INDIA OUR ALLY?

by

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"The interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy."

Resolution of Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, September 15th, 1939

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PREFACE

THIS pamphlet was written and set up in type before the terms of the British Government's proposals for meeting the claims of the Indian people to independence were disclosed on March 29th, and I have thought it best to let it be published unaltered, adding the text of the Government's announcement in an Appendix.

At the same time, I must use this Preface to make a few comments on the Government's scheme; for, great as is the responsibility involved in criticism at this anxious period, it would be fatal to pass over in silence certain defects in and omissions from the proposals as they stand.

To deal first with an omission, it is most regrettable that no proposal is made for the immediate establishment of a provisional national government, nor even for the assumption in any form of responsibility by the Indian people for their own government. This is surely an essential condition for the effective mobilisation of the Indian people in the common struggle against Fascism.

Turning to what is to be found in the proposals, it is clear that both the merits and the shortcomings of a scheme that is not to be carried out until after the end of hostilities are comparatively unimportant, since the post-war situation—at present quite unpredictable—may make the whole scheme unreal, but one patent defect, amounting in substance to a denial of the freedom of the Indian people to determine their own future, must be pointed out at once. This defect lies in the constitution of the proposed electoral college, which is to consist of all the members elected to serve in the provincial legislatures, together with representatives of the Indian states in proportion to their population. The apparent reasonability of this proposal disappears on examination. Only about 13 per cent. of the people of

British India have the vote, and the elaborate constitutional provisions for separate representation of various communities in the legislatures render even that restricted franchise still less democratic. If there be added to legislatures elected on this basis a number of delegates from the Indian states, presumably selected by autocratic princes with no pretence of popular choice, the resultant electoral college would be very far from representative of the mass of the Indian people, and would in particular tend to give undue support to the case for Partition. And Partition, whether it be looked at from the point of view of geography, of administration, or of economics, would be wholly unworkable, and would merely re-enact the tragedy of Ireland on a larger stage.

But it remains crucially important, in the light of the urgent war situation and of the common interests of the British and Indian peoples in victory over Fascism, that an enduring settlement of Indian national claims be reached without delay. Democratic public opinion in this country has thus a great opportunity and a great responsibility; it must press the Government so to modify the proposals as to provide for the immediate formation of an Indian national government, responsible in general for the government of India and in particular for its defence in co-operation with Great Britain, on the lines advocated in the body of this pamphlet. With such modification, there is ground to hope that the negotiations now in progress between the British Government and the Indian National Congress may end in a firm and genuine settlement, pregnant of infinite benefit to mankind; and the people of Britain should bend every effort to ensure that this settlement shall not elude them.

D. N. PRITT.

April 2nd, 1942.

INTRODUCTION

THE menace of a Japanese invasion has brought the question of the settlement of Indian national aspirations to the front of the political stage, and has led to the despatch to India of Sir Stafford Cripps with the War Cabinet's proposals for a settlement in his portfolio.

This may prove to be a pregnant moment in the history of the British and Indian peoples. We stand at a critical period of a world war, in which the future happiness of ourselves and of all mankind depends on achieving the utter defeat of Fascism, be it German or Japanese or Italian or any other. Our fellow subjects in India, as deeply hostile to Fascism as we are, earnestly desire and demand their independence. They are a potential ally, able in time to make an overwhelming contribution, human and material, to our common fight against Fascism; but we can only win them to alliance and co-operation with us by bringing about a satisfactory settlement of their national demand. The whole future of both peoples thus depends largely on right judgment and courageous action in the next few weeks and months. For us, it will determine whether we lose or gain the help of the Indian people, with all the influence which that can have on the course of the struggle against Fascism. For the Indian people it will determine for a long time to come whether they are to be happy, free and prosperous, or torn by the endless

internal upheavals that, at the present stage of development, are bound to result from any continuance of foreign domination.

A genuine settlement of the Indian national problem is trebly desirable. It can at once save Britain, defeat Fascism, and set the Indian people on a course of progress in which their talents and spirit can be turned from political conflict to constructive work, to the incalculable benefit of mankind.

Can this settlement be achieved? The answer must be that it can. The task will not be easy: it will necessarily be complex in its details; many powerful interests will seek to resist it; and real or imaginary obstacles born of years of misunderstanding and conflict will have to be overcome. But there is no insoluble element in the problem, and with goodwill on both sides the great benefits that its solution will bring will not be lost to mankind.

Whilst the negotiations proceed, particularly when the main lines of the proposals and of any objections that may be offered to them by various interests here and in India have become clear, we in Britain—and particularly in the Labour movement—have a great responsibility. We are a democracy, and as such we must decide this—as all other—major problems of our country's politics for ourselves; we cannot surrender our functions to the Government. We must overcome—as we are already, under the pressure of military events, rapidly overcoming—the almost disastrous indifference most of us have hitherto shown to Indian questions, must pierce through both the murk of old misconceptions and the fog of present-day censorship, and must

form and exercise our judgment on the best possible information. We may at any moment have to take a vital decision one way or another between the proposals of our Government, who are fallible and may be subject to the pressure of strong interests, and those of the representatives of Indian opinion, who are equally fallible, and may be swayed by sectional opinions.

This pamphlet is written at once to stimulate and to assist in the formation of public opinion on these vital and urgent matters, and in particular to urge that the full independence of India, a goal which for many reasons must be reached in the near future, should be frankly sought now and not to-morrow, eagerly and not reluctantly. Half measures, "too little and too late", attractive to the timid and to the selfish, are no longer possible; it would indeed be fatal to toy with them.

