

India in Peril

The Report of the Commission

By Lord Sydenham of Combe

It was prophesied some years ago that India would be lost at Westminster, with shattering effects on the Empire, and the sequence of events which has inevitably led to the present perilous situation ominously recalls this forecast. If ever the history of the handling of the problems in India in recent years comes to be written, it will be an appalling record of nescience, weakness and vacillation,* which in an Eastern land could only bring about the results now painfully manifest.

The Morley-Minto Reforms came into operation in January 1910. They were settled in principle between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, and worked out in detail by the Central and Provincial Governments. Lord Morley was determined that an exotic parliamentary system which, as he said, "I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with," should not be forced upon India; but he was over-anxious as to the reception the political changes would receive, which, in this country, was distinctly favourable. In India these Reforms

were greeted with surprised approval. Mr. Gokhale and other leading Indians told me that all their expectations had been surpassed.†

It fell to me to inaugurate the new system in Bombay and to preside over two successive Councils, enlarged from 22 to 46, with a majority of 33 non-official members, of whom 21 were elected. These Councils proved responsible working bodies, and the tone of their debates was on a high level. We never had an official majority in Bombay, and, as far as possible, I confined Select Committees on Bills to non-official and elected members.

The Morley-Minto Reforms worked exceedingly well, and much could be learned from them. There were defects easily remedied; but we were then moving on lines which could have been broadened and extended

* "The Crumbling of an Empire," a pamphlet of 100 pages, published by the Indo-British Association of which I was President, gives a chronological summary of "The decline of British authority in India," from September 1916 to March 1922, which lies at the root of all that is now happening.

† "My Working Life." Murray.

INDIA IN PERIL

with safety and real advantage to India. "My reforms," wrote Lord Morley, "were quite enough for a generation at least."

In September, 1916, however, Mrs. Besant, turning from Theosophy to politics, established a Home Rule League, and moderates and extremists, uniting at the Congress in December, for the first time demanded independence, since merged into "Dominion Status." As anarchical crimes were freely instigated, a placatory gesture from Whitehall was soon forthcoming.

In 1917, Mr. Lloyd George, at a critical period in the war, appointed Mr. Montagu to guide the destinies of India, and his classic declaration, into which Lord Curzon interpolated the shockingly abused, but eminently explosive, term, "responsible government,"* was made on August 20. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report followed, leading to the Government of India Act of 1919, rushed through the House of Commons by the kangaroo closure, though the clearest warnings were given at the time, pointing out exactly what has since happened. No more unsuitable moment for the calm consideration of organic changes in the Government of India could have been chosen. The nation was distraught by the effects of the war and in no mood to pronounce a reasoned opinion on these grave matters. The immediate result of this most momentous Act was "open rebellion," better planned than the Mutiny of 1857 and as dangerous. The handling of the situation by Mr. Montagu, and his treatment of the men, British and Indian, who saved India, went far to destroy British authority and to alienate the trust of our Indian friends. †

The Simon Commission was a legislative product of this disastrous Act, which unwisely laid down that the situation should be completely overhauled for the inspection of Parliament after a period of ten years. In response to loud clamour from Indian politicians, this period was antedated, and the three-party commission began its investigations on February 3, 1928. Again, the vast complex of Indian polity has been flung into the

* When he received this fateful announcement, Mr. Montagu is reported to have said, "I threw up my hat," which can easily be imagined.

† This degrading story is admirably told in Sir M. O'Dwyer's "India as I Knew It" and in Mr. Ian Colvin's "Life of General Dyer."

INDIA IN PERIL

melting-pot, and again the nation, confronted with a serious economic crisis at home, and facing dangers in Egypt, Palestine, China, and possibly Iraq, is certainly not psychologically fitted to examine dispassionately the far-reaching problems of India.

The preliminary "Survey" of the Simon Report of more than 400 pages has received the high praise which it richly deserves in all countries, except in India, where the small politically-minded section finds the presentation of pregnant facts unpalatable. We have a compendium of essential information, well arranged and conveyed in coldly judicial language, attractive from its literary excellence.

