INTRODUCTORY

Emergence of Germany as a powerful state in Europe during the last decade of the nineteenth century had become a source of great danger to the British. The British statesmen had started believing that the pace at which Germany was progressing and multiplying her resources on all fronts — political, economic, military — would soon jeopardise the power and prestige of Great Britain, both at home and abroad.

To Great Britain, a strong German state in Europe, in a bellicose mood and fervidly desirous of becoming a first rate power in weltpolitik, was like a sword of Damocles hanging over her head. Little wonder that British statesmen had started feeling that sooner Germany was checked, the better it would be. In pursuit of the policy, the British strategicians now concentrated on devising ways and means to push back Germany to its position of 1850s when it was weak and divided. They abandoned outmoded British policy of splendid isolation from the beginning of the twentieth century and adopted that of winning friends from among the States in Europe, Asia and elsewhere.

The British Foreign office started manoeuvring its diplomatic guns against Germany from all over the globe with a view to isolate Germany and courted one after the other the friendship of Japan, France and Russia. It also began a secret dialogue with Italy to induce her to leave the camp of the Central powers and cross over to Great Britain and its allies.
The strategy of Britain also brought about a remarkable change in her imperial policy. It now started preparing for a war and while doing so adopted a conciliatory attitude towards its subject nations, in the hope that this would encourage them to give greater help to Britain on the outbreak of the war.

Britain now initiated a policy of benevolent autocracy towards the King's subjects in the dependencies. It made occasional compromises in the hope that they would fetch greater goodwill and loyalty of the King's subjects in return. The status of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa was raised and they were brought at par with the Dominion of Canada in 1901, 1907 and 1909, respectively. In India the peaceful atmosphere disturbed during the Viceroyalty of Curzon (1899-1905) in his zeal for efficient administration was sought to be restored. Between 1905 and 1910, Minto and Morley worked extremely hard to soothe political passions in India but much still remained to be done. Hardinge was specially chosen in 1910 to go to India as the Governor-General and Viceroy to do that.

On reaching India, Lord Hardinge posed himself as the most sympathetic Viceroy the Indians ever had. A good diplomat, as he was, he began convincing the Indians through his public utterances that he was sincere in his sympathies. He would emphasize that Indians had rights within the Empire, and Britain had deep respect for the feelings of Indians, and their aspiration for self-government. His sympathetic words successfully produced a hypnotic effect.
upon the Indians. The Coronation Durbar at Delhi, annulment of the partition of Bengal, transfer of the capital to the historic city of Delhi with which India had a sort of sentimental attachment, opening of the highest gallantry award of Victoria Cross to the Indian soldier and forestalling provincial autonomy in one of his early public despatches to the Secretary of State for India were some of the more important actions which Hardinge took to please the Indians. He did all these things with the complete concurrence and active support of the British Government at home.

While these efforts were being made to create a favourable atmosphere, secret steps were taken to gear up the military machine in India with a view to meet any eventuality that might arise either in India or in Europe. Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1904-1906) had taken the first step. He had reorganised the Army on modern lines and had made full preparations to train and equip it. He got the munitions depots overstocked. His successor continued the same policy and adopted many other measures. The result was that when the war broke out in Europe, India was better prepared for playing its role than any other Dominion or Colony. India sent big contingents of soldiers to Europe and supplied large stores of munitions to Britain at very short notices, while meeting her own requirements of a large Army for unforeseen trouble within the country or on the North-Western Frontier.
The Civil administration had been simultaneously geared to play the new role of actively supporting war preparations. Provincial governments were fully prepared to meet the needs of Britain and curb the subversive activities of the Indian revolutionaries. It was also tuned to handle the public at large with sympathy. Hardinge had devoted special attention to the Punjab, both because of its geographical position and its being the greatest supplier of Indian soldiers. He had appointed a new Lieutenant Governor in 1913 who was known for his dash and quick decision, besides enjoying the reputation of being extremely tactful in his handling of awkward situations.

The motive behind this apparent change of heart on the part of Britishers was to win over the loyalty and confidence of the Indian people for the benefits of the British Raj. With England preparing for a big war, Indians' goodwill and loyal co-operation was as valuable as her vast resources.

This shrewd policy of the Government of India pursued for just less than a decade bore fruit. When the Great War broke out in Europe and England declared war against Germany, most of the Indians rallied around "their King-Emperor" and their hearts throbbed in sympathy with the British cause. In the Punjab there was an instantaneous outburst of loyalty.