We can therefore welcome Sir Stafford Cripps' mission. True, there are some disquieting features. The postponement of disclosure of the terms after it had been semi-officially announced that they would not only be made public, but would be debated in Parliament—although there are obviously certain advantages in it—has grave disadvantages from the democratic point of view, especially at a time when in every field the people seem to be far better than their government;[1] the delay involved—not lessened by Sir Stafford Cripps' halt in Cairo—may also be serious, in the light of the military position; and Mr. Winston Churchill's announcement of March 11th, 1942, bore

[1] So much so that the old saying, "*Je suis leur chef, il faut que je les suive*" (*I am their leader, I must follow them*), is in danger of becoming: "*Je suis leur chef, mais je ne veux pas même les suivre*" (*I am their leader, but I do not even want to follow them*).

the flavour of some of the more reactionary elements around him, and of his own past, in its reference to the Government statement of August, 1940, and in its chilling insistence on "obstacles and safeguards." Nevertheless, the action taken is the most encouraging that has occurred in this field for a long time. It is perhaps actually more encouraging because it comes from a War Cabinet containing men of such reactionary attitudes on the Indian question as Mr. Attlee, Sir John Anderson, and the Prime Minister himself (not to mention Mr. Amery, who is not in the War Cabinet, but is Secretary of State for India). It does indeed justify the hope that at last a new approach may be made to the Indian problem.

A NEW APPROACH

It should be recognised that a new approach, a new spirit, is called for at this critical period.

India, a land comprising to-day one-sixth of the human race and four-fifths of the population of the British Empire, has been for some 180 years part of that Empire. During the last third of that period a demand for self-government has been steadily growing, and has now developed into a clear demand for independence; it has, moreover, gradually widened in its popular support, until to-day almost every section of the population is convinced that India cannot any longer continue as a subject nation.

Whilst this demand has been growing, what has been the attitude of the British Government? It has, of

course, changed with changing circumstances, but it must be admitted that a good case can be made out in support of the strong criticisms of it advanced by Indian nationalist opinion. More than once, when the balance of strength permitted, the movement towards self-government has been suppressed by force, with shootings and wholesale imprisonment.[1] At other times, half-way concessions, not of self-government, but of some measure of participation by Indians in the government of their country, not involving any change in the reality of power, have been made in the hope of conciliating some sections of opinion. And wider aspirations for self-government, when too persistent to be ignored and too strong to be suppressed by force, have been met by promises of "Dominion status" made at intervals for a quarter of a century, but not yet fulfilled.

There is much to be said, too, for the assertion that throughout this period the economy of India, both urban and rural, has been guided—consciously or unconsciously—in the interests of those who hold the power over that country; and that it is the security and remuneration of British investments in India and the safeguarding of industries in Britain from too formidable competition in their Indian market, rather than the interests of the Indian people, that have determined the direction and the limitations of the country's industrial development, the extremely uneven balance of its industry and agriculture, which intensifies its dependence on the British market, and in short the

[1] There are still, at this moment, several thousand political prisoners in confinement in India for agitating for independence by methods which would not be legally criminal in normal democratic countries.

whole economic life of the country.[1] It is undeniable that the country is poverty-stricken and illiterate, and that it has been going backward rather than forward during this century. An average income of round about 2*d.* per head per day, and an illiteracy figure of about 88 per cent., mark a terribly low standard of living and education; and the Indian people claim to see in the experience of the U.S.S.R. a proof that their misfortunes are wholly unnecessary. That country, twenty-five years ago, matched India in poverty and illiteracy, and many of the Asiatic peoples within its borders resembled India both in their culture and characteristics and in the fact that they were in reality colonies of a European empire; and in those twenty-five years they have passed under the eyes of their Indian cousins from their former wretchedness to cultural and material levels which represent an almost miraculous improvement.

In all these circumstances, it is inevitable that the movement for independence has been growing steadily, and has based itself on economic as well as on political considerations. It is too late now for half-measures which might have been accepted comparatively few years ago. India has a case, practical and material as well as theoretical and ethical, against both British rule and its visible results; she has a case, in short, for the recognition of her independence.

[1] It is, for example, regrettably true that India has not so far been allowed to produce a single internal combustion engine, either for aeroplanes or for automobiles; and, whilst she possesses within her own territories almost every raw material required for large-scale industrial development, only 1 to 1½ per cent. of her total population is employed in industry.

A somewhat remarkable reinforcement of this claim recently came from the Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, in the message which he addressed to the people of India on February 21st, 1942, on the conclusion of his visit to India. After urging the Indian people to take an active part in the war against the aggressors, he concluded:

> "I sincerely hope and I confidently believe that our ally, Great Britain, without waiting for any demands from the Indian people, will as speedily as possible give them great political power, so that they may be in a position further to develop their spiritual and material strength and thus realise that their participation in the war is not merely an aid to the anti-aggression nations for securing victory, but also a turning-point in their struggle for India's freedom. From an objective point of view, I am of the opinion that this would be the wisest policy, which will redound to the credit of the British Empire."

INDIA A NATION

Any people or peoples who demand, not just the redress of grievances, but the recognition of their national independence must, of course, possess that measure of cohesion, homogeneity, and national consciousness which constitutes and justifies its claim to be a nation. The opponents—interested or disinterested—of India's demands have often suggested that the variety of races and languages found within her

territories, and the communal or religious conflicts or special interests involved in the large numbers of Moslems, depressed classes, and other minorities, destroy the claim to Indian nationality.

If such objections were valid, the promises of Dominion status, so often repeated by the British Government, could not have any basis of reality or sincerity; but the truth is that they have little foundation. It is now widely accepted that the inhabitants of India, whatever their race, language, economy, or status, are and have long been conscious of a national unity and a national interest, in short of a common nationality. It must suffice here to give one quotation from the *Oxford History of India* (Vincent A. Smith, 1919):

> "The political unity of all India, although never attained perfectly in fact, always was the ideal of the people throughout the centuries. The conception of the universal sovereign as the Chakravartin Raja runs through Sanskrit literature and is emphasised in scores of inscriptions. The story of the gathering of the nations to the battle of Kurkshetra, as told in the Mahabharata, implies the belief that all the Indian peoples, including those of the extreme south, were united by real bonds and concerned in interests common to all. European writers, as a rule, have been more conscious of the diversity than of the unity of India. Joseph Cunningham, an author of unusually independent spirit, is an exception. When describing the Sikh fears of British agression in 1845, he recorded the acute and true observation that 'Hindustan, moreover, from Caubul to the valley of Assam, and

the island of Ceylon, is regarded as one country, and dominion in it is associated in the minds of the people with the predominance of one monarch or one race.' India therefore possesses, and always has possessed for considerably more than two thousand years, ideal political unity. . . .

"India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, language, dress, manners and sect."

