of public opinion with the conduct of the war, he suggested establishment of a consultative group, representing the major political parties and the princely states, over which the Viceroy would preside.¹

The Viceroy emphasised the seriousness of the communal situation, the disagreements of political parties and the difficulty of converting the departmental system of administration at the centre into one of cabinet responsibility.²

Review of the 1935 Act at the end of the war and setting up of war advisory committee were a poor response to India's political demands. Even the Liberals were frankly very much disappointed. In the British Parliament Mr. Wedgewood Benn voiced the sentiment of the Labour party in a spirited condemnation of the Viceroy's statement. He considered it unfortunate that political parties were not consulted about it. He characterized it as 'a massive and clumsy document' and said: "If you are asking India to make sacrifices which she is asked to make, surely she is entitled to be assured that the cause for which this country

1. Statement issued by the Governor General of India on October 17, 1939; Coupland, Op. Cit.,; Vol. II 216. Also in Indian Annual Register; 1939; Vol. II pp. 381-82.
2. Menon V.P.; The Transfer of Power In India; Orient Longman & Co.; 1957, pp. 63-64.
is fighting is also her cause. It must be remembered that we stand at the bar of world opinion". The offer to political parties to nominate persons from whom the Viceroy would select his advisers was worthless in the sense that it did not visualize partnership. The plea that nothing could be done during the war time was not assuring. In 1917 Mr. Montagu had visited India at a very critical period of the war and conducted negotiations with Indian leaders. The deadlock which the Government was precipitating was naturally considered by Mr. Benn as very damaging to British prestige.\(^1\)

Apart from this reply of the British Government to the National Aspiration of Indian people for complete independence of India, what infuriated the Indian people most was that while the Allied Powers were talking of fighting for 'freedom and democracy' in India the constitution of 1935 was suspended, all powers were concentrated in the hands of the Viceroy, and in many parts of India several restrictions on personal liberty were imposed e.g. prohibition of all public meetings and demonstrations, imprisonment without trial etc. British Government merely promised another Round Table Conference at the end of the war and left no choice to the Congress but to dissociate itself from administration.

\(^1\) India Debate in the House of Commons, 26th October, 1939; Indian Annual Register; pp. 395-98.
The National Congress characterised the Viceroy's statement as an 'unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialist policy' and therefore declared itself unable to give any support to Great Britain, for it would 'amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy', which it has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction the Congress Working Committee called upon the Congress Ministries to resign. All the Congress Ministries accordingly resigned between 27 October and 15 November, 1939. Thus, as a result of the political differences between the Government and the Congress, political deadlock arose in India. The Congress decision to resign from office, in the opinion of Sir Taj Bahadur Sapru, was "a first class mistake in its turn has unfortunately led to many more".

It is supposed to have weakened the bargaining power of the Congress. It is true, the number of those pluming for co-operation with Britain in the ranks of nationalist leadership was not insignificant. But could the congress afford to cherish the ideal of co-operation, when the British Government did not appear to value it? What really weakened the negotiating power of the Congress was the betrayal of the nationalist cause by communal organisations. The Congress, however, did not still lose hope of some settlement with the

1. Ibid., pp. 217-218.
government. Sympathy for the Allies and non-embarrassment to them were the dominant notes of the utterances of responsible Congress leaders. Moreover the hostility of the Muslim League to the Congress was creating serious complications.

The Muslim League empowered its president to give an assurance of cooperation and support of Muslims to the prosecution of the war.¹ This strengthened the League’s position vis-a-vis the Congress. Now the League was in and the Congress was out. It celebrated the resignation of the Congress Ministries as the day of deliverance on December 22, 1939.

Both the Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, and the Viceroy tried to win over the Congress leaders by nearly granting more powers to Indians in the administration. Further futile negotiations followed on the basis of Sir Samuel’s suggestion, on 26 October, to include more Indians in the Governor General’s Executive Council. On 10th January, 1940, addressing Orient Club at Bombay, the Viceroy made another important pronouncement in which he promised that Dominion Status in terms of the West-minister status shall be the basis of the constitution for India to be achieved ‘at the earliest possible moment’ and that His

Majesty's Government were eager to facilitate the achievement of that status by all means in their power.¹ The British Government appeared to repudiate the old policy of exploring possibilities of constitutional progress within the framework of the 1935 Act. The Congress was not assured by this pronouncement which denied the substance of the national demand. The British still remained the final power to determine India's destiny. Till this stage British policy was one of vague assurances and no definite commitments. Official pronouncements were a clear repudiation of the national aspiration to enable India to determine her future in a democratic manner. British statement had not completely rid themselves of the notion of advance on the lines laid down in the 1935 Act, particularly Part II of it relating to the federation which had not come into operation. They contemplated no legislation in the near future implying any radical change in India's constitutional status.

Jinnah definitely rejected the idea of any Constituent Assembly as it would be dominated by the Congress. The Viceroy felt relieved by the resignation of Congress Ministries, for they controlled eight out of the eleven Provinces and so had power to impair the war-efforts of the Government. As the eight Provinces were now being ruled by the Governors, there was no longer any need to placate

¹. Mitra; Indian Annual Register; 1940, Vol. I p. 35.
the Congress, and the Viceroy canvassed the support of the Muslim League. This considerably strengthened the position of the League and it was joined by the waverers among the Muslims. In March, 1940, the Muslim League, at its Lahore Session, made a formal demand for a separate independent state: Pakistan.1

Did British Government of India really desire Congress help? P. Moon, then a member of the I.C.S. writes: "A section of British opinion was, therefore, not at all keen to have members of Congress in office during the war and secretly welcomed their departure soon after its outbreak".2

Though Linlithgow privately agreed that the minorities had no right to block the progress of India towards self-government, he declared that in his opinion public in England had a feeling that Hindus as a community were against British interests. "There were indeed Churchill and the British mercantile interest which found it difficult to excuse the Indian industrialists who were mostly non-Muslims. But the real tragedy, both to India and to England, was that the Viceroy instead of interpreting Indian aims and aspirations

1. Muslim League Working Committee Resolution, March 23, 1940.
to the British public was content to remain as the mouth-piece of the reactionary Tory Coterie.¹

In fact, Linlithgow did not want Congressmen to return to office, were they might be sources of trouble. He could easily find out from the pronouncement of the Congress leaders that their sympathy was with the Allies, and they would not precipitate a struggle against the Government. Definitely there was no helpful response from the British Government to the sympathetic gesture of Indian leaders.

