CHAPTER II
GOVERNMENT'S WAR POLICY

With a view to getting maximum out of India for helping British during the war, the Government of India thought it proper to keep up the existing tempo of excitement and enthusiasm among the Indians during the course of the war. For maintaining this it chalked out a set policy in the light of past experience and laid down certain cardinal principles for future guidance of all governments in India, Central and provincial.

This policy was prepared on the lines already laid down by the Government of Great Britain and the principles so decided were a consequence of a detailed discussion at the highest level.

As early as 1912 the British Government had drawn a guide line for the Government of India in the eventuality of the outbreak of the war. It had drawn up a Defence Scheme to be followed in India in the wake of Anglo-German war and had sent it to the Government of India in the form of a Secret Memorandum on 7 November 1912. Since then the Government of India had been gearing its machinery to meet the war eventuality on the lines suggested by that memorandum. When the war actually broke out in Europe on 28 July 1914, Lord Crewe, the

1. GOI-Home-Pol-August 1914-Pro. No. 48: In this Secret Memorandum full details of the Defence Scheme were given as to how the Government of India should defend itself from enemies within and without in the event of the war and how they should help in defending the British interests overseas.
then Secretary of State for India, at once alerted the Viceroy to take action under this Defence Scheme. The Viceroy acted accordingly and asked his civil and military councillors to take all the necessary steps indicated in the Memorandum of 1912, as suggested by the Secretary of State.

The Viceroy's direction evoked an immediate response. The first to respond was the Commander-in-Chief. He assured the Viceroy within a couple of hours of receiving the Viceroy's communication: "Full arrangements made. For reinforcements to be sent abroad 6th, 7th and 3rd Divisions named in order and Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade could most conveniently be sent". "I have", he added, "geared all the machinery and taken precautionary measures even at a higher degree than the Secretary of State suggested". Similarly on the civil side of the government, the Home Member, R.H. Craddock, also moved into action.

With almost all the necessary information about India in his possession and possessing an excellent mind well adapted to analysing the people's temper at a particular time, the Home Member prepared a policy draft for the approval of the Governor-General and his Executive Council. In this draft the Home Member predicted the probable impact of the war on various classes and creeds in India as follows:

"The outbreak of war, and its early stages will
doubtless be accompanied by a burst of loyal
enthusiasm, and offers of help from every quarter;
Native Chiefs, the great Zemindars, and some of
the large Indian bankers. It is probable that
every class (except the anarchists), if they
do not echo this sentiment, will at least have the
decency to keep silent."

However, having said that he sounded a note of caution. He
wrote that in due course there might emerge political movements
against the British in India which in all probability would be
accompanied by occasional outbreaks of disorders by lawless
people, especially in the event of British reverses. "For
example" he wrote,

"if on the news of some British reverse, Bengali
students were allowed to go about in procession
in the streets shouting the cry of 'Bande Matram'
which is the cry of Indian Independence (however
much it may be disguised), or exhibiting signs of
joy, in a few days time we should find similar
manifestations in Poona, Lahore, Nagpur, Benaras
and many other centres."

Such spirit of insubordination to law and authority, Craddock
contended, would then take the form of a movement and would
spread as rapidly as plague.

5. Ibid., Para 21.
To deal with such contingencies, Craddock suggested that government should form a clear idea of the temper of the people on such occasions in advance, to enable it to take timely action. As how to gauge public temper, he wrote:

"We have to gauge the temper of the people as things go on, by their behaviour and often by small signs. If as the war progresses, any setback is accompanied by instance of insults to European women by townspeople, or if cases begin to occur of assaults on isolated Europeans in villages, or assaults on the police or resistance to authority we shall know that mischief is going on. The town baimsh element is of course always ripe for mischief; but signs of an unruly spirit among rural folk will be potentially more serious as indicating that poison is at work."

According to him, once the public temper is accurately known, things would be easy for government in meeting the emergency with success.