The claims recently put forward by the Moslem League and its leader, Mr. Jinnah, for the recognition of a group of separate states comprising territories with a majority of Moslem inhabitants, under the name of Pakistan, are in a sense a denial of the existence of one Indian nation, for they imply that there are two; but, whatever their validity, they involve equally with the general nationalist demand the assertion of the right to independence from British rule.

The specific position of the Moslem League will be discussed below (see p. 41); but it is closely connected, of course, with the most prominent argument of the defenders of British rule in India, who maintain that there is a fundamental and irreconcilable division and hostility between Moslems and Hindus. The Indian nationalists assert—and there is a good deal of evidence to support them—that these divisions have been fostered as part of the machinery for maintaining British rule; and it is at any rate clear that both in the Indian states

and in the trade union and Labour movement in British India Moslems and Hindus have long lived and worked side by side in amity. There is certainly no such final or necessary division between them as to impair the national claims. Indeed, the strength of the nationalist movement disproves the suggestion; for if there were any such general feeling of fundamental cleavage Moslems and Hindus could not be working side by side, as they are, for the recognition of the independence of India, one and undivided, and the "Pakistan" demand would have arisen long ago and attained major dimensions. The problems of special minorities, communities, or interests, whilst they must not be ignored, must equally not be allowed to grow out of their sphere and veto strong and clear national claims.

The other main argument against the claim to national independence rests on the number and variety of the languages of India. The difficulties of a multilingual country would not be made any worse, of course, by the withdrawal of one language—English—which is read and written by only 1 per cent. of the population; but the difficulties are not as great as is suggested, and have never obscured the consciousness of nationality which I have described above. There are in reality only about twelve main languages, of which nine are very closely akin to one another; and Hindustani is already on the way to becoming the *lingua franca* of India.

It may be added that the growing awakening of India to national consciousness does not derive merely from economic circumstances or political development within her own borders. It forms part of a general

awakening of the peoples of Asia, which may be seen most clearly in China, Turkey, and the Soviet Union. The people of India grow more and more conscious of this renaissance and of the great part which they should naturally play in it. They are in effect held back from playing their part by the domination of their present rulers, and it is easily understood that their national consciousness and national movement are greatly strengthened by the irritations of this very constraint.

WHO REPRESENTS INDIA?

In a country where a movement towards self-government or independence has developed to such maturity over a long period of years, the student expects to find a number of political organisations, all expressing the demand for independence in the light of the varying interests—propertied or working-class, urban or rural, landlord or tenant—which they represent; and the politician who has to face the practical problems of negotiation and safeguard hopes to find one such organisation which, by virtue of its influence and the breadth of the interests it represents, may be accepted as representative of the main body of national opinion.

In India to-day there is in the Indian National Congress a body which can claim to be at any rate far more representative than any other, and can be accepted—given the impossibility of holding at the present stage a general election for a constituent assembly—as entitled to speak for a far greater body of Indian opinion than

any other organisation. This is of the greatest importance in the immediate future. Negotiations have to be carried on without much delay; many divergent interests, such as those of the Indian states, which of course form an integral part of India, the depressed classes, the Moslems—or, more accurately, that section of them who regard themselves as requiring some separate or special treatment because they are Moslems —have to be reconciled; and some if not all of those interests will be tempted to put forward claims and demands which cannot be met without injustice to other claims of at least equal validity. If it is possible in fairness to say that Congress, whatever its limitations, is so representative of India that any settlement which the British Government puts forward and Congress accepts should be treated as a settlement with India, and that other sectional or minority interests, whilst entitled to the fullest consultation, representation, and safeguard within the limits of the general national good, have no claim to speak on behalf of India or to impose a veto on the general settlement, an immense practical advance is realised.

It is at least clear that Congress has an overwhelmingly greater claim to speak for India than any other body; and there is little doubt that it can go further and claim to speak substantially for all India. It is a great, united, disciplined movement, tempered in the fire of long political struggles and repressions. In the practical test of the provincial elections of 1937, on a restricted franchise that definitely handicapped it, it polled an overwhelming majority of the votes cast, and formed the government in eight out of the eleven

provinces; and its prestige and influence in the political and national life of India is as great as this electoral success implies.

It should not be thought that Congress is a Left-Wing, a Socialist, or peasant movement. It is in the main a Moderate or "Central" political movement, driven to present a demand for complete freedom from domination by a widening and deepening mass movement, and by the inevitable development of national sentiment brought about by the resistance of the British Government to earlier and less sweeping demands. There have, of course, arisen in the last thirty years trade unions and a workers' movement, which have led perilous but not inglorious careers through waves of suppression and imprisonment. At present the Communist Party is illegal, and the Socialists function as a party inside Congress (the "Congress Socialist Party"). The peasantry, too, in spite of their heartrending poverty and backwardness, have developed numbers of Peasants' Leagues, with an organised paying membership of between half and three quarters of a million. The Labour movement, which has already considerable achievements to its credit, and is likely to do incalculable service as India becomes more industrialised, does not, of course, increase but on the contrary diminishes the practical difficulties of negotiation and recognition of independence. Not merely does it naturally support independence; it is a strong element against communal or religious antagonism; it constitutes a unifying force in the national movement, and it represents the mass of the poor workers of the country to a greater extent than Congress without it could do.

OUR NATURAL ALLY

It is natural that the minds of most of us should turn on the military advantages that may be derived from a settlement with India at the present crucial period of the world war; and it is important—and not a little comforting—to realise that the Indian people, if they can be won, are not merely a valuable ally by reason of their great numbers, their strategic position, and their vast potential military and industrial power, but are—what is far more desirable—naturally allied to us by all their interests. We and the Indian people are alike democratic in our outlooks and aspirations, and convincedly anti-Fascist. With the shortness of public memory, and the inadequate and often censor-ridden reporting of Indian news in the British Press, it is not realised what a fine and long-standing anti-Fascist record the Indian people can claim; and the fact that they were for long lukewarm towards the question of their active participation in the present war has naturally tended to obscure their true attitude.

Their anti-Fascist record is admitted on all hands. From the time of Japan's attack on Manchuria onward, through the tragedies of Abyssinia, Spain, and Czechoslovakia, the Indian national movement went on record in emphatic protests against Fascist aggression, and condemned the "appeasement" policy of Mr. Chamberlain. It is noteworthy that Mr. Bose, who is now used by Axis propaganda, was expelled from Congress before the war broke out.

