

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL IMPULSES OF BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS INDIA DURING WORLD WAR II

Lord Curzon, in his speech to the India Council on March 30, 1905 said, "the geographical position of India will more and more push her into the forefront of international politics". With the passage of time, the pronouncement of Curzon become true and India emerged as a key player in the international politics. The First World War was fought relatively remote from India; however, the Indian troops and resources played an important role in the war front. But the Second World War and especially from 1942 onward when the war reached to the Indian borders, it enhanced the significance of India. British policy during this period was to muster the support of the people of India against the Axis Forces while, the political parties of the sub-continent particularly the Indian National Congress start demanding self-determination more vigorously than ever. The British could no more ignore the wishes of the Indians because on the one hand the British people were stressing on their government to resolve the Indian problem, 'and on the other leaders such as Chiang Kai-Shek and Roosevelt Allied Powers asked the British Government to give attention to the Indian people's demands. British policy, however, on one hand promising the solution of the question of self-determination but on the other delay it to the end of the Great War.

Since the arrival and occupation of India, India remained significant for the British Imperial interests; economically, politically and strategically. It is opined that the capitalist economy in Britain had been built up, stage by stage, on the exploitation of Indian resources. The accumulated capital from India accelerated the Industrial revolution in England. In the later

stage, India provided a huge market for English goods. The continuation of the British imperialism even became an integral part of the socialist programme in Britain.¹

Strategically, India provided immense reservoir for the British Empire, like material and human resources. It were primarily the Indian forces, on the basis of which, wars were conducted in Afghanistan, Burma, Siam, China, Persia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt and Abyssinia. The British were not ready to allow the occupation of India by any of their foe.² Politically, the annexation of the Sub-continent brought Britain into the world politics and raised its prestige and authority in world community and she became a master of immense empire of which India was the heart.

Due to the above considerations, British adopted a policy to hold on India as long as possible. Nevertheless various events and developments compelled Britain on occasions to make overtures to reconcile with the Indian people. The actual problem faced by the government was how to keep their sway over India in the face of new movements and difficulties arise in the World War II. Suppression of the Indian people for a longer period never provided a suitable remedy and moreover the British electorate could not tolerate it for a longer time.

From 1942 onward the situation around India changed, the freedom movements particularly the Muslim separatist line of struggle became more imminent when Jinnah did not aligned himself with Gandhi's demand of the British to leave India. The British needed help of the people of the Sub-continent badly than ever which forced them to revisit some of the facets of its Indian policy.

THE WORLD WAR II AND THE INDIAN PROBLEM

In September, 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. British policy in relation to India sought to follow the same lines as in 1914 i.e. as a passive pawn of British policy. Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow without consulting the people of India, announced on September 3 that India was at war with Germany and appealed

for sympathy and support.

The Viceroy, in order to secure the cooperation of the Indian leaders saw M. K. Gandhi leader of the India National Congress and M. A. Jinnah leader of the All India Muslim League. Gandhi showed his sympathies in the war were with England and France from purely humanitarian stand point. However, it was his personal assurance and not that of Congress while Jinnah told the Viceroy that he could not promise anything without consulting the working committee of the Muslim League.³

On September 11, 1939, Viceroy addressed both the houses and gave the message of his Majesty's government. He announced suspension of implementation of the clause of 1935 Act related to Indian Federation.⁴ The Congress Working Committee soon commence its meeting and expressed its sympathy with the democracies and condemned the German aggression, but declared that Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any cooperation in war which is conducted on the imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate Imperialism in India and elsewhere.⁵ The Muslim League Working Committee expressed its deep sympathy for Poland, England and France. However, the solid Muslim cooperation and support to Great Britain cannot be secured successfully unless Muslims have been given justice and fair play in the Congress governed provinces⁶ and an assurance that no declaration regarding the question of constitutional advance for India would be made, nor any constitution would be framed without the consent and approval of the All India Muslim League.⁷

The Viceroy felt that some concession should be given to get the support of the Congress and Muslim League in wartime. He made it clear that during war no constitutional changes could be brought, however he agreed upon the constitution of a Defense Liaison Committee, the Viceroy would preside the meetings and would give confidential information and bring to note any points of difficulty arising out from the prosecution of war.⁸ Indian leaders were invited for talks in

Simla. British aim regarding the war was justified. Success of provincial autonomy and the inevitable suspension of the federal scheme during the war were mentioned. He gave an undertaking that at the end of the war they would be willing to enter into consultation with the representatives of several communities, parties in India and with the Indian princes for the framing and modifications in the India Act 1935. The Muslim League did not reject the Viceroy's statement, but asked for further discussion and clarification. The working committee of Congress in its meeting held in Wardah on October 22 and 23 condemned the statement and decided no support to Great Britain. In protest, it called upon the Congress ministries in provinces to resign. Consequently Congress ruled provinces there upon went into Governor's direct rule.