The Viceroy made no correct or sincere attempts at all to win over the Congress to his cause, on the contrary he employed considerable energy to woo the Muslim League and in particular Jinnah, which established Jinnah as the only leader among the Indian Muslims, the Muslim League as the only party of Indian Muslims to which all Muslims belonged, and Pakistan as their legitimate goal. Mr. Jinnah's counter-offensive to Congress politics was blessed by the British with the result that there was no possibility of accommodation between the Congress and the Muslim League. It is significant that in his letter to Mr. Jinnah of 19 April 1940 the Viceroy communicated and underlined that portion of the Secretary of State's declaration in the House of Lords (18 April) which emphasised that His Majesty's

¹ Majmudar, A.K.; *Advent of Independence*; Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan; Bombay; 1963; p. 152.
Government would not force or enact a constitution without the approval of their eight million Muslim subjects.¹

Instead of making any allowance for the delicate position of the Congress leaders, the Government did its utmost to crush it out of existence. British Government did not give any response to the National Aspiration of Indian people. The Congress resignation was both due to dissatisfaction with the British war aims as well as to the rebuff given to all Congress offers of co-operation.

12. **SITUATION IS CHANGED**:

The war situation in Europe worsened. Hitler's campaign in the West were remarkably successful. In quick succession he over ran Norway and Denmark, in April, 1940; and the Channel ports being threatened, the British Expeditionary Force made the famous evacuation from Dunkirk (May 28 to June 3, 1940). Then came the turn of France. The battle began on 5 June, 1940, and by the end of that month the whole of France was at the feet of Hitler. Though Britain was saved the horrors of a direct invasion, she suffered a great deal from air-bombing.

The Congress reiterated its objective in even clearer and stronger terms in the Ramgarh session in March, 1940.

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The resolution adopted by it declared that "nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India" and they "alone can properly shape their own constitution". Though the resolution also held out the threat of resorting to civil Disobedience, no positive war-policy was laid down and no definite line of action was determined. Even in June 1940, "Mahatma was still non-committed and he repeated that, in his view, the country was not prepared for a fight and any attempt to precipitate it, would do more harm than good to India".

Winston Churchill replaced Chamberlain on May 10, 1940 as Prime Minister of Britain. L.S. Amery took over from Sir Samuel Hoare as the Secretary of State. Mr. Churchill was very critical of India and he did not like to give away any real political power to Indian people. He had declared in 1930 that sooner or later the British would have to crush Gandhi and the Indian Congress and all they stood for. He had, five years later, combated tenaciously the passing of the Act of 1935 on the ground that it gave India more self-governing powers than she was fit to exercise. In his book A Roving Commission he wrote: "The British nation has no intention whatever of relinquishing effectual control of

Indian life and progress. We have no intention of casting away that most truly bright and precious jewel in the crown of the King, which more than all our other dominions and dependencies constitutes the glory and strength of the British Empire.¹

Speaking in the House of Commons on March 29, 1933, Mr. Churchill had said: "... I suppose that two millions or three millions in these Islands get their livelihood from beneficent services mutually interchanged between us and India".²

Broadcasting on India on January 29, 1935, Mr. Churchill had said: "India has quite a lot to do with the wage earners of Britain. The Lancashire cotton operatives have found that out all right. One hundred thousand of them are on the dole already, and if we lose India, if we had the same treatment from a Home Rule India as we have had to our sorrow from a House Rule Ireland, it would be more like two million bread-winners in this country who would be tramping the streets and queing up at the Labour Exchanges".³

One can see from the such statements of Mr. Churchill that he was never in favour of granting independence to India.

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2. Ibid., p. 255.
3. Ibid., p. 255.
Moreover he wanted to exploit Indian resources for the betterment of Britain.

Speaking at Epping on July 8, 1933, he had said: "India is vital to the well-being of Britain and I cannot help feeling very anxious when I see forces from which our population is largely supported being gradually diminished. Foreign investments are slowly shrinking and shipping is at a low ebb. If to these we add the loss of India in one form or another, then problems will arise here incomparably more grave than any we have known. You will have a surplus population here which it may be beyond the Government to provide for effectively." Mr. Churchill was even against of granting self-government to India under the British dominion. He was only concerned with the rights and interests of England in India.

Addressing the constitutional club before the war, he had said: "A great error was made when, almost unperceived, the process of extending reform and self-government to India by Parliament was conceived. Unless you are prepared to defend your rights and interests in India, you will be stripped of every vestige you possess and expelled with ignominy from its shores. The loss of India will destroy all that we have built up".

1. Ibid., p. 255.
2. Ibid., p. 255.
Discussing the question of Dominion Status for India, Mr. Churchill in a speech delivered under the auspicious of the Council of the West Essex Conservative Association at Winchester House, had said: "At any rate I hold it of the utmost importance that we should make it clear that there is no chance of such a goal being reached in our lifetime or in any period which it is profitable for us to consider... It would be altogether wrong to entrust the welfare of the great masses to the Indian political classes".¹ When Mr. Churchill was against in granting dominion status to India; how can he be favourable for the demand of complete independence? In fact he was strictly conservative with a full of reactionary thoughts and unashamed imperialistic mind.

He had said during a debate in the Commons after the outbreak of World War II: "To transfer that responsibility to this highly artificial and restricted oligarchy of Indian politicians would be a retrograde act. It would be a shameful act. It would be an act of cowardice, desertion and dishonour".²

And now the same Mr. Churchill had became the Prime Minister of Britain. What could India expect from him now?