To understand the attitude of the Indian movement

to the present war, one must recall the history of its declarations and of the declarations and actions of our own Government since 1939. Briefly, it may be said that the Indian people have throughout stood consistently by their anti-Fascist attitude, remaining ready and anxious to take an active part in the struggle against Fascism, but insisting that they can only do so as a free people. As the present leader of Congress, Pandit Jaharwalal Nehru, has said: "We are not seeking political freedom as the price of full co-operation in the war, but as an essential pre-condition of a people's war, the only effective war against Fascism." One need not agree or approve their standpoint, but it can at any rate be understood, for the attitude of the British Government until quite lately has been in substance at once a seeming forgetfulness of the very existence of the Indian people, an apparent belief in Britain's capacity to carry on the war and to win it without enlisting India as an ally, and an expectation that India should do what she is told to do in the war without having her independence recognised or any fundamental concession made to her.

This brief statement must be justified by setting out the facts. The story begins, most unfortunately, with the British Government at the outbreak of war in September, 1939, declaring India a belligerent in a war (brought about, incidentally, by policies of which Indian opinion had always disapproved) without the consent of, or even any consultation with, the Indian people or their representatives. The reaction of Congress was immediate. On September 15th, 1939, its Working Committee passed a resolution, duly ratified

by the All-India Congress Committee on October 10th, from which the following may be quoted:

"The British Government have declared India a belligerent country, promulgated Ordinances, passed the Government of India Amending Bill, and taken over [*sic*] far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people, whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. . . .

"The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of Imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must, therefore, unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

"The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist

ends. Any imposed decision or attempt to use India's resources for purposes not approved by them will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If co-operation is desired in a worthy cause, this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by external authority.

"Co-operation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have, in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free, democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her. . . .

"If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interest and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interest of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and Imperialism and Fascism.

"If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end Imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have

the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy. A free, democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity. . . .

"India has been the outstanding example of modern Imperialism, and no re-fashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources, she must play an important part in any scheme of world re-organisation. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom to-day is individual, and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster. . . .

"The true measure of democracy is the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present.

"Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order, the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

"In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion

and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at this stage, so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed, as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and of which she disapproves.

"The Working Committee, therefore, invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? . . .

"The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world."

The British Government did not respond with any declaration of their war aims, nor did they renounce their imperialist policy. Their only reply was to state in the same month that they regarded "Dominion status" as their objective for India, and that they were ready to

expand the Governor-General's Council so as to include representatives of the political parties and to establish a consultative committee. "Dominion status" has a vagueness of outline which is sometimes useful and sometimes disastrous; promises of it had been made in the War of 1914–18 and never fulfilled, and whilst an offer of it might have been accepted at some time in the tragic "twenty years between," it had by 1939 a stale and unappetising appearance. It was indeed then much too late to hope that it would commend itself to the now more fully developed movement for independence. The rest of the offer consisted of "sops" of a painfully familiar kind, holding out no hope of any change in the substance of power. Neither the expansion of the Council nor the appointment of the committee was actually carried out at this time, it being alleged by the British Government that there was insufficient agreement between the majority parties in the provinces.

The British Government then proceeded, as in 1914–18, to carry on the war, and to use Indian troops outside India for the purposes of the war, in accordance with British belligerent interests and without consulting those of India. Five months later, in March, 1940 (at a time when, it will be remembered, little had happened in the war in Europe since October, 1939), Congress met at Ramgarh and passed by an overwhelming majority the following resolution:

> "This Congress, having considered the grave and critical situation resulting from the war in Europe and British policy in regard to it, approves of and endorses the resolutions passed and the action taken

on the war situation by the All-India Congress Committee and the Working Committee.

"The Congress considers the declaration by the British Government, of India as a belligerent country, without any reference to the people of India, and the exploitation of India's resources in this war, as an affront to them which no self-respecting and freedom-loving people can accept or tolerate.

"The recent pronouncements made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India demonstrate that Great Britain is carrying on the war fundamentally for imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire, which is based on the exploitation of the people of India, as well as of other Asiatic and African countries.

"Under these circumstances, it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way, directly or indirectly, be a party to the war, which means continuance and perpetuation of this exploitation.

"The Congress, therefore, strongly disapproves of Indian troops being made to fight for Great Britain and of the drain from India of men and material for the purpose of the war. Neither the recruiting nor the money raised in India can be considered to be voluntary contributions from India. Congressmen, and those under the Congress influence, cannot help in the prosecution of the war with men, money or material.

"The Congress hereby declares again that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of Imperialism, and Dominion

status, or any other status within the imperial structure, is wholly inapplicable to India, is not in keeping with the dignity of a great nation, and would bind India in many ways to British policies and economic structure.

"The people of India alone can properly shape their own constitution and determine their relations to other countries of the world, through a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage.

"The Congress is further of opinion that while it will always be ready, as it ever has been, to make every effort to secure communal harmony, no permanent solution is possible except through a Constituent Assembly where the rights of all recognised minorities will be fully protected by agreement, as far as possible, between the elected representatives of various majority and minority groups, or by arbitration if agreement is not reached on any point.

"Any alternative will lack finality. India's constitution must be based on independence, democracy and national unity, and the Congress repudiate attempts to divide India or to split up her nationhood.

"The Congress has always aimed at a constitution where the fullest freedom and opportunities of development are guaranteed to the group and the individual, and social injustice yields place to a juster social order."

In June, 1940, France was overrun and defeated, and the military situation in Europe looked black. Many elements in Congress hoped that some compromise might be reached which would enable India both to

achieve her independence and to co-operate with Great Britain in fighting Fascism, now grown more menacing than ever. On July 7th, accordingly, after a five-day session, the Working Committee of Congress passed the following resolution:

"The Working Committee have noted the serious happenings which have called forth fresh appeals to bring about a solution of the deadlock in the Indian political situation and, in view of the desirability of clarifying the Congress position, they have earnestly examined the whole situation once again in the light of the latest developments in world affairs.