In the summer of 1940, Indian National Congress called upon the government that they were ready to cooperate with the government if they recognize the Indian independence and the establishment of a Provisional National Government at the centre.⁹

On August 8, 1940, Viceroy announced the British policy on behalf of his Majesty's government commonly known as 'The August Offer'. It declared that Viceroy is ready to enlarge the Executive Council by inducting certain number of representative Indians. He assented the setting up, after the war, a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new constitution. During the war, the Viceroy announced the establishment of a War Advisory Council which would meet at regular intervals and comprised of representatives of the Indian States and other Indians. However, he declared the British government could not contemplate transfer of present responsibilities for peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and awful elements in India's national life.¹⁰

Responding to August Offer, the Sikhs, the Scheduled Castes and the liberals accepted it while the Congress Working

Committee declared that,

"the British government's refusal to part with power and responsibilities in favour of the elected representatives of the people of India ... is a direct encouragement and incitement to civil discord and strife ... the issue of the minorities has been made into an insuperable barrier to India's progress The rejection of the Congress proposals is proof of the British government's determination to continue to hold India by the sword.... The desire of Congress not to embarrass the British government at a time of peril for them has been misunderstand and despised."¹¹

The Muslim League was willing to accept the August Offer provided the following demands were accepted: First, the British government must give a categorical assurance that it should adopt no constitution, whether for the war period only or in final form without the previous approval of Muslim India. Secondly in any reorganization for the people of mobilizing India's maximum war-effort, Muslim India's leadership must have equal share in the authority and responsibility of the government, central or provincial. If Executive Council is enlarged, the members of Muslims in number must be equal to that of Hindu members if Congress comes in, if it does not, the Muslims must be in majority. The same proposition should be applied to an Advisory War Council of any kind.¹²

Thus the British government failed to secure the support and co-operation of the Congress and the Muslim League. The August Offer was failed. However, it clearly conceded that the framing of constitution was primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves. Mr. L. S. Amery, Secretary for State for India continued to repeat his promises of granting a dominion status to India after the war, but took no practical steps which were demanded by the people of India. In August, 1942, British prime minister, Winston Churchill and U.S. president,

Roosevelt signed declaration of common principles, better known as the Atlantic Charter. In January 1, 1942, twenty-six countries formed United Nation which subscribed the principles of the Atlantic Charter. It raises hopes of the Indian people for independence by declaring that they (United Nations) respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live and express the wish to see sovereign rights and self-determination restored to those who have terribly deprived of them. But the prime minister, Winston Churchill declared that Atlantic Charter did not apply to India, and thus shattered the hopes of Indians for self-determination.¹³

BRITISH RESPONSE---- CRIPPS MISSION:

By the end of 1941, the war situation changed. In Europe Germany was gaining more and more territories. In Africa, Erwin Johannes Rommel popularly known as the Desert Fox was following the Allied forces in the desert war despite of the fact that the British forces were superior then that of Germany. The following figures reported in the Indian Annual Register prove this fact,

“A British army 11 percent superior in number, 40 percent stronger in tanks, 60 percent in artillery, and at last 23 strong in Air, operating closer to its bases of supply, suffered a defeat in the desert warfare, because the German was able to ‘surprise’ their foes with a type of anti-tank guns that they had used in every campaign in this war”.¹⁴