Craddock suggested that it would be the best policy for the government to humour the Indians on one side and crush the seditionists on the other. He spelt out cardinal principles of the policy as follows:

7. GOL-Home-Pol-Deposit-August 1914-Pro. No. 1, para 19.
(1) "To show no suspicion or distrust of the people of India, but to affirm publicly our belief in them as loyal and patriotic subjects, His Imperial Majesty, to whom His Majesty looks, as in the past, for their help and support against the enemies of Great Britain.

(ii) To preserve the regular administration of the country on its ordinary current and routine lines without any curtailment in the programme that is not absolutely forced upon us by financial considerations.

(iii) To avoid all measures of panic or tending to repression except when they are called for by actual occurrences, but to have all such measures ready for immediate use, if required.

(iv) To nip in the bud and repress at once any acts of disorder or violence, or any efforts to incite to disorder or violence, or to excite race-hatred or religious animosity."

Elaborating the first point and the exact manner in which this part of the policy was to be executed, the Home Member wrote that in the event of war breaking out, a Royal Proclamation should be read at a meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council and that should be followed by a reassuring statement by the Viceroy. By doing that Indians' sentiments would be gratified.

9. Ibid., para 15.
As regards the second point, Craddock suggested that if finances require curtailment of expenditure it should only be in respect of new projects; existing works should be maintained as far as possible, which would not only ease the economic conditions of the labouring classes, and would keep up their wages and their purchasing power, but would also serve as an evidence of tranquil and undisturbed administration. Additional expenditure envisaged on education and sanitation were to be postponed. The Home Member argued that the postponement of new development projects as distinct from the closing down of works in progress, would neither create disturbance in the public mind nor would cause any discontent among the people at large. In that context he insisted that the building of Delhi must go on, even if progress was to be curtailed on financial grounds. It would be symbolic of British stability and might in India.

Explaining the third principle of the policy, Craddock wrote that as a matter of fact it was only for the guidance of Civil side of the government. Military matters did not fall under that category. His contention was that because military measures in times of emergency to ensure the secrecy of its movements and dispositions — such as the protection of the coasts and ports from invaders or raiders, and the dissemination of false or exciting news by the Telegraph and the Post Office, or by newspapers, as well as measures directed

against foreign spies and aliens — were hardly objected to in any country, no objection would be raised in India either. "None of those urgent measures can be deemed to be aimed at the fidelity of the Indian people as a whole." But if the Civil officers would do something in haste it would create a wrong impression on the public mind. Therefore they should so act as to give the impression of being calm and unruffled.

About the fourth principle, Craddock emphatically put forward the suggestion that, notwithstanding what had been said otherwise as regards other principles, every kind of mischief should be dealt with promptly and effectively and under no circumstance leniency be shown in such cases. He said that enough law existed in the statute book to curb such tendencies.

In the end Craddock pleaded that the general policy lines, with such modifications as the Governor-General or his Executive Council might desire, should be indicated to local governments. In this context, he argued:

"From my own personal experience and from exchange of views with some heads of provinces in 1907-3, I know it was felt that the provinces were never quite sure what the policy of Government of India was. We must put it tactfully to Local Governments and re-affirm that the responsibility is on them."

11. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-August 1914-Pro. No. 1, para 17.
12. Ibid., para 13.
13. He was referring here to Swadeshi movement which had been at its height during that period, as a consequence of partition of Bengal by Curzon.
Governor-General on 1 August 1914. As soon as Britain formally declared war on Germany, Hardinge hastened to put a note on this document on 5 August that he was in full agreement with the principles of policy as laid down in the draft except on the point that the policy be communicated to the local governments. Dilating on the undesirability of doing this he wrote:

"My own opinion is that very little should be said to local governments, as there is always leakage and instructions as/the policy to be pursued under certain circumstances may be interpreted as anxiety lest those circumstances should occur. I believe it is a sounder policy to express our confidence that nothing will occur, and at the same time to maintain vigilance. Even though I agree with the four cardinal principles enunciated by Sir R. Craddock I think it would be dangerous to communicate them in their 15 present form to local Governments."