"The Working Committee are more than ever convinced that the acknowledgement by Great Britain of the complete independence of India is the only solution of the problems facing both India and Britain and are, therefore, of opinion that such an unequivocal declaration should be immediately made and that, as an immediate step in giving effect to it, a provisional National Government should be constituted at the centre, which, though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all elected members in the Central Legislature, and secure the closest co-operation of responsible Governments in the provinces.

"The Working Committee are of opinion that unless the aforesaid declaration is made, and a National Government accordingly formed at the Centre without delay, all efforts at organising the material and moral resources of the country for defence cannot in any sense be voluntary or as from

a free country, and will, therefore, be ineffective. The Working Committee declare that, if these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organisation in the defence of the country."

On July 28th, 1940, the All-India Congress Committee, after a long debate, ratified this Resolution by a two to one majority, with many abstentions. The offer contained in the Resolution was transmitted to the Viceroy and was answered by him on behalf of the British Government on August 8th, in a long statement which was regarded by Congress and by the Indian people generally as highly unsatisfactory.

The statement contained four main points of substance. The first was the reiteration of the old story that differences between various sections of the Indian people made the achievement of national unity impossible for the moment. The second was an assertion that the British Government "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 large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government."

This seems to be merely the expression of an unexceptionable sentiment; but the people of India must be forgiven if they suspected, firstly, that it might encourage a minority to think it could hold the majority to ransom by claiming to veto a reasonable settlement, and, secondly, that some elements in the

British Government cherished the intention of thwarting national aspirations by "putting up" a minority to impose such a veto, and of thus disappointing both parties and continuing British rule in India.

The third main point in the statement was to announce the decision to invite a certain number of Indians to join the Governor-General's Council, and to set up a War Advisory Council, containing representatives of the Indian States and of other national interests.

The fourth main point concerned the establishment of the new constitution for the purpose of realising Dominion status. On this one may quote the statement as follows:

> "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. But His Majesty's Government authorise me to declare that they will most readily assent to the setting up after the conclusion of the war, with the least possible delay, of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new constitution, and they will lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters to the utmost degree. Meanwhile, they will welcome and promote in any way possible every sincere and practical step that may be taken by representative Indians themselves to reach a basis of friendly agreement, first, upon the form which the post-war

representative body should take and the methods by which it should arrive at its conclusions, and secondly upon the principles and outlines of the Constitution itself. They trust, however, that for the period of the war (with the Central Government reconstituted and strengthened in the manner I have described, and with the help of the War Advisory Council) all parties, communities, and interests will combine and co-operate in making a notable Indian contribution to the victory of the world cause which is at stake. Moreover, they hope that in this process new bonds of union and understanding will emerge, and thus pave the way towards the attainment by India of that free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which remains the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament."

This really represented a withdrawal rather than an advance, at a time when the readiness of the Indian people to fight Fascism and their determination to achieve independence had both developed greatly. On August 22nd, 1940, accordingly, the Working Committee of Congress passed a Resolution embodying a reasoned reply to the Viceroy's statement, which it wholly rejected. On September 15th, the All-India Congress Committee passed a Resolution, consistent with that rejection, declaring in favour of *non-violent* resistance to co-operation in the war, under Mr. Gandhi's leadership.

For many months the position in India remained unchanged. Hitler in the early months of 1941

conquered or absorbed most of the Balkan countries, and on June 22nd attacked Soviet Russia. The British Government continued to carry on the war without regard to Indian interests, keeping thousands of political prisoners in gaol while recruiting to the Indian Army on only a modest scale and making practically no use of the immense resources—actual and potential—of India's people and territory.

On July 22nd, 1941, it was announced that—in substance—the Viceroy's decision of the previous August, which had been quietly dropped, was now being carried out. Five new seats were created on the Governor-General's Council, functions were allotted to them, and five Indian gentlemen, collected, as Mr. Amery put it in the House of Commons, by "infinite patience and tact which the Viceroy has exercised for many months to try and get together a team which will co-operate in the defence of India, and in the interests of India and ourselves in the common cause," were appointed to those seats. At the same time, the proposed War Advisory Council, now named the National Defence Council, was set up.

The following points should be noticed in relation to this development. In the first place, the Viceroy retained the right to ignore or veto any decision of the Executive Council; it was not responsible to the Legislature or to the people, and he was not bound by its "decisions." The vital departments of Defence, External Affairs, Communications,[1] and Finance were not given to Indian members; the Indian members of the

[1] On March 24th, 1942, an Indian was nominated as a temporary member of the Council, with the portfolio of Communications.

Council, whilst constituting a majority of the Council, thus had no wider sphere sof government, nor any more right to make their views on policy prevail, than the Indian minority had had before. None of the five gentlemen appointed represented the views of Congress or any nationalist views; they were selected by the Government, and acceptable to it.

The National Defence Council was purely advisory, and was intended to meet every two months. What advice it would be able to give on what subjects was not clear; it was at any rate plain that the Viceroy did not need to follow that advice.

The next landmark was the "Atlantic Charter," a joint declaration signed by Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt on August 12th, 1941, "to make known," as was stated in its preamble, "certain common principles in the national policies of our respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world." In the third of its eight points, the two statesmen pledged their countries and peoples to the following:

> "They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."

No mention was made at the time of any exclusion of India from this broad and unqualified recognition of an elementary right, and it can hardly be supposed that Mr. Churchill—or, for that matter, Mr. Roosevelt —forgot one-sixth of the human race. And on August

15th Mr. Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, in an address to West African students in London, emphasised (according to the report in the *Daily Herald*) that "coloured peoples as well as white will share the benefits of the Churchill–Roosevelt Atlantic Charter."

He said, among other things:

> "You will not find in the declarations which have been made on behalf of the government of this country on the war any suggestion that the freedom and social security for which we fight should be denied to any of the races of mankind."

But, alas, on September 9th, 1941, Mr. Churchill stated in the House of Commons 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 developments of constitutional government in India, Burma, and other parts of the British Empire. 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. . . . At the Atlantic meeting we have had in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and natural life of the States and nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke . . . that is quite a separate problem from progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown."

When one considers this statement in the light of the scope and wording of the Declaration of August, 1940, quoted above, it is, of course, clear that Mr. Churchill was flatly refusing, as a decision of policy, to apply the Atlantic Charter to India. The disappointment in that country may be imagined.