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. With the eastward advancement of Japan into Asia, the situation in India deteriorated. Exaggerated fears had driven thousands of people from Calcutta and other cities and fanatic rumors were in the air. The weakness of the Far-eastern defense had shaken public confidence and the arrival of refugees from Burma and other places had shocked the people.¹⁵ Singapore fell on February 15, 1942; Rangoon was taken on March 8, and in the words of Churchill "the shadow of heavy and far-reaching

military defeat" lay over India. In February 1942, Chiang Kai-shek, commander and leader of the Chinese nationalist forces visited India. He met with the officials as well as the Indian leaders including Gandhi, Nehru, and Jinnah. Chiang Kai-shek had pressed the British government to recognize India's independence in order to get help in the war.¹⁶ He expressed himself as,

"our ally Great Britain (would) without waiting for any demands on part of people of India... speedily as possible give them real political power so that they may be in position further to develop their spiritual and material strength and thus realize that their participation in war is ... turning point in their struggle for India's freedom."¹⁷

On the 24th, Chiang sent a cable to his ambassador in London, with a copy to his' Minister for foreign affairs in Washington to say,

"that he had been personally shocked by the Indian military and political situation....If the Indian political problem is not immediately and urgently solved, the danger will be daily increasing. If the British government wait until Japanese planes begin to bomb India and the Indian morale collapses it would already be too late.... If the Japanese should know of the real situation and attack India, they would be virtually unopposed. If the political situation in India were to change for the better, this may prevent the enemy from having any ambition to enter India".¹⁸

The seriousness of the Indian problem during the war situation became closer when on February 22, 1942; President Roosevelt declared that "the Atlantic Charter applied not only to the parts of the world that border the Atlantic, but the whole of

the world". Along with this statement President Roosevelt made direct communication with the British government in support of the self-determination for Indian people.¹⁹

The British government can no longer ignore the Indian problem. The situation around India and the international pressure on the government compelled her to give due attention to the Indian problem. As far as the Indian public opinion was concerned it took no keen interest in the war efforts on the allied side. It was reported that,

“the system of administration that prevails in India has done nothing to enlist the heart and mind of the Indian people on the side of “United Nation”, the enthusiasm and spirit of adventure that inform the life and conduct of leading nation of the world are absent from India”.²⁰

Responding to the Indian problem Prime Minister Winston Churchill, himself decided to proceed to India in order to consult the Indian leaders for the formation of an assembly to work on a constitution for India after the war.²¹ Unfortunately his health did not allow him to materialize the visit. Another reason for not going to India was the advancement of Japanese forces towards Singapore and he felt he must be in England when Singapore fell.²²

On March 11, 1942, Churchill, after discussing the war situation and the Indian problem declared, that the War Cabinet had agreed to send a member of the War Cabinet to India to satisfy himself upon the spot by the personal consultation, upon which the war Cabinet agreed, and which it believed represented a just and final solution to achieve its purpose.²³ The proposed name was Sir Stafford Cripps.

Sir Stafford Cripps was Lord Privy Seal and leader of the House of Commons. He was well versed in the Indian politics and had close relations with Gandhi and Nehru.²⁴ He was aptly described once as "the Nehru of England".²⁵ He was so

interested in the Indian politics that when he came back from Moscow where he was a British ambassador, almost the first thing he had said to the prime minister was about the solution of Indian problem. When he became member of the War Cabinet, Mr. Churchill asked him to start drafting his ideas.²⁶ Thus his interest in Indian politics and his close relations with Congress leaders convinced the British government to appoint him for the talks with the Indian leaders and the settlement of the Indian problem.

Sir Stafford Cripps reached India on March 22, 1942 and announced the draft declaration for the discussion with Indian leaders; the object of which was the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect. A constitution making body to be set up immediately after the war, partly elected by the membership of the Provincial Legislative Assembly to be elected after the war on the basis of proportional representation, and partly nominated by the princes in proportion to the population of their states to frame the new constitution for India. Right of any province of British India or any state to remain outside, and either continue on the present basis or from a new constitution as separate Dominion with equal rights. Treaty between British and the "constitution making body" to make provision in accordance with the undertakings given by his Majesty's government for the protection of racial and religious minorities.-Retention of power by the British with consultative cooperation of Indian representatives.²⁷