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1. Ibid., p. 255.
2. Ibid., p. 254.
He had, through the years, made numerous statements against Indian independence. He now had the power to prevent it. He and his war cabinet enjoyed a plentitude of powers, with which even the dictators were not clothed. Nothing could have prevented the British Government from putting India firmly on the road to freedom if it had only decided to do so. Within one month of his assumption of the Prime Ministership, he made the epochmaking offer of a union with France. Such a revolutionary gesture was made during "the most fateful moment in the history of the World". Thus the argument that the exigencies of the war forbade any radical changes in the Act of 1935 was invalid.

13. **CONGRESS OFFER FOR CO-OPERATION**

The rapid success of Axis powers in War compelled Congress party to revise its stand from 'no help to the British' to offer co-operation, provided the right of India to complete independence was acknowledged and immediate steps made to give effect to it; a Provisional Government enjoying the confidence of the elected members of the Central Legislative was set up. 1

This change in the attitude of the Congress led to a serious split in the Congress rank. Gandhiji, true to his creed of non-violence, was against India's participation in war in any case.

The Indian National Congress had clearly stated the conditions on which it was ready to give help to the British Government. For the Congress non-violence was not a creed but a policy. National Congress was not a pacifist organization but one for achieving India's freedom. The conditions which were laid down by the Congress were such that they were trying to put restrictions on the powers of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-chief. In other words the Congress was willing to have a coalescence cabinet at the Centre, which would be responsible to the Central Legislative Assembly. But the events which took place afterwards proved that the British Government was not willing to give real power into the hands of Indian Political leaders during the war.

To counter the offer of Congress Co-operation, Mr. Jinnah demanded an assurance from the Viceroy that in all wartime arrangements the Muslims must be treated on an equal footing with the Hindus and that no constitutional change, permanent or transitory, should be effected without prior approval of the League.

(B) POLITICAL DEADLOCK BECOMES HARDER 1940-42:

1. AUGUST OFFER OF 1940:

The new Secretary of State pleaded for a positive approach on the part of His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy was persuaded to have further consultations with the Indian leaders. The correspondence between Amery and
Linlithgow at this stage is quite instructive. The Viceroy was opposed to the idea of a provisional arrangement and also to a fresh declaration of policy. He continued to harp on the divergence between the Congress and the Muslim League. With the loyalty of the Princes and the co-operation of the League in the Provincial sphere assured he felt that the status quo should not be disturbed. On the other side the Secretary of State was willing for a fresh declaration. But the draft he proposed underwent much mutilation, "with its added implication and safe guards". In the Secretariat at Delhi that the Congress would not touch it with a pair of tongs.

In reply of the Congress offer of co-operation the Viceroy made his 'August Offer' in the August of 1940. Rejecting the Congress demand for the immediate setting up of a provisional Government, the Viceroy said that, "they could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by a large and powerful element in India's national life". Outlining the future the Viceroy reiterated that "India's free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth remains the

2. Ibid., p. 92.
proclaimed and accepted goal of British Government. But "It is clear that a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence is not one in which fundamental constitutional issues can be decisively resolved. His Majesty's Government authorises me to declare that they will most readily assent to the setting up of a body representative of all the principal elements in India's national life in order to device the framework of a new constitution, and they will lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions in all relevant matters to the utmost degree". As an immediate step to associate Indian public opinion with the war effort, he proposed to appoint more Indians to his executive council and also establish a war Advisory Council.¹

The offer undoubtedly met the Congress claim in one respect that the future constitution of India was the concern of the Indian people, not the British Parliament. But it promised no change in the existing constitutional position and also conceded nothing very definite and assuring. The expansion of the Executive Council was in no way an advance towards the establishment of a national government. The plea of disagreements among political parties was put forth to keep the country in political tutelage. Moreover, so long as differences continued to exist among the diverse political elements British Government was not bound to consider

the aspirations of Indian nationalism to transfer power. The offer did not definitely promise Dominion Status to India at the end of the war.

The *August Offer* did not meet with the Indian Aspirations. The British Government missed the last chance of winning over the Congress to war-efforts when the majority of the Working Committee even threw Gandhi over board and extended a helping hand. The Congress President Maulana Abulkalam Azad, rejected it without consulting his congress colleagues, because "there was no common ground between the Congress demand for independence and the Viceroy's offer of enlarged Executive Council.\(^1\) Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"The whole conception of Dominion status for India was as dead as a doornail.\(^2\)

Mr. Amery tried to explain and defend the Viceroy's offer, but the Liberals were not inspired by the latest proposal. Some members of Parliament pressed Amery to visit India but he considered it fruitless.\(^3\) Whatever be the differences in Indian national life the deadlock in India was a failure of British statesmanship.

\(^1\) Maulana Abulkalam Azad; *India Wins Freedom*; Delhi 1959 E p. 36.
The Congress had lost its importance in the eyes of the Viceroy but it could not afford to lose its prestige with the people. Indo-British relations now entered a new phase of bitterness. The Congress decided to reiterate its faith in freedom by some demonstration which would not hamper the British war effort.

The Congress party, under the leadership of Gandhiji, launched the individual civil disobedience movement. Congress leaders and volunteers courted arrest shouting antiwar slogans. Gandhi did not make the independence of India the main issue or even a side issue. The immediate issue, he declared was not 'freedom of India', but 'freedom of speech' by which he meant 'the right to state freely what we feel about the war'. Elucidating this point still further he said: "I claim the liberty of going through the streets of Bombay and saying that I shall have nothing to do with this war, because I do not believe in this war and in the fratricide that is going on in Europe."  

This passive resistance lasted till the end of 1941. It had created little interest and less excitement among the masses. The futility of such a campaign was recognized by most people, and even Congressmen who had suffered imprisonment for it joined with them in an appeal to call off the movement. But Gandhi would never withdraw it, nor convert

1. Ibid., p. 247.
it into a mass movement as a large section desired, for he feared that the mass action during the war would embarrass the Government. While the war was being waged in the name of democracy and for the rights of man, in India there was the strange spectacle of Government by officials.