These facts may help democrats to understand why Indian opinion as represented by Congress did not feel ready, even after the extension of the war to the U.S.S.R., to join in the war unless and until India's independence is recognised; indeed, Congress leaders might reasonably plead that they could not have carried their supporters with them in any such policy. We may regret this; we may wish that the Indian people as a whole could have continued to press their demand for independence without making it a condition precedent to their participation in the war; but we can hardly fail to understand their point of view.

Progressive sections of Indian opinion have shown a more encouraging attitude, taking a standpoint similar to that of Socialists in Britain. This can be well illustrated by two examples drawn from the trade union and the student movements. The first is a resolution passed in December, 1941, by the Bombay Provincial Trades Union Congress to be sent to the All-India Trade Union Congress, which ran thus:

> "The war which the Soviet Union and Great Britain are jointly waging against Hitler Fascism with the assistance of the U.S.A. is one and indivisible, and can no longer be regarded by the working class or the people of India as an imperialist war to which

they could afford to take a neutral or hostile attitude. . . .

"The All-India Trade Union Congress can no longer pursue the policy of hostility or non-co-operation or neutrality towards the war efforts of even the present government. We must vigorously and boldly tell the workers that this war of the Soviet peoples and of the British people is our war as well. It is a war which the people have to win in their own interests. We want the war effort to be increased a thousandfold. . . ."

The second illustration is furnished by the All-India Students' Federation. At its Conference in Patna on January 1st, 1942, this Federation, which represents all universities, colleges and High schools in India, adopted by 600 votes to 9 a resolution which ran in part as follows:

"From Hitler's treacherous attack on Russia to Japan's unprovoked aggression, leading to the U.S.A.'s entry into the world struggle, a series of events have taken place completely transforming the character of the war. The Federation must take into account the change and reformulate its policy.

"It is not enough to express sympathy and give moral support to the war of the anti-Fascist front led by the Soviet Union. It would be wrong to say that we cannot do anything until we are free or we are granted such and such demands. The titanic struggle for world liberation raging in the five continents, and which is now knocking at our very door, demands that we Indian people should unite to hold up our

head and declare to the people of the world: We know this war is just; we are in it and are determined to do everything to win it."

The resolution went on to formulate certain minimum demands in order to enable India effectively to participate in the war. These demands included the recognition of India's right to independence, release of the anti-Fascist political prisoners, establishment of democratic liberties, a responsible government at the centre, removal of restrictions on industrial development, and improvement in the living conditions of the workers.

It was explained, however, that "this national charter is not a threat, but a practical programme of action." The resolution concluded: "We do not wish to cheat History; we wish to make it. We do not say, 'Grant these demands and we will participate in your war.' It is not their [British reactionaries'] war. It is ours."

In the light of all this narrative, there can be little doubt by now that the Indian people can and will constitute a powerful ally of the British people if and when a satisfactory settlement of their national demands is achieved; and that in alliance with us they will be fighting a battle in which all the interests and sympathies of both of us will be engaged in harmony.

THE URGENCY OF A SETTLEMENT

British public opinion, which has been prone to pay too little attention to Indian problems, and has in

addition been starved of information as to the developments in India during the war, has in the last few months become fully alive to the urgency of the position. It has seen in Malaya and in Singapore—and has seen again, perhaps even more vividly, in Burma—the complete indifference of the native population to the fate of its British rulers, and has learnt that for European armies to fight a cunning and resourceful enemy in the midst of such populations is a burden too great to carry. It has compared this position with that in the Philippines, where a native population which has obtained a large measure of self-government and a positive and unambiguous promise of freedom within a definite period has co-operated in offering prolonged resistance to that same enemy;[1] and, above all, it has compared it with the situation in China, where over long years every conceivable handicap of supplies, equipment, and resources has been neutralised by the courage and tenacity with which the Chinese have fought under their own popular Government for their own land and their own freedom. It has seen, too, the analogy, just as cogent if a little less direct, of the magnificent struggle of the free peoples of the Soviet Union against the German Fascists.

The lesson is clear. So long as India's aspirations are left unsatisfied, and her population remains accordingly indifferent or hostile, we cannot effectively defend Indian territory against Japanese attack; and, on the other hand, so soon as her claims are met, she will be

[1] The Philippine parliament, or national assembly, consists wholly of Filipinos elected on a basis of universal adult suffrage and entrusted with all the powers of internal government. The President is also a Filipino, popularly elected.

ready enthusiastically to co-operate in the war, and neither the backwardness of industrial preparation nor the slowness hitherto shown in recruiting and equipping troops in India will present any real obstacle to the constitution of a united front of resistance to invasion of quite incalculable strength.

To save ourselves from a large-scale military defeat, to preserve at any rate most of the Indian peoples from the horrors of invasion and occupation by the Japanese, and to begin to bring about the end of Japanese Fascism, we must convert the bulk of Indians from hostility or indifference to alliance. It is at any rate clear what we must do to achieve this—namely, frankly to recognise and meet their claims. It is not clear how much time we have; we may well have enough, but we certainly have very little to spare, and it is deeply to be regretted (from the point of view of conciliating opinion as well as from that of time) that Sir Stafford Cripps was asked to spend even a few days in Cairo on his way.

POSSIBILITY OF A SETTLEMENT

It has already been shown that the need for settlement is great, its advantages incalculable, and the vital condition—the recognition of independence—clear and inescapable. But that does not automatically make a settlement possible; and, whilst of course nobody wants to believe that statesmanship is incapable of reaching a solution when the prize is so great, we have to base ourselves on realities and consider the

difficulties. A country which has been governed by a foreign Power, with full consideration for its own interests, for nearly two centuries, in the course of which period all sorts of artificial structures and safeguards have been built up to prevent the subject peoples from becoming too strong, whilst the grant of reforms which never touched the essential elements of power complicated administration and whetted appetites, is bound to present a good many complexities. Whilst we may discount most of the arguments put forward by those whose paramount interests are bound up with the maintenance of British rule, we have still to make up our minds as to what the true facts are.

The difficulty usually advanced as the most serious is that of the communal or religious differences between Moslems and Hindus, which have already been briefly mentioned. There is some uncertainty as to the facts, but in the main the true position can be definitely stated, and may be compared with the story that is usually told by the propagandists.