The policy draft was circulated among the members of the Executive Council of the Governor-General for their individual opinions. All the members agreed with the guidelines of the policy but a debate followed on the point raised by the Viceroy — whether provincial governments should be apprised

of the policy of Government of India or not. Some members supported the views of Craddock that Provincial Governments should be made known of Government of India's policy whereas the others sided with Hardinge in opposing it. But ultimately the former's point of view was accepted and it was decided that local governments should have the precise knowledge of the policy the Government of India had adopted.

In view of the secret nature of the policy, it was thought desirable to address the heads of the local governments semi-officially and Sir Michael O'Wyer, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, like other heads of provincial governments was sent the following letter by Craddock:

"On the information before them the Government of India regard the internal situation with confidence, and they would deprecate any action savouring of mistrust of the loyal co-operation of the people. They trust that regular course of administration will continue unchanged on the usual lines .... They propose to take no special measures immediately beyond those necessitated by military considerations ....

At the same time it is clear that it behoves all officers to exercise special vigilance in their respective charges so as to detect at once any signs of trouble. Any movement in the direction of disorder must be controlled and promptly suppressed ...."
In short, the Government of India think that present attitude should be one of acknowledged confidence in and reliance on, the support of the country, accompanied by a careful watch of developments, economic and political as they occur.

The document quoted above in extenso makes it clear that the government had a fair vision of coming events in the wake of the war and had accordingly formulated a policy to guide and control them to the best of British advantage. The motive of the government in formulating this policy was to keep the Indians in good humour in the wake of war. By making loud proclamations of their fidelity, it hoped to use Indian credulity in British interests.

The policy was based on the presumption that in the gigantic war, Britain would be in great need of sinews of war which were to come from India on a larger scale and on easier terms than from any other component part of the then British Empire. The sinews could be collected only through peoples' co-operation, and this was possible when the Indians would be made to believe that government trusted them, and that they belong to an Empire, whose defence

was as much the concern of the British as that of the Indians. To achieve this end of creating an artificial atmosphere of trust and belief between itself and the Indian people, the government publicly made a spate of announcements affirming Britishers' faith in Indians as loyal and patriotic subjects "to whom His Majesty looks, as in the past, for help and support" against any enemy of the Empire, while maintaining a round-the-clock vigil over the avowed enemy of British Government — the Indian revolutionary, described by the Britishers as an anarchist.

The first act of the Viceroy under this policy of showing confidence on the Indians, make an announcement that brave Indian soldiers were being sent abroad to defend the British Empire. He publicly declared:

"War has been forced upon the British Empire, and an Expeditionary Force from India is being prepared to take its place in the defence of the Empire across the seas. The Force will be a large one and will include a very considerable number of our brave Indian Regiments as well as some of the Imperial Service Troops from the Native States."

17. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-August 1914-Pro. No.1, para 14.
13. The Indian Review, August 1914, p. 600 h.
Along with this announcement he made an appeal to the princes and people of India to contribute liberally in the War Relief Fund:

"I appeal with confidence to the Ruling Chiefs, nobles, merchants and people of India, both European and Indian, to come forward, each according to his means, to help to alleviate distress of all kinds due to the war, and especially the distress and suffering that war must necessarily entail upon the families and dependents of those who will be braving death and enduring hardship for the safety and common interests of the Empire."

The announcement of the Viceroy, giving Indians an opportunity to fight in the war and seeking their active help and cooperation, naturally satisfied the urge of the Indians at that time.

The Government of Britain also acclamatised itself at once with the policy laid down by the Government of India. At that time Britain needed help, so, it was no occasion for dissent or discussion. Moreover, where was the harm in making flattering observations on the Indians which might bring high dividends in return? On 28 August, Earl Kitchener, Secretary of War, declared in the House of Lords that the British troops were on their way to the scene of war in Europe. Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for India, while explaining the employment of Indian

19. The Indian Review, August 1914, p. 600 h.


troops in the European war, said that the government had been deeply impressed by the unprecedented wave of enthusiasm and loyalty throughout India and the desire of the Indian people to see the Indian soldiers stand side by side with their counterparts in British army in the defence of the empire. He argued that Indians were aware of the employment of African troops by the French, and there would be disappointment in India if Indians were debarred from participating in this war. He exclaimed with a sense of pride that the British army would soon be reinforced by soldiers who were "high-souled men of first class training". He was, of course, certain that despite the heavy drafts on the Indian army, the Indian Frontier would continue to be adequately secured. Lord Crewe further observed that the enthusiasm pervading all classes and races in India rendered internal trouble absolutely impossible.