2. **ATTITUDE OF NON-PARTY CONFERENCE**

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had presided at the non-party leaders Conference held in March and July, 1941, which had passed resolutions on need for some bold stroke of statesmanship in views of gravity of international situation. Opening the March Conference Sir Tej had said that it was "a conference of men who were approaching the Indian question as it had tended to become not from the point of view of any particular party but from the point of view of the whole country".

Those who participated in the Conference were distinguished in public life. For example, Sir T.B. Sapru, Sir Srinivas Sastri, and Mr. Jayakar were Privy Councillors; Sir T.B. Sapru and Sir Jagadish Prasad had been members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Sir T.V. Sapru and Sir Srinivas Sastri had represented India at Imperial Conferences; and Sir Srinivas Sastri and Sir Sivaswami Aiyar at the General Assembly of the League of Nations. Sir Sarvepalli

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Radhakrishnan was spalding professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University and Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University. Mr. Mohammed Ynnus had been Premier of Bihar in the interim Ministry which had held office in 1937. Lord Sinha was the son of the First Baron Sinha of Raipur. Mr. Chunilal Mehta and Sir Rahimtoola Chinoy were prominent businessmen.

In fact these great Liberals who had faith in British good will, had lost patience now. They refused to be used as tools of the Imperialists. On the other side these honest intellectual giants meeting in a Conference in Bombay had been dubbed as political pigmies and relegated to the woods.

3. ATTITUDE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT:

Mr. L.S. Amery, Secretary of State for India, moved a resolution in the House of Commons on 22nd April, 1941 to extend for another year the Proclamation under which the Governors of the Indian Provinces can assume the powers of Provincial Legislatures. A debate followed in which some of the prominent members closely associated with India subjected Mr. Amery's statement to a severe criticism.

Mr. Amery made a second speech in reply to the debate. He said: "The debate illustrated to the full the fundamental

1. Ibid., p. 4.
universal good will of this House towards India and its aspirations". ¹

Though it was true that universal good will towards India of some of the honourable members of House of Commons was reality but the policy and aims of His Majesty's Government were quite contrary and disappointing to the national aspirations of India.

Sir Stanley Reed (conservative), depressed with Amery's Speech said: "It did not take us anywhere, did not lead us any further on the road to a solution of the great problem of closer co-operation between India and the British Commonwealth at the present time". In conclusion he asked Mr. Amery "to consider again and again proposals which came from men of goodwill and patriotism with a view to seeing whether steps could now be taken whereby India might feel that not only her armed forces, munitions and her industries and interests were behind the war effort but the heart and soul of a great and generous people". ²

4. THE INDIAN REACTIONS:

In India, the country-wide reaction cooked by the Secretary of State's speech found expression in a spate of statements issued by leaders of every school of thought and

¹. Parliamentary Debates; House of Commons; 5th Series, Vol. 367-370, 1940-41; 22nd April, 1941.
². Ibid., p.
political inclination. Mahatma Gandhi did brief analysis of the speech. For him the speech was amazingly misleading. He declared: "Mr. Amery has rendered no service to Great Britain by his contemptuous disregard of the situation as it exists in India and the facts that state one in the face". Even Moderates were disillusioned. Standing Committee of the Bombay Conference issued a statement, in which they said: "The Committee very much regret that the speeches should have betrayed such an amazing misunderstanding of the real political situation in India and displayed such an unsympathetic and unbending attitude towards the aspirations of India".

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Chairman of the Bombay Conference asked in a statement: "What is his (Amery's) real contribution to the solution of the communal tangle? Is he not by his speeches making the task of those who want a real settlement more and more difficult? Is he strengthening the faith of Indians in British intentions?"

Here one can see that liberal leader and well wisher of the Government Sir Tej is loosing confidence in the wisdom or statesmenship of the Government and is posing direct question to the Secretary of State Mr. Amery that

1. A Nation at Bay; Ed: C.K.B. Naidu Bombay; Documentary Collections of various speeches and writings; p. 25.
2. Ibid., p. 28.
3. Ibid., p. 38.
what was his real contribution to solve the communal differences among Indians? Even Sir Tej blames that speeches of the Secretary of State were responsible for deepening the communal differences.

Mr. V.N. Chandavarkar, President, National Liberal Federation of India said in a statement on April 19, 1942:
"Mr. Amery's speech is bound to create a deep sense of depression and a spirit of hopelessness in the minds of those who have been working strenuously to bring about a better understanding between the British and Indian Nations."

Same was the feeling of Mr. K.M. Munshi, the Home Minister, Government of Bombay. He said in a statement: "The average Indian is convinced that on one pretext or another India is kept out of his due share in the Country's Government... Sense of frustration has seized the Indian mind."

Dewan Bahadur K.S. Ramaswami Sastri, Vice-President of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, in his statement, said:
"It is entirely wrong to say that the Governor's rule has met "with general acquiescence, and indeed, good will" and that the work of beneficent social progress continues in

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2. See press statement of K.M. Munshi, Bombay *Cronical*, dated April 24, 1942, p. 3.
full swing and with broad popular approval. Sir Chimanlal Setalwad said in a statement: "However profuse the assurances of the British Government may be as regards their intentions to make India a self-governing Dominion, no political party is convinced, because of past experience of the British Government's sincerity as regards parting the power."  

Sir S. Radhakrishnan expressed the following views on Mr. Amery's speech: "The way in which the proposals of the Bombay Conference have been treated by the Secretary of State indicates that, even in this crisis, Britain is not willing to part with power in India."

Here one can see that even most moderate leaders were not only convinced that the government was not willing to part with any real power in India; but they were also speaking the same thing publicly and thus were urging the Government to create the atmosphere of confidence and to remove doubts.