In the whole draft, announced by Cripps there was no reference to discussions with the Viceroy. The later developments showed that there were considerable differences between Cripps and the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow. Both C. R. Attlee, leader of the Labour Party and S. T. Cripps had long been critical of Linlithgow, while the Viceroy had the favour of Churchill. A controversy arose on the power of Cripps in India. Cripps powers were instructed to Linlithgow but he later claimed that he was never told what instructions the war cabinet had

issued to Cripps.²⁸ Other characteristics which Cripps shared with the Viceroy were piety and self-importance, so that their conflict of political philosophies was almost certain to a point-counter point relationship.²⁹ Cripps began his meetings with Indian leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Gandhi. Gandhi criticized the autocratic princely states to persist under British protection and the virtual invitation to the Muslims to create Pakistan. Cripps countered him that Britain intended that the creation of a free Indian Union would set up a movement for democratization in the states. It would encourage them to join the Union. About the later objection Cripps stressed that the Declaration envisaged Indian Unity and that non-accession would occur only in the event of disagreement in the constitution-making body. Cripps met Jinnah also, to discuss these proposals.³⁰ Muslim League held its official decision waiting for Congress reaction to the Cripps proposals.

On April 2, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution rejecting the offer. It strongly objected both the provincial option and the inclusion of representatives of the princes, not of the states' peoples, in the constitution-making body. But the Working Committee, decided not to publish it while they negotiated on the interim plan. The point they were really interested in was an immediate *defacto* transfer of power, with special emphasis on defense. Colonel Louis Johnson, the personal representative of President Roosevelt took an active part to bring together the Congress on the question of defense. His proposals were later on known as Johnson-Cripps formula. According to this formula the Defense Department would be placed in charge of an Indian representative member, but certain functions relating to the conduct of the war...specified as governmental relation of General Head Quarters, Naval Head Quarters and Air Head Quarters would be exercised by the Commander-in-Chief, who would be member of council for the War Department in control of the armed forces of India. Colonel Johnson reported that Congress start working on the formula but the Viceroy soon asked him to retire.³¹ The Johnson-Cripps formula was rejected by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. They backed the views of Viceroy and Commander-in-

Chief who opposed the reduction of powers of the Viceroy during the period of war.

Mr. M. K. Gandhi labeled the Cripps offer "post-dated check on a bank that was obviously failing". On April 10, 1942, the Congress published its resolution and rejected the Cripps proposals and demanded the establishment of a free national government with full powers. After the disclosure of the Congress decision also Jinnah published resolution of the Muslim League Committee which rejects the offer. Jinnah complained that the "talks had been carried on over the heads of the Muslims, and other parties had been utterly ignored."³² Thus the Cripps Mission failed to solve the Indian problem.

The failure of the Cripps Mission was not good news to the President of America. In a private letter to Winston Churchill the American President, Mr. Roosevelt urged that Cripps should remain in India until a Nationalist Government could be set up³³ In reply to Roosevelt, Churchill wrote that,

"I could not decide such a matter without commencing the Cabinet, which was not physically possible till Monday. Meanwhile Cripps had already left ... you know the weight which I attach to everything you say to me, but I did not feel I could take responsibility for the defense of India if everything had again to be thrown into the melting-pot at this critical juncture Anything like a serious difference between you and me would break my heart, and would surely deeply injure both our countries at the height of this terrible struggle".³⁴

As for as the British public opinion is concerned, among them it was propagated that there was none in India with authority to receive the dominion status of India, because the Hindus wanted one thing and the Muslims another, and others something else.³⁵ But Louis Fisher, an American publicist and lecturer who was in India during the Cripps visit to India, had

told the world that the Mission had failed not because there was the Hindu-Muslim disunity but because Sir Stanford Crimps could not make or was not allowed to make good his assurance about 'National Government'.³⁶

The Labour Party of England had no definite views on the Crimps mission. On March 30, Arthur Greenwood, deputy leader of the party, issued a statement, welcoming the offer and asking India to accept it. The Labour Party's presence in the War Cabinet implied that it had blessed Crisp's journey to India. But when the party's annual conference met a few months later, some delegates chose to attack the offer rather than those who turned it down. Some of them were even of the view that Nehru should be invited at once to form a Nationalist Government. Finally, the conference unanimously passed a resolution calling upon the government and the people of India to make a further effort to reach a rapid and satisfactory settlement.³⁷ Sir Walter Citrine, the general secretary, during the Trades Union Congress Annual Conference of 1942 criticized those who saw greater unity in India than facts warranted, and expressed his conviction that if self-government were given to India at once it would result in such internal strife as would facilitate Japanese occupation.³⁸ The press of the Right was no less critical of the attitude of the Congress during the Crimps negotiations. The daily *Telegraph*, which had welcomed the offer and commended its acceptance, now rebuked the Congress for its intransigence and its attitude of 'the most complete intolerance' towards the Muslims.³⁹