Such statements of facts, clearly put, were made by the high authorities at the helm of affairs, to serve a two-fold purpose. On the one hand these statements were expected to arouse the confidence of the Indian people in the generosity and justice of Britishers and on the other to camouflage the dire necessity of Britain. Hardinge's declaration of despatch of Indian troops, Kitchener's observation made in the House of Lords on the employment of Indian soldiers in France, and Crewe's declaration that

23. Ibid., p. 551.
24. Ibid., p. 549.
the troops were sent out of India because Britain had full confidence in Indian's loyalty were interconnecting links in the chain of a well thought out policy.

Apparently the statements were very assuring. They reposed faith and trust in the Indians, and served the intended purpose very well for the time being. It is appropriate, however, to point out here that although there was no doubt that the Indian people had liked the idea of the employment of Indian troops in the war for many reasons, the government had still other reasons for sending them abroad.

One of them was that British needed them for garrison duty on the Suez. The second was the need to use them on the battlefield of Europe. The second purpose had the additional advantage of its producing a favourable reaction in India.

The Viceroy actually protested to the Home Government against their decision to station the Indian troops only in Egypt. That was, of course, not for the love of Indian aspirations but for a favourable political effect in India. Luckily for the Viceroy, the Home Government had reasons of its own.

26. Comradeship in arms would constitute an irresistible claim to the rights of equal citizenship and equal privileges in the British Empire.


28. Ibid: "Fancy the Government at home wanting to employ our troops solely in Egypt and the Mediterranean as garrison troops. I had a tremendous fight over it. It would have been the greatest political blunder of modern times. Our quiet will be largely due to the satisfaction generally felt at the employment of Indian troops in Europe."
to agree to his suggestion. At first, it showed some reluctance in stationing Indian troops in Europe but ultimately acceded to the suggestion of the Viceroy when need for the Indian troops was felt very badly after the Germans started threatening to capture the northern coast of France. On that occasion help could be sought only from India. Troops raised in the Dominions were still untrained and unfit for fighting.

It soon became almost a fashion with the English statesmen in Britain to say something in India's praise on whatever opportunity that would come to them to do so. The Right Hon'ble H.H. Asquith, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, while addressing a large meeting at the Guild Hall on 4 September 1914 referred to India's loyalty and England's gratitude as follows:

"India too with less alacrity has claimed her share in the common task. Every class and creed, British and Native, Princes and People, Hindus and Mohammedans vie with one another in the noble and emulous rivalry. Two divisions of their magnificent army are already on the way."


30. *Hardinge Papers*, Vol. 33, No. 275, Hardinge to James Hillcocks, dated 6 January 1915: "That is where India beats all the colonies, for even now the Colonial contingents are still unfit to get to the front, while our Indian troops have been there for months."
We welcome with appreciation and affection their proffered aid and, in the Empire which knows no distinction of race or class, where all alike are subjects of the King-Emperor and are joint and equal custodians of our common interest and fortunes, we here hail with profound and heart-felt gratitude their association side by side and shoulder to shoulder with the Home and Dominion troops, under a Flag which is the symbol of all the Unity that the world in arms cannot dissever or dissolve."

Even Lord Curzon, who had nothing but contempt for Indian character during his viceroyalty of India, not only spoke highly of Indian troops but also the civilized culture of the land to which they belonged:

"It would be an act of folly to refrain from using troops which were not inferior to but in some respects the most efficient of the whole army. The martial spirit in India was traditional and famous, and why when we wanted every man we could get, should we refrain from employing them, because the sun happened to have looked upon them and made them dark? They would not fire on the Red Cross badge; they would

31. The Indian Review, September 1914, p. 713.
not murder innocent women and children; they would not bombard Christian Cathedrals even if to them they were the fanes of an alien faith. The East was sending out a civilized soldiery to save Europe from the modern Huns."