Let us start with the propaganda story. It is to the effect that the Moslems, over 80,000,000 in strength, stand consciously together as a religious community, opposed to the Hindus, another religious community something like three times as numerous; that the two communities are fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed to one another, and live on terms of mutual ill-will and hatred; that Congress is a Hindu organisation; and that the Moslem League represents substantially all the Moslems. From this one is expected to infer that there is really no practicable method of working out an independent India, since satisfactory safeguards

for the Moslem minority cannot be evolved, and that, in consequence, British rule must remain. (The Moslem League and Mr. Jinnah do not draw that conclusion; their policy is that several provinces where Moslems are in the majority over the Hindus should constitute separate Moslem states, wholly independent of the rest of India, under the name of "Pakistan.")

The true position is very different. There is no fundamental conflict between Hindus and Moslems, nor any economic basis for such a conflict. They have the same problems of wealth and poverty; they are alike landlords and tenants, oppressors and oppressed, employers and employed, moneylenders and debtors. Religious disputes and conflicts do arise, and are indeed at times fomented. British rule has not cured them; they have in the main arisen in the present century, and there is good reason to believe that under Indian rule they would disappear. It is significant that in the Indian states, where there are many mixed populations, communal trouble between Hindu and Moslem is virtually unknown; and in the trade union and Labour movements, as one would expect, they disappear before the greater unity of the common interest of all workers. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has expressed himself with vigour on the subject of communal difficulties, as follows:

> "This communal question is essentially one of protection of vested interests, and religion has always been a useful stalking-horse for this purpose. Those who have feudal privileges and vested interests fear change and become the camp-followers of British

Imperialism. The British Government, on the other hand, delights in using the communal argument to deny freedom, democracy, or any major change, and to hold on to power and privilege in India. That is the *raison d'être* and the justification of communalism in India."

Morevover, Congress is not a Hindu body, and the Moslem League does not represent many Moslems. Congress does not keep religious statistics of its membership; one becomes a member of Congress if one believes in its policy and can afford—as millions cannot—to pay 4 annas (say, 5*d.*) per annum, and one is not asked to declare one's religion; but it is known that in one of the various periods during which Congress members were being sent to prison in large numbers (sufficiently large to make proportional calculations reliable) the percentage of Moslems among the Congress prisoners was found to be 20 per cent., and there is no reason to suppose that the general percentage is either more or less. The proportion of Moslems to Hindus in Congress is thus scarcely less than the proportion in the whole population. The President of Congress is a Moslem; the North-West Frontier Province, with a 90 per cent. Moslem population, is a "Congress" province; the Moslem Premiers of Sind and Bengal are opposed to the Moslem League, taking a position similar to that of Congress and supporting the policy of one independent India; and the Premier of the Punjab, the only other province in which Moslems are in a majority, has dissociated himself from Mr. Jinnah and is opposed to any partition.

When we turn to the Moslem League, we find it a small if vigorous body, headed by a vigorous President, Mr. Jinnah. It publishes no figures of its membership, but it claims to represent the whole Moslem community. We have already noticed the Moslem elements in Congress and the Congress support in Moslem provinces. But what of the Moslem community in general? Of the two great religious divisions among the Moslems, the Sunnis and Shiahs, the latter, comprising about 20 per cent. of the whole, are opposed to the Moslem League. Then the Momins, an economic and occupational grouping, about 45,000,000 strong—some of whom, of course, will doubtless be Shiahs—support the Congress. Mr. Jinnah can thus claim at the most those Moslems who are neither Momins, nor Shiahs, nor in the North-West Frontier province, nor supporters of the Premiers of Sind, Bengal, or the Punjab, nor among the Moslems who form 20 per cent. of Congress supporters. I do not know whether he can even do as much as that, but if he does he will still not muster a very formidable army. It is not surprising that in the general elections of 1937 the League candidates polled less than 5 per cent. of the total Moslem votes cast, and that even before the latest developments some revolt was developing against Mr. Jinnah within the League.

The Moslem League demand for "Pakistan," the erection of separate Moslem states in those areas where Moslems are in a majority—a relatively recent demand which has little to recommend it—is certainly not acceptable to most Moslems. It rests on the most reactionary basis, that of religious differences; it recalls the unhappy experiences of partition in Ireland; and it

would tend towards economic disaster. It is particularly dangerous because it plays into the hands of the opposition by denying that India is one nation. Perhaps the best answer to it on this point was given by another Moslem body, the All-India Azad (Freedom) Moslem Conference, representing several million Moslems, including the Premiers of Bengal and Sind, which passed a resolution at Delhi on April 30th, 1940, as follows:

> "India, with its geographical and political boundaries, is an indivisible whole, and as such it is the common home of all the citizens, irrespective of race or religion, who are joint owners of its resources. All nooks and corners of the country contain the hearths and homes of the Muslims, and the cherished historic monuments of their religion and culture, which are dearer to them than their lives. . . .
>
> "The Indian Muslim . . . is unquestionably an Indian national, and in every part of the country he is entitled to equal privileges with all other Indian nationals in every sphere of governmental, economic and other national activities. For that reason, Muslims owe equal responsibility with other Indians for striving and making sacrifices to achieve the country's independence. . . ."

The conclusion must surely be that, whilst it may be necessary, at any rate during a transitional period, to provide some special minority safeguards for the Moslem communities in India, the notion that they could constitute any real obstacle to unity and independence, or that they are entitled to any veto on a settlement, is unfounded.

The special position of the Princes, who were agreeable to contemplate federation with British India under the Government of India Act, 1935, would obviously call for consideration, but it cannot seriously be suggested that it imposes any insuperable obstacle. The same may be said of other special groupings, such as the numerous "depressed classes."

The problems arising from extreme poverty, the thwarting of industrial development, and the lack of balance between urban and rural life, do not, of course, present any obstacle to the establishment of independence. British rule is largely responsible for their existence; it has certainly not cured them; if they can be cured—as the example of the U.S.S.R. strongly suggests that they can—they can be cured by an Indian government better than by any other.