After the failure of the Cripps mission, Congress becomes more and more bitter and uncompromising. Gandhi was now convinced that Japan was going to win, and he appealed for the withdrawal of all British forces from India. In his opinion, the departure of British would not only stop Japan from invading India but also solved the Hindu-Muslim problem. He called; leave India in God's hands or in modern parlance, to anarchy. Then all parties will fight one another like dogs or will, when real responsibility faces them, come to reason and agreement.⁴⁰

In August the India National Congress Committee

approved the working Committee's policies which meant the warning that if independence was not forthcoming immediately, there would be violent mass revolt 'Quit India Movement' against Britain. Gandhi and other Congress leaders were arrested. Serious disturbances followed immediately, and spread rapidly in Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces and Madras. The means of communications such as telegraph, railway stations, tracks and post offices were damaged. The scarcity of troops due to their deployment in outer stations from India was filled by the Auxiliary Force (India) to back the civil authority. About three weeks the situation was everywhere under control and it was clear that the insurrection was failed. These disturbances took place only in the Hindu majority provinces and all other parties including Hindu Mahasaba, kept themselves aloof from the rising.

The British reaction to the Congress 'Quit India movement' was of condemnation. However, some of the Leftist in Britain extended their support to the Congress and suggested that, in view of the Japanese danger, a policy of appeasement of the Congress should be adopted. Lord Huntingdon's solution of the Indian problem was that Britain should quit India at once and hand over power to the Congress.⁴¹ The National Executive Committee of the Labour party passed a resolution on July 22, viewing with grave apprehension the possibility of a civil disobedience movement and describing it as political irresponsibility that might imperil the fate of all freedom-loving people.⁴² In the House of Commons, participating in the debate on India and Burma (Temporary and Miscellaneous provisions) Bill, Campbell Stephen said about the government policy that it did not differ materially from that of the Germans in occupied countries. He demanded the release of Congress prisoners, and suggested the appointment of Gandhi as Viceroy with a government under Nehru.⁴³ Among those papers which condemned the movement, are *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Observer*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Economist*. *The Economist* called it one of the most dramatic acts of political blackmail in world history. *The Daily Telegraph* called the scheme not for the withdrawal of the British but the entry of the

Japanese.⁴⁴

The Quit India Movement failed. Most of the Congress leaders were detained. Meanwhile, the Viceroyalty of India changed from Linlithgow to Lord Wavell, who was Commander-in-Chief of the British army in 1942. Lord Wavell's policy towards India (especially towards the Muslims' demand of Pakistan), disclosed in his first speech as Viceroy of India, that "India is a natural unit" within which the two great communities, the lesser minorities and the States should decide how they were to live together.⁴⁵ He begins a stiff policy towards the Congress leaders and he refused to release Gandhi to share incarnation of his wife, Kashturba who died in February 1944. His stand was that the Congress must not merely repel its Quit India resolution but repudiate it.

In the last phase of the war, when Allied Powers were gaining victories in Eastern and Western poles, Viceroy felt that stagnation in the Indian politics could not be continued and that a new effort must be made to prepare India for the birth of independence. He watched closely the individual efforts of the Hindu and Muslim leaders to bring together the communities i.e. Muslim League and Congress in a united front.

Raja Gopalacharia, a Congress leader, prepared a formula for the talks between Gandhi and Jinnah to resolve the differences or at least to unite them on some points. This formula got the blessing of Gandhi and in September 1944, talks took place in Bombay between Gandhi and Jinnah. But it failed because, while Gandhi agreed to a partition after the British withdrawal, Jinnah insisted on a division before independence. He had serious doubts whether Congress would keep its pledge; once the British departed.⁴⁶

SIMLA CONFERENCE

Lord Wavell was now convinced that deadlock in the Indian political scenario can be broken by a party outside the Indian scene and that could be the British government only. A conference of the provincial governors held on August 14 which

unanimously supported his views. No practical step was taken until Lord Wavell went to London to discuss with the cabinet the Indian political deadlock. He returned India on June 14 and on the same day he presented a new offer in his broadcast. He invited the Indian leaders, both from the centre and the provinces, with a view to the formation of a new executive council which should be more representative of organized political opinion. The main task of the new council would be:

1. To prosecute the war against Japan with utmost energy until final victory.
2. To carry on the government of British India until a new permanent constitution could be agreed on and come into force.
3. To consider, when the members of the government thought it possible, the means by which such an agreement could be achieved.⁴⁷

He invited the Indian leaders for a conference on June 25, 1945, to discuss the formation of a politically representative executive council. The council would be entirely Indian, except for Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief; external affairs, hitherto, the preserve of the Viceroy would be in charge of an Indian member, so far as the interests of British India were concerned. Communally, the council would include equal proportions of casts, Hindus and Muslims. As a token of India's new status Britain would appoint a High Commissioner in India to look after British interests. One vital, task of the new government would be to work towards a long-term constitutional solution.⁴⁸

The conference began in Simla and all parties agreed on certain main principles including the representation of minorities, support to the Allied Powers during the war and structure of the executive council till the end of war. However, differences arose between the Congress and the Muslim League when Maulana Azad insisted on the nomination of any member including Muslims to the executive council by the Indian National Congress.⁴⁹ Jinnah on the other hand, claimed that under the proposals the Muslims would always be in minority. The Sikhs and Scheduled Castes (who had representation in the

proposed council) would vote with the Congress. He asked that no matter should be decided in the Executive Council by vote if the majority of Muslim members were opposed and that the Muslim League must be given the right to nominate the Muslim members of the Council and objected the Muslim nominee by other than Muslim League.⁵⁰ Jinnah said that Muslim League would not agree to a constitution on the basis other than that of Pakistan. The talks break down because there was no consensus on nomination by both the parties, Muslim League and the Congress.

The British public opinion made the Muslims responsible for the failure of Simla Conference. However, the Right was less critical than the Left. *The Times* found Jinnah's claim to appoint all Muslim members an "extreme proposition" but reluctantly conceded his second point that the party which secured effective representation now would be given the advantage point in relation to the settlement of the future permanent constitution with which the problem of Pakistan was connected.⁵¹ The press of the left expressed strong resentment of the Muslim demand. *The Manchester Guardian* condemned Jinnah for using his familiar veto and declared that we shall sooner or later have to tackle that veto. *The New Statement* said that the conference had failed only because of the intransigence of Jinnah and the Muslim League.⁵²

Just after the failure of the Simla Conference, certain political development outside India took place such as Japan surrendered on August 15, and the World War II was over, the first Labour government under Attlee replaced the War Cabinet. These developments compelled the leaders to solve the Indian problem permanently. Sir Stanford Cripps, who was now more powerful than ever on Indian policy, declared that time should not be wasted in trying to arrive at a temporary arrangement, but that means be expatiated to arrive at a permanent solution, in which the question of Pakistan must form a major issue, and for this purpose new elections should be held in India. The Viceroy agreed. In India, Jinnah also declared that Muslim League offered its cooperation in the interim government because of

war, now the war was over and the problem was needed to be solved permanently, necessarily on the basis of Pakistan, on which the League would never surrender.⁵³

In December 1945, the election for the Central Legislative Assembly was held. Muslim League emerged as the only Muslim representative political party by winning all the 30 Muslim seats. The Congress got 57 seats but failed to secure a single seat in the Muslim constituencies. Election proved the fact that Muslim League can be no longer ignored in the Indian politics.

CONCLUSION

Britain became a world power after the annexation of India and lost its world status after the independence of India. British policy towards India remains the same as the imperialist powers carry out to treat its colonies. They implicitly argued that being a civilised nation they had the right to rule in order to educate and civilise Indians. Moreover the ruled people were not capable to be granted a democratic government even if they themselves demand it as the Indians demanded. The beginning of the World War II changed the global situation particularly that of the Sub-continent. The attempts by the British government to hold India under its total control was now loosen amidst a powerful resistance by the Indian people particularly after 1942 when Japanese advances appeared in the north-eastern borders of India. Meanwhile British Allies such as Chiang Kai-Shek and Roosevelt and the internal pressure of the British pressure groups pleaded to grant concessions to the Indians including national self-government. Freedom to India could not be resisted for a longer period.