Meanwhile, in India the Viceroy and his Government made full preparations for the autumn session of the Imperial Legislative Council going to be held at Simla. In pursuance of the policy decided upon, the Viceroy procured a Royal Proclamation from the King-Emperor to the people of India and the same was read out in a dramatic way in the Legislative Council when it met on 8 September. The Proclamation read:

"Paramount regard for treaty, faith and pledged word of rulers and peoples is the common heritage of England and India ..., nothing has moved me more than the passionate devotion to my Throne expressed both by my Indian and English subjects and by the feudatory Princes and Ruling Chiefs of India and their prodigious offers of their lives and their resources in the cause of the realm."

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33. The Indian Review, October 1914, p. 301; Speech of Lord Curzon at Hull on 7 September 1914.

34. GOI-Home-Pol-Deposit-August 1914-Pro. No. 1, para 14; See also p. 39.

Their one voiced demand to be foremost in conflict has touched my heart and has inspired to the highest issues the love and devotion which as I well know, have ever linked my Indian subjects and myself.

I recall to mind India's gracious message to the British nation of goodwill and fellowship which greeted my return in February 1912, after the solemn ceremony of my Coronation Durbar at Delhi, and I find in this hour of trial a full harvest and a noble fulfilment of the assurance given by you that the destinies of Great Britain and India are indissolubly linked."

After reading this grateful message, the Viceroy made a long speech, expressing gratitude for the spontaneous support from the Indians. He went on to express his sympathies with the many problems of the Indian people and ended up with the assurance that his government would continue to endeavour, as before, to solve them.

The King's Proclamation and Viceroy's statement made exhilarating effects upon the Indian Legislators. They were now out to help government in all respects. That was evident from the way they made their speeches in the Council and voted for financial assistance to British Government from Indian Treasury.

Apart from the munitions which Hardinge was asked to supply forthwith by the Home Government, he wanted to help British with money as well. But it would not have looked nice to pour out the money from Indian Treasury direct, so a clever method was found out to show to the outside world that British were taking money from India not by force but with the full consent of the Indian people.

Sir Gangadhar Chitnavis, a prominent member of the Council, was called upon to move a resolution on the war and the question of financial assistance in connection with the Expeditionary Force sent from India.

No sooner the resolution was moved, then the support arranged for it from every corner of the House. Ultimately when it was passed there was great applause from all the members present.

The extent and the nature of impact made by this policy on the Indian mind can be gauged from the speech made by S.N. Banerjee while supporting the resolution:

"Privilege and burden go together. We aspire to Colonial self-government, then we ought to emulate the example of the colonials, and try to do what they are doing. Our participation in the burden...

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38. Hardinge Papers, Vol. 93, Hardinge to Chiroli, dated 12 August 1914: "England has taken 500 officers and 45000 of our rifles bungling seems to be at home. We have none the less magnificent store, South Africa even appealed to us for arms and munitions."

39. I.L.G.R., 3 September 1914, pp. 16-17.
of Empire at the present moment will constitute an irresistible claim to the rights of equal citizenship and equal privileges, which we are so anxious to secure."

In order to keep up the prevailing spirit among the members of the Council, the Viceroy tried once again to fire the imagination of the Indians while replying to the debate of the day. He then said:

"I cannot help feeling that as a consequence of the war better relations will be promoted amongst the component parts of the British Empire, many misunderstandings will be removed, and, outstanding grievances will be settled in an amicable and generous manner. In this sense out of evil good may come to India, and this is the desire of us all."

It was in pursuance of the same set policy that a day before the opening of Imperial Legislative Council, a cable containing long roll of contributions made by the Princes and people of India was sent to England for wide publicity in Britain and in Europe. On the close of the proceedings

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40. *L.L.C.*, 3 September 1914, p. 34.
in the Imperial Legislative Council at Simla in the afternoon of 8 September 1914, once again a cable was despatched to the Secretary of State for India detailing the highlights of the debates in the Council.