Dr. H.C. Mookerjee, the leader of Indian Christian Community said in a statement on Mr. Amery's speech: "It is necessary for Britain to understand that, just as all parties

1. Ibid., p. 46.
2. Ibid., p. 47.
3. Ibid., p. 49.
are united in their detestation of totalitarianism, similarly all parties are united in a demand for a much larger measure of self-government than what India enjoys today".  

The Hon. Mr. F.N. Sapru, in a statement on Mr. Amery's speech, said: "The broad fact that stares us in the face is that the British, as represented by Mr. Amery, is unwilling to part with or even share power with India".  

Sardar Sant Singh, M.L.A. (Central) gave a press statement "Mr. Amery has shown a deplorable lack of appreciation of the present political situation in India".  

Sir P.S. Sivaswami Aiyar expressed his views: "The latest speech of Mr. Amery in the House of Commons will not bring about any solution of the Constitutional deadlock or any easing of the political and communal tension in this country".  

Pandit Hridaya Nath Kunzru, member of the standing committee, of the Bombay Conference, in an interview said: "the very persons who are treated as representative of  

1. Ibid., p. 51.  
2. Ibid., p. 54.  
3. Ibid., p. 55.  
4. The Hindu, Madras, April 24, 1942.
India when the British Government claim that India is with them in the war effort are treated as unrepresentative when they ask for their national rights.¹

The Council of the Deccan Sabha was "deeply disappointed at the recent statement made in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for India, as it shows no disposition to find a solution of the present grave Indian problem."²

Mr. Atther Moore, Editor of the statesman said in a statement: "In peace-time we insisted on the over-riding judgement and initiative of Parliament. In war time Secretary of State insists that the responsibility both for the initiative and completion of this high inquiry rests with Indians themselves, there is somewhat a paralysis of leadership, which does not befit the times."³

Thus an Englishman, editor of the British newspaper also was not satisfied with the government's policy. No doubt, he was representing many English people's view who were sympathetic and just toward the Indian aspirations.

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1. A Nation at Bay; op.cit.; p. 57.
2. Ibid., p. 57.
3. Ibid., p. 58.
The Honourable Khan Bahadur Alla Bux, Premier of Sind, expressed his views as follows: "Mr. Amery is repeating the old offer, which has been rejected by all political parties in India and reiterating his old arguments".  

Rai Bahadur Guru Narain, General Secretary of the All India Hindu League, expressed his opinion; "I think that Britain does not want to part with power. There is nothing in Mr. Amery's offer and the statement in the country instead of being solved, would assume a more difficult aspect".  

The Advance in a leading article commenting on Mr. Amery's speech in the commons, said: "What he said on August 8, 1940, and called his firm offer, he repeats, renews and reiterates on April 22, 1941, with an undisturbed complacency, as though the world has stood still since the August offer of his was made".  

5. OPINION OF THE PRESS:  

Mr. Amery had handed over India's future to Mr. Jinnah; for, perfecting the British policy of divide and rule, the latter had been accorded a right to veto all 

1. Ibid., pp. 58-59.  
2. Ibid., p. 59.  
3. The Advance; Calcutta, April 23, in a leading article under the caption "India knows her Amery", (1941).
political progress of India. Almost all the political organizations of India were against this policy of status quo towards Indian aspirations by the British Government. The Indian National Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, the large majority of Muslims who owed no allegiance to the Muslim League, the Sikhs, the Indian Christians, the Liberals, the large number of Nationalists who had so far not associated with any political organization—even the Indian States—were now negligible in the eyes of British diplomacy. British Government was having only one policy: self-interest of Britain. They had nothing to do with the Indian aspirations.

Newspapers in India were not silent against this deaf and dumb policy of the government. It raised voice against the Government policy and clearly revealed imperialistic politics of the Government.

The Bombay Chronicle wrote: "Mr. Amery seems more interested in counter-acting the influence of the Congress than in bringing about a settlement with it".  

The Free Press Journal, commenting on the India debate, wrote: "All the argumentation is for clever handling of the Indian situation for more cunning diplomacy, for more calculating generosity there was not a whisper of Britain's

1. The Bombay Chronicle, Bombay, April 24, 1941.
tremendous moral responsibility in respect of the 500 millions of coloured subjects over whom she rules.¹

The Stateman wrote: "... But an attendant stipulation has brought frustration. The new constitution must be the outcome of agreement among the principal elements in India's national life. That is where the programme has broken down."²

The Amrita Bazar Patrika rightly brings out the Tory character of the British politicians.

It wrote: "There is no change in Mr. Amery's attitude. There is no change in his tone either. The old prejudiced mind is actively at work. Mr. Churchill is a Tory diehard. Mr. Amery is a good lien tenant. The diehards are in the saddle. Democracy and freedom are opposed to the traditions which they understand and labour to maintain and uphold."³

The Hindustan Standard put the British-Muslim relations in a better perspective.

The Hindustan Standard wrote: "The Muslim League obviously has received more sympathetic consideration than the Congress."⁴

¹. Free Press Journal, Bombay, April 24, 1941.
². The Stateman, Calcutta, April 23, 1941.
³. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, April 23, 1941.
⁴. The Hindustan Standard, Calcutta, April 23, 1941.
This 'no response' policy of the British Government stiffened the attitude of the nation. The indirect encouragement to the Muslim League by the speech induced it to persist its impossible demand. Rejection of the well-meaned proposals of the Bombay Conference disappointed the Liberal Section of opinion in the country.

The Hindustan Times forcefully puts forward the reactions of ordinary men in the country.

The paper wrote: "... And the manner in which he finds fault with all sections, while himself contributing nothing more to the solution of the Indian problem except the whole inadequate and insufficient offer of August last and a few soothing phrases, will create disgust in the minds of ordinary men".¹

The National Herald echoed: "Congressmen should find ample justification in the speech for their cardinal belief that the British Government have not the slightest desire to part with power now or hereafter. The turning brush of suspicion is applied to all alike".²

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1. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, April 23, the article under the caption "Maligning the Congress". (1941).