Lastly, it is often suggested that the standard of living of the British worker will fall if the tribute from India to Britain, generally estimated to amount to £150,000,000 per annum, should cease to flow. This should scarcely be regarded as an argument. The British worker has no moral right—and in the main no desire—to participate in the exploitation of his fellow workers in India, even to the extent of 2*d.* per day per head, the amount he would get if he shared equally with the rich in this tribute, which he does not do. And in any case a free and prosperous India will be able to trade with Britain on a far more ample scale than before, and the British people, by improving their economic system, can raise their own standards of living by much more than 2*d.* per day, without battening on the poverty of their brethren in Asia.

It must be plain that, whilst a settlement will be complicated and will call for careful statesmanship, there is no foundation for the suggestion that any insuperable obstacle exists.

THE BASIS OF A SETTLEMENT

It is clear by now that the vital element of a settlement is the recognition of independence, with proper safeguards for minorities, and—in the long run—the determination of the detailed structure of India's future political life by a democratically elected constituent assembly; but it is equally clear that the working out of such a settlement is a complex matter, that time presses, and that some machinery must be devised which can produce the reality and essence of independence without delay, and so convince those who have long been waiting for their omelette that the eggs really have been broken and cannot now be coaxed back into their shells; for only so can we secure the support of the Indian people in the war.

If what has been written above about the predominant position of Congress in the political life of India is correct, it is with Congress that negotiations must primarily be carried on, and such machinery agreed. Without a general election, no body more representative of the Indian people could possibly be found; and no existing League or organisation other than Congress can claim to represent more than some section of opinion, which as such is entitled to separate safeguards, or can assert the right to veto a settlement to which Congress agrees. The more other organisations join in

the negotiations and in the final settlement, the better from many points of view; but it should be clearly recognised that agreement with Congress is the indispensable basis.

Fortunately, it seems not only that it is within practical politics and common sense, now that readiness for settlement on both sides is probably greater than it has ever been, to devise such machinery, but that Congress has gone a long way towards devising it.

The demand of Congress, clearly formulated, has long been that a constituent assembly, democratically elected, should be summoned to determine the constitution of free India; and in normal times nobody could doubt the reasonable nature of this demand, once the principle of independence is conceded. But it is not practicable in the present emergency; and Congress has recognised the position. It is willing to accept the immediate establishment of an Indian provisional national government, chosen in the first instance so as to represent all the Indian interests, national, sectional, liberal, labour, depressed, peasant, and others, by which the whole powers and functions of government shall be exercised, without the old device of "reserved powers"; and to accept that this government shall be responsible for the time being to the existing central legislature. It is this latter proposal which shows at once the wisdom and the confidence of Congress. It is wise, for it is only by accepting this legislature that a settlement can be carried through without fatal delay; and it shows confidence, for the numbers of "official" members and of special representatives of sectional interests in the legislature are so high that, to make

Indian wishes prevail, an almost complete unanimity of the representatives of general interests has to be achieved.

It is also, of course, of the utmost importance that the settlement should comprise agreement as to the basis, the manner, and the extent of the collaboration of India with Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China in the prosecution of the war. Strategy, command, recruiting, supply, production—in short, every aspect of large-scale military co-operation—should be fully covered.

Both with regard to the agreement on military co-operation and over the whole field of settlement, we are justified in feeling that the settlement can rest on a very solid and secure basis. It is not only that the recognition of independence is just and logical and an inevitable historical development; there is what is much better, a wide common interest. Both the British and the Indian peoples desire, above all, the defeat of Fascism. Both are equally interested in securing that Japan shall not "lord it" over Asia, and that China shall be free. Both know clearly that it is only by marching cordially together, and bringing to bear all the strength we both have, that we can defeat Japan and help in the fight to end Fascism. Our agreement and alliance will thus rest on something stronger than sentiment, repentance, or the tardy recognition of a just claim.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it is worth emphasising that, apart altogether from the military advantages already discussed, the

British people have much to gain from a settlement, as well as the Indians. It is in any event impossible now to avoid what reactionaries would call "the loss of India." The doom of old-fashioned Imperialism is sealed; it has either been murdered or has committed suicide. Britain must give up voluntarily her dominion over India, and gain her as a friend and ally, or lose everything, either to Japan or to India.

But we need not look only at the negative side of the picture. We have positively much to gain. If we free India, we can greatly strengthen our claim to speak of ourselves as fighting for freedom and democracy. We can at the same time rid ourselves of complicity in the exploitation of starving people. We can regain the approval of American and neutral opinion, which has long been disquieted by our treatment of India to an extent of which our Press has given us little conception. (And we can deprive Goebbels of one of the best of the weapons with which he works up hatred and distrust of us among the German people in Germany, to whom we desire to appeal as part of our campaign for disintegrating Fascism in Germany.)

If we look a little further ahead, and indulge in the risk of speculation on the basis of China's tenacity in struggle and Soviet Russia's success in developing Asiatic peoples and territories, we can see almost illimitable possibilities of happiness, prosperity, and security for the Indian, Chinese, and Soviet peoples, and for those of Japan, too, when their Fascist Government is finally destroyed. When we grasp this possibility, and realise what it may mean for the peace and prosperity of Asia, Europe, Britain, and the whole world, we must

be resolved that, whatever the outcome of the immediate negotiations, we will work unremittingly for the full establishment of the free and equal friendship and alliance between our two peoples which can bring about such advantages for mankind.

APPENDIX

DRAFT DECLARATION OF DISCUSSION WITH INDIAN LEADERS

(*As issued by the Ministry of Information on March 29th, 1942*)

THE conclusions of the British War Cabinet as set out below are those which Sir Stafford Cripps has taken with him for discussion with the Indian leaders, and the question as to whether they will be implemented will depend upon the outcome of those discussions which are now taking place.

His Majesty's Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfilment of the promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.

His Majesty's Government therefore make the following declaration:

(*a*) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

(*b*) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body.

(*c*) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to:

(i) The right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, his Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution, giving them the same full status as Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

(ii) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between his Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by his Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities; but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in the future its relationship to the other member States of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation.

(*d*) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities:

Immediately upon the result being known of the Provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral

college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of the representatives of British India as a whole, and with the same powers as the British Indian members.

(*e*) During the critical period which now faces India, and until the new constitution can be framed, his Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral, and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth, and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

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