The British faced the only difficulty of transferring power to 'the majority, .i.e., the Hindus. It would lead to a disastrous civil war. And if power is not transfer to the majority, the British Government would be accused of arming the Muslims-a minority with a veto power. Considerable leftists in Great Britain supported the Congress view of independence and denied the legitimacy of Muslim League and supported the view

that the power should be immediately transfer to the Congress. For example Edward Thomson in 1943, argued that the British had won the sovereignty of India from Marathas, not the Muslims, implying that therefore sovereignty should revert to the Hindus when the British withdrew.⁵⁴ However, the question of a civil war after the withdrawal cannot be ignored. Moreover, Muslims who constituted 75 percent of the British Indian Army, fought for the Allied cause would be disappointed if their views were ignored regarding the future course of India. The question was not decided until 1947, when the British government had no other way except for the creation of two independent states, Pakistan and India.

Notes and References

- 1 K.K. Aziz, *The British in India; A Study in Imperialism*, National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, Islamabad, 1975, p.87.
- 2 Ibid., p.175.
- 3 V.P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, Sangam Books, New Delhi, 1981, p.60.
- 4 C.H. Philips and Marry Doreen Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, p.560.
- 5 Palme Dutt, *India Today*, Book Traders, Lahore, 1979, p.553.
- 6 In the result of 1936-37 provincial elections, Congress ministries were installed in 8 out of 11 provinces.
- 7 G. Allana (comp & ed.), *Pakistan Movement Historic Documents*, Islamic Book Service, Lahore, p.219.
- 8 Menon, op.cit., p.62.
- 9 Palme, op.cit., p.555.
- 10 C .H. Philips (ed.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, pp.370-71.
- 11 H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1985, p.87.

- 12 *A History of The Freedom Movements*, vol. IV, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1970, p.119.
- 13 C.S. Chhabra, *Advanced Study in the History of Modern India* vol.3, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 1987, p.125.
- 14 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942, p.10.
- 15 Menon, op.cit., p.115.
- 16 Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient Longman, Madras, 1988, p.41.
- 17 Robin James Moore, *Churchill, Crimps and India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979, p.61.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Palme, op.cit., p.559.
- 20 *The Indian Annual Register*, July 11, 1942, p.72.
- 21 Martin Gilber, *Winston Churchill, vol. VII Road to Victory (1941-45)*, William Heinman Ltd., London, 1986, p.53.
- 22 Ibid., p.54.
- 23 Telegram Mr. Amery to the Marquess of Linlithgow in Nicholas Mansergh (ed.), *Transfer of Power* vol. 1, Oxford University Press, London, 1976, p.407.
- 24 Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. N The Henge of Fate*, The Educational Book Company Ltd., Loudon, n.d., p.160.
- 25 Moore, op.cit., p.6.
- 26 Hodson, op.cit., p.91.
- 27 Draft Declaration for the Discussion with Indian Leaders in Nicholas, *Transfer of Power* vol. 1, op. cit., p. 565.
- 28 Moore, op.cit., pp.79-80.
- 29 Ibid., p.81.
- 30 Ibid., p.88.
- 31 Hodson, op.cit., p.100.

-
- 32 Menon, op.cit., p.133.
- 33 Martin, op.cit., p.168.
- 34 Churchill, op.cit., p.169.
- 35 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942, p.142.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Muslim India*, Islamic Book Service, Lahore, 1987, pp.153-54.
- 38 Ibid., p.154.
- 39 Ibid., p.153.
- 40 Ibid., p.154.
- 41 Ibid., p.156.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 *Keesings Contemporary Archives* 1940-43, Longman, London, p.5416.
- 44 Aziz, *Britain*, op.cit., p.156.
- 45 Hodson, op.cit., p.111.
- 46 Aziz, *Britain*, p.158.
- 47 *Keesings Contemporary Archives* 1943-45, Longman, London, p.7267.
- 48 Hodson, op.cit., p.120.
- 49 Azad, op.cit., p.116.
- 50 Hodson, op.cit., pp.121-122.
- 51 Aziz, *Britain*, op.cit., p.159.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Hodson, op.cit., p.129.
- 54 Aziz, *Britain*, op.cit., p.163.