2. The National Herald, Lucknow, April 23; editorial under the caption "Ipsissima Verba". (1941).
The Pioneer wrote: "It has committed a blunder of the first magnitude, the effect of which it is impossible to foresee." 

The Tribune wrote: "The immediate and most important effect of Mr. Amery's speech was to destroy whatever hopes of a solution of the present political impasse in India the Bombay Conference and the resolution passed by it had roused, whether in this country or in Britain." 

British Press also was very critical of the government's policy toward India.

Even The Manchester Guardian wrote: "The India debate on Tuesday was unsatisfactory so far as it disclosed Government's policy ... The debate was only satisfactory because some of the speeches by private member showed that there is a lively discontent with Government having no policy now for doing anything". The paper asked "What have Government done to show that they do not deserve to be accused of drifting since the Viceroy made the August proposals. It has been suggested that a delegation of members of Parliament should go to India with Government approval to try and bring

1. The Pioneer; Lucknow, April 23; a leading article under the caption "Amery Blunders" (1941).
2. The Tribune, Lahore, April 23; in a leading article entitled "Mr. Amery's Damper" (1941).
together the Muslim League and the Congress. Have Government ever helped that plan?" The article added: "Mr. Amery finds all sorts of difficulties but there will always be difficulties. They have to be overcome and risks have to be faced." 1

Above mentioned articles and statements, few selected among many, mirror the genuine national perspective and reflect general political aspirations prevailing throughout the country. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "The lack of any vision in the British Government amazed me, its utter incapacity to read the signs of the times and adapt itself accordingly. There is something comic and something tragic about the functioning of this Government, for nothing seems to shake it out of its age long complacency; neither logic nor reason, neither peril nor disaster. Like Rip Van Winkle, it sleeps, even though awake, on Simla hill... Imperialism thinks otherwise and imagines that it can continue to function and to coerce people to do its will." 2

The Hindu asked: "Is it not idle to suppose that the legitimate aspirations of a great nation could be checked and

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1. The Manchester Guardian in a leading article dated April 26, 1941.

2. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote this in his article titled "Parting of Ways", which was written as an epilogue to the American edition of his autobiography. This appeared in The Nation dated February 1, 1941.
thwarted indefinitely by Britain, even though her will may be backed by big battalions?"  

India was feeling desperate frustration, confronted with Britain's policy of dealing with her as cavalierly as if she were a conquered country under military occupation. To inspire that feeling of futility in India was not good for Britain.

The Hindu again wrote: "It is the right and the duty of the Congress to organise a countrywide campaign to force Britain to adopt a more reasonable attitude towards the National Demand." Here one can see that the paper was suggesting to the Congress to organise such a countrywide demonstration which can force the Government to adopt a more reasonable attitude. In other words, it was a suggestion that without the fight for political right the Government will not concede any. Same feeling was echoed by the Bombay Sentinel.

The Bombay Sentinel wrote: "The supreme fact is that the British Government does not intend to part with power, and all the five phrases are hypocritical sentiments in Mr. Amery's tedious speech are merely insincere propaganda for

1. The Hindu, from Madras, wrote two leading articles titled "Yet another No", and "Congress Must Assert Itself" on April 24, 1941, and April 28, 1941, respectively.

2. Ibid.
Here one can clearly see that Amery was assailed from all quarters in India. It is clear that there was a general disbelief among Indians regarding the British promises. British policy towards India was this: all is going well, there is nothing to be done. Indians are not united, unless there is no understanding between them, we cannot do anything.

Outcome of this short-sighted policy was this: There was no identification of the people with the power and policies of the Government. On the contrary, bitterness was growing towards the Government. Average people were doubtful about the intentions of the Government. Not only that, but most of the people were certain that British don't want to give up any power in India.

Indians were now convinced that British Government was cleverly trying to manipulate all reactionary forces to stifle national aspirations, and Britain only wants to exploit every source from India; useful for the war purposes; without giving any concession to Indian demand.

This policy of the British Government created sense of frustration throughout the country. It was this sense

1. The Bombay Sentinel wrote three leading articles titled: "Hammered But Unchastened", "Divide and Rule" and "Who are responsible New" which were published on April 24, 1941, April 25, 1941, and April 29, 1941, respectively.
of frustration which was mainly responsible for the slogan of complete independence. India had realised that unless India becomes free from foreign domination and exploitation, it was impossible for her to rise to her full status and take her rightful place in the comity of independent nations. The sense of frustration was almost overwhelming. Amery hadn't asked simultaneously the Muslim League, as he had asked the Congress, to come to terms with other Indians. Than how Indians can believe his 'bonafides'? In fact, he was more concerned to encourage the League to carry on its war against all those who asked for democracy in India. Faith in British statesmanship was wholly absent in India, and nothing had been done to restore it.

It was significant that Mr. Amery's arguments and charges had not been supported by a single Indian leader of reputation. Even some of the Liberal journals in England had condemned them in unmeasured terms. Amery had been guilty of dishonest statements 'made in utter disregard of truth', misleading the ignorant world.

Thus the 'August Offer' seems to have been the pivot round which the British policy revolved for more than a year. India was not given at once a few extra seats on the Executive Council. Even this reform was long delayed. The Executive Council was enlarged on July 22, 1941. The same day a National Defence Council to associate non-official opinion, was set up. Neither the Congress, nor the Muslim
League sent any member to the Council. The Government therefore picked up only yes-men for the new position, to show to the outside world that India would be governed from that time by the Executive Council of Viceroy on which the majority of the members were Indians. Although eight out of the thirteen members were Indians, they were neither responsible to the Legislature nor to any political party. The fact remains that the foreign affairs and the political department remained under the Governor General. The defence remained with the Commander-in-chief and the other important departments, namely Home and Finance also remained in the hands of Englishmen. The remaining work was distributed in the hands of Indian members. The old belief therefore "persisted in nationalist minds that the function of the Council was to register the opinions of the Viceroy, and the function of the Viceroy to do what he was told by Whitehall".¹ Also, the Defence Council, being merely an advisory body, did not make any impression on the Indians. There was therefore hardly any thing tangible which could convince the Indians of the bonafide of the British offers and promises to give a real Dominion status to the Indians.