As if to show the British gratefulness to India, on receiving the second cable, Lord Crewe extolled offers made by Indians in the House of Lords on 9 September on the same lines as the Viceroy had done a day earlier in India. Lord Crewe informed the House of Lords of the Resolution passed unanimously by the Members of the Viceroy's Legislative Council regarding the War and the decision that the expenses of the Expeditionary Force sent from India were to be met from Indian resources. With a view to tickle the Indian mind he said:

"the men of our blood in colonies have donations and offers of support but in case of India it is more striking, certainly not less gratifying, that those who speak for the various races in India — races which represent a civilization of almost untold antiquity; races which have been remarkable in arms, in arts, and in the science of government — should in so whole-hearted a manner rally round the British Government, and most

43. GOI-Home-Pol-Part-D-May 1915-Pro. Nos. 100-426; Morowether and Smith, The Indian Corps in France, pp. 3-4.
44. P&Pks., 8s., Vol. 17, p. 573.
45. Ibid.
of all, round the person of their Emperor at such a moment as this; and I am certain that this House will desire to express, through those of us who are entitled to speak for it, its appreciation of their attitude and our recognition of the part that they have played and are playing."

Great applause and appreciation followed from all corners of the House when Lord Crewe finished his speech.

In the House of Commons a similar scene was enacted by Charles Roberts, Under-Secretary of State for India, on the same day. The long roll of Indian help was repeated by him on the same lines as was done by Lord Crewe in the House of Lords. He concluded his speech with the following words:

"I feel confident that the House and country will feel deep appreciation of this magnificent demonstration of loyalty with which the princes and people of India have identified themselves with the cause of the Empire."

The British Government obviously believed that the debate and the flattering remarks made on India and the Indians would create a favourable reaction in India for the British.

46. _Parl._, 5., Vol. 17, p. 570.
47. _Parl._, 5., Vol. 66, p. 574.
The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab too, had begun playing the same role in pursuance of that policy. At the time of the outbreak of war, the Punjab Government was functioning from its summer headquarters at Simla. Though secretly it was felt that in view of the emergency the local Government of the Punjab be shifted to its permanent headquarters (Lahore), yet the Lieutenant-Governor decided to remain at Simla for the time being. It was done only to show that the government was least perturbed by the Britain's involvement in the war. Sir Michael O'Dwyer made it a point to acknowledge each and every message of loyalty and offer addressed to him. Among the native chiefs of the Punjab, Maharaja Patiala was the first to have seen O'Dwyer on 11 August and offered his troops and himself for active service. The Lieutenant-Governor promptly recommended to the Government of India that Maharaja Patiala's offer must be accepted as in doing so they would be getting not only genuine help but also produce "excellent political results."

The Lieutenant-Governor met his Legislative Council on 19 September at Simla. Last people got an impression that


50. Ibid.


52. Harding Papers, Vol. 88, No. 122, O'Dwyer to Hardinge, dated 12 August 1914.
the Government was very much perturbed by the war and its consequences, O’Dwyer, by virtue of his being the President of the Council, decided to take up first the other business of the day and gave the resolution regarding loyalty to the Crown a second preference. When the Council met and finished ordinary business of the day, O’Dwyer found the occasion appropriate for playing up the record of Indian contribution to war efforts. First of all he repeated the King’s message to the Indians, which the members heard standing in silence as a mark of respect. Then he moved a resolution on the assurance of loyalty to the Crown of the people of the Punjab and while doing so eulogised the services of the Punjabis in the past to the cause of the Crown. He talked of their martial traditions, valour and prowess of arms in the battlefields, of their liberal hearts and broadmindedness and of their being the ‘spearhead’ and ‘swordarm’ of India.

This was how after the outbreak of the war, the Britishers at all levels of administration in India and England had begun proclaiming the Indians’ active loyalty and they continued to do so till the close of the war. It was done not because of the spontaneous and splendid enthusiasm shown by the Indians in general and the Punjabis in particular but because of the government’s calculated move to produce excellent results. It did produce the desired effect in the Punjab. By the end of the war Punjab was surpassing all other provinces in its war-efforts.

54. Ibid.