Few months after the expansion of the Executive Council of the Viceroy, the Government released all

This was, probably, done to make the Indian members more popular and also because of the worsening of the war situation for the Allies.

6. **ATLANTIC CHARTER**

On 14th August, 1941, President Roosevelt of America and Prime Minister Churchill of Great Britain signed the Atlantic Charter. As a statement of war aims, its Article 3 laid down: "They respect the right of all people to choose the form of Government under which they live, and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."²

Such an emphatic anti-imperialistic stand was bound to affect the subject nations all over the world. With the signing of the Atlantic Charter, the U.S. was openly committed to the cause of freedom to the colonies. India - "not only the greatest example of Imperialism but one of the gravest problems of Imperialism" - was thrilled at this United States Commitment."³

1. Churchill was really not happy with these release. He considered it as surrender at a moment of success and as suggesting the Viceroy of the Congress. See Churchill Sir Winston; The Second World War, Vol. III, Collins; p. 748.

2. FR, 1941, I p. 368.

Gandhi and other national leaders in India had been clamouring for a statement of war aims by the British Government. As early as October 16, 1939, Gandhi had demanded that, "The Congress cannot help Britain, if Britain is secretly fighting for Imperialism while it declares to the world that the fight is for saving the democracies. For Britain to be in the right, a clear declaration of her war aims is a necessity." The joint Anglo-American commitment contained in the Atlantic Charter raised Indian aspirations for freedom. President Roosevelt's speeches strengthened such aspirations. The declaration was heartily welcomed by all sections of Indians.

But Prime Minister Churchill, in keeping with his well-known stand that he had not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire, came out with a British interpretation of the Charter.

During a debate in the House of Commons on September 9, 1941, he asserted that "the joint Declaration does not qualify in any way the various statements of policy which have been made from time to time about the development of constitutional government in India, Burma, and other parts.

of the British Empire". ¹ and added: "We are pledged by the Declaration of August, 1940 to help India to obtain free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth with ourselves, subject, of course, to the fulfilment of obligations arising from our long connection with India and our responsibilities to its many creeds, races, and interests". ² According to him: "At the Atlantic meeting, we had in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and national life of the states and nations of Europe under Nazi Yoke, and the principles governing any alterations in the territorial boundaries which may have been made. So that is a quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institution in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown". ³

Churchill's elaborate interpretation of the Charter was a shock to Indian aspirations. All the distrust and suspicion were converted into a definite belief in the insincerity and double-dealing of the British by an unfortunate speech of Churchill. Regional coupland, the famous British expert on Indian constitutional problem,

2. Ibid., c. 69.
3. Ibid., c. 69.
remarked that: "the nationalists seized on it as a clinching proof of British dishonesty.\(^1\)

Indian political leaders knew that Mr. Churchill was not willing to give any real power to the Indian hands, and yet he expected help from India. If Britain had made a deliberate rescue to antagonize all sections of public opinion in India, she could not devise anything more suited to the purpose than this speech of Churchill. The large majority of Indians merely found in it a formal corroboration of what they had all along believed, namely, that the British never meant to make any real concession to India. British dishonesty, said congressmen, had now been nakedly exposed.

The Liberals, including Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, who was the greatest champion of unconditional aid to British war efforts, felt shocked. He said: "Mr. Churchill's statement is the biggest rebuff India has ever received.\(^2\)

Dr. M.R. Jayakar, Supreme Court Justice and a great liberal leader of India, commenting on Mr. Churchill's statement about the Atlantic Charter, said: "It was the slave

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pwner's argument and naturally India was indifferent to the outcome of the war as long as she did not stand to gain anything as a result of the war".¹

Even the all India Council of Indian Christians demanded responsible Indian Government and expressed anxiety of Churchill's statement.²

Gandhiji maintained silence which was more eloquent than words. Mr. Kripalani, General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, and Dr. Rajendra Prasad expressed the opinion that Churchill convinced them that Britain was fighting the war for preserving her empire and keeping India in bondage as long as she could.³

Mr. Savarkar, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, declared that Churchill's "blunt candour" did not surprise the Mahasabha because the Mahasabha had already expressed the belief that Britain was fighting the war for her personal benefit.⁴

It is true that the Muslim League did not attempt to waste words on the theoretical discussion on India's status.

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1. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
within the framework of the Atlantic charter but instead concerned itself to put its point across about the realistic expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the National Defence Council. ¹

The All-India Nationalist League concluded its session in New Delhi under the presidency of Mr. Jamnadas Mehta on October 30, "disapproved Churchill's interpretation of the plighted word of His Majesty's Government". ²

On behalf of the Standing Committee of the Non-Party Leaders' Conference which concluded its two-day session at Allahabad on November 2 its Chairman Sapru stated:

"It is difficult to believe that it could have been the intention of President Roosevelt to exclude India from the operation of the first part of the third principle of the Charter which reads "... they respect the right of all peoples to choose, the form of Government under which they live..." or that Mr. Churchill could have ignored at that time India's claim to self-government". ³

On November 18 Mr. V.V. Kailkar moved a resolution in the Council of State of the Indian Legislature. It related

². Ibid., p. 30.
³. Ibid., p. 270.
to the non-applicability of the Atlantic Charter to India which "in the opinion of this House is likely to prejudice the war effort in this country at this critical juncture".  

At the twentieth convocation address of Nagpur University on November 29, Lt. Col. T.J. Kedar, Vice-Chancellor, said: "... The Atlantic Charter of 1941 may be the charter of British and American democracy but it is not and cannot be a charter of democracy as such... But when we talk of the charter of democracy, it must be with reference to the principles enunciated in 1776 by the fathers of modern democracy..."  

The National Liberal Federation also passed, on December 28, a resolution declaring that: "The National Liberal Federation of India protests against the Prime Minister's speech excluding India from the scope of the Atlantic Charter and the recent speeches of Mr. Amery and Lord Linlithgow reiterating the determination of His Majesty's Government to make no change in their policy towards India".  

It is true then that Indian public opinion was hostile to Churchill's interpretation of the Atlantic Charter.

1. Ibid., p. 98.
2. Ibid., p. 360. For his full address see p. 358-361.
3. Ibid., p. 257.
There were until this stage, a few who either could not or did not believe that the British Government had all along been playing a double game, bribing India to do her utmost to help in winning the war was won. But now they consoled themselves with the thought that they had put too favourable an interpretation on the words and promises made by the British rulers, who never intended to grant the type of freedom which India had in view. But none the less they were thoroughly disappointed. The subsequent attitude of the Indians is to be viewed in the perspective of the situation created by Churchill's speech. Henceforth India would never trust or put any faith in the promises of perfidious Albion. Everything must be paid in cash, and no credit was to be allowed.

United State's Secretary of State Cordell Hull wrote in his memories, about Churchill's interpretation of the Atlantic Charter that: "Neither the President nor I and any of my associates accepted this interpretation, we had no desire to engage in an altercation with the British".¹ For this reason U.S. did not openly repudiate Churchill's interpretation.

According to Louis Fischer; "In London, United States Ambassador John G. Winant tried unsuccessfully to dissuade

¹ Hull Cordell; The Memories of Cordell Hull; Vol. II; Hodder and Stoughton. New York; 1948; p. 1484.
Prime Minister Churchill from stating publicly that the Atlantic Charter's self-government clause did not apply to India.¹

On 1st January, 1942, at Washington, Sir G.S. Bajpai, the Agent to the Governor General in the United States, had signed on behalf of India the joint Declaration of the United Nations referring to the Atlantic Charter as "A common programme of purposes and principles¹ and pledging themselves to employ their full resources in the prosecution of the war and to co-operate with one another. Referring this on 5th January, 1942, Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for India wrote to Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, in a private letter: "Bajpai has signed on behalf of India to yet another resounding declaration which bases itself upon the Atlantic Charter, so it can hardly be said now that India is excluded from its purview."²

Also Mr. Amery had dealt at length with the issue of India and Atlantic charter in his Manchester Speech of


14th November. He wanted to know whether it had any effect in India. In reply the Viceroy wrote: "But the fact is that in their present mood, the politically minded in India are not prepared to be persuaded or comforted by any speech however able or however tactfully phrased." In the Indian opinion document which Bajpai signed under British Government's malevolent instructions, was a document which added outrageous insult to the cruel injury of Winston's interpretation of the Charter.

On 8th January 1942, Mr. Amery had made a statement in the House of Commons to the effect that His Majesty's Government's pledge in India, though given independently of the Atlantic Charter, are in complete accord with the general principles affirmed in that declaration.

In the Council of State on 8th November, Sir Akbar Hydari, as spokesman for the Government, argued that the

1. About the application of the Atlantic Charter Sorensen asked Amery in the House of Commons on November 27... "Does not the right Hon. Gentleman appreciate that Indian opinion, both official and non-official, appears to disagree with him regarding the relationship of point 3 of the Atlantic Charter to the demand in India for Independence, and will be not, therefore, reconsider the whole matter in the light of the other interpretation given to it by the Indian people". No immediate reply was given. Vol. 376 H. of C. Deb., c. 880.


Prime Minister had not declared that the Charter did not apply to India but had himself stated that the principles of the Atlantic Charter were embodied in the declarations about India which had previously been made by His Majesty's Government.  

In the Legislative Assembly on October 29th Mr. Aney for the Government took the line that the Government of India were not a party to the Charter and that those who signed it were the proper persons to say what was in their minds when they signed it.

Sir Sultan Ahmed, made a public statement on January 15th . . . the Atlantic Charter of last August was a statement not of terms, but of principles. Their application, various as it must eventually be in meeting various aspirations, has never been limited in its possible extent. Any misunderstanding arising out of Mr. Churchill's subsequent statement on the Atlantic Charter, and any feeling that its effects would be felt only in Europe, should vanish with the effective realisation that the war is now worldwide and that India's name stands beside those of the 25 other nations pledged to see it through to victory, and to construct upon that victory

a peace on the broad principles of the historic Churchill-Roosevelt Declaration. ¹

But fact remains that the Government was not ready to include the applicability of the Charter to India. So, Mr. Amery instructed to the Viceroy in his 'immediate, private and personal' telegram on 6th February 1942: "... A point useful for debating purposes as illustrating Sultan Ahmed's point that the Charter contains principles not terms is the particular application to India of the expression "people" used in Article 3—Congress would claim that it applies to all the inhabitants of British India taken together but Moslems might well claim to be treated separately as a "people". But obviously the point needs to be handled with care". ²

Thus diplomatic statements and carefully handled, 'tactfully phrased' speeches raised doubts and bitterness in India towards the British Government. The war awakened India to a sudden sense of reality. Indians had believed that with the enjoyment of a little bit of provincial autonomy they were marching towards their goal of independence. But the


war proved that they did not count; they were still a dependency. The British policy of 'divide and rule' came at its ugliest during the war. All possible groups and parties whose grievances fancied or real, could be exploited were invited and ranged on one side in order to show the world that there was a larger 'non-Congress' India than 'Congress' India. Fact is that, instead of responding to India's legitimate aspiration for freedom. British Imperialism stood in the way of peace and justice, exactly as it did before the war. The Problem which was purely 'political' one, the British Imperialism tried to paint it before the world as 'communal' one. Definitely this was not the act of statesmanship on the part of the British. As a result of this shortsighted and unwise imperialistic policy of the British Government the political deadlock in India became harder.