India has an area of about 1,800,000 square miles, "as large as the whole of Continental Europe, without Russia." The population is now about 320,000,000, of whom about 250,000,000 are under British rule,* the rest being governed, in accordance with ancient tradition, by Princes and Chiefs in 562 States, large and small, showing a "striking diversity of characteristics." There are 222 vernacular languages, creating vertical cleavages throughout India. English is the only unifying tongue of the educated classes, and, in its absence, all the organizations now engaged in making India ungovernable would have to operate under the greatest difficulties. In British India there are about 163 million Hindus and ~~60,000~~ Muhammadans, most unequally distributed and living in a state of tension, frequently "carried to the point of violent outbreak." The Commission state that communal riots "have not diminished since the [Montagu] Reforms." They have, in fact, steadily increased, as the authority of government progressively diminished. Hindu society is further split, horizontally, into 2,300 castes, and is dominated by about 15,000,000 Brahmins, who abound in the administrative services, exercising "power and influence . . . which is out of all proportion to their numbers." At the lower end of the social scale are 43,600,000 "depressed classes," suffering in varying degrees from untouchability. In British India

* There has been no census since 1921.

British India also contains 11,491,000 Buddhists, 2,367,000 Sikhs, 456,000, Jains, and 88,000 Parsees. There are also 3,028,000 Christians and 6,941,000 "others" living in aboriginal conditions.

INDIA IN PERIL

14.4 per cent. of males and 2.0 per cent. of females are accounted "literate"—a term which needs to be heavily discounted, as many pupils of primary schools relapse into illiteracy. In English, the only all-India language, there are about 2½ million literates, and this figure is also misleading.

Successive waves of conquering races have made the peoples of India an aggregate of types, exhibiting differences far more marked than those of Europe. Punjabi Muslims, Rajputs, Pathans, Bengalis, Marathas, Baluchis, or Tamils, for example, in psychology and outlook, are as poles asunder, and M. Briand's plans for a European political condominium, fantastic as they are, would seem to be purely derisory, if applied to India. British genius, after years of continuous hard work, has accomplished the miracle, and since 1858, when the Crown assumed all authority, the huge medley of warring races, religions and factions, has enjoyed equal justice under British laws, and could count securely on a *Pax Britannica*, which safeguarded their greatest interests.

Such are what the Commission call the "fundamentals of the Indian problem," and no one who has not assimilated the contents of their masterly "Survey" has any qualifications for judging the merits of the political changes they propose. It would have been well if they had devoted a section of their Report to a dispassionate summary of what British brains and British capital have conferred upon India, raising her to the forefront in the Eastern world, in civilization and progress. China, Persia, and Afghanistan give some idea of what India would have been but for the British Raj, though in none of these countries were the conflicting and disintegrating elements so numerous or so powerful.

The Commission most wisely took a broad view of their charter, and did not confine themselves to an appreciation of the effects of the Montagu Reforms, which would have robbed the Report of its permanent value. They have explained with perfect fairness and accuracy the structure and working of the whole machine of government, and they have made it possible for any conscientious reader to understand much that has been grossly misrepresented. Bureaucracy, used as a term of abuse by Indian politicians who have no idea of its

INDIA IN PERIL

meaning, is commonly hurled against our rule. The work of the Indian Civil Servant, sharply contrasting with the system at home, is mainly carried out in the district—"the unit of government"—among the Indian peoples, to whom he is guide, councillor and friend, with duties infinitely varied. Except in the Central Government, there was no bureaucracy, which, however, began to develop under the Montagu Reforms, that, incidentally, caused the retirement, by 1924, of 345 "officers of 10 to 25 years' service, whom India could ill afford to lose." All this the Commission faithfully record, and their demonstration of the astonishingly small British personnel by which India is administered should be a revelation to our parliamentarians. In what is classed as "General Administration," there are, "in round figures, 630 Europeans out of a total of 5,500," excluding the "lower classes of subordinates."* In the police, 600 European officers and 800 sergeants rule a force of 187,000. In the civil medical department, we have only 200 out of nearly 6,000 officers; in the education service, 200 out of 1,500 officers in the higher grades; in the judiciary, 230 out of 2,500. Government in India is administered by Indians, with a small British element in the superior ranks, steadily diminishing, and doomed, in some cases, to disappear in the next 20 years, so rapidly is "Indianization" proceeding.

The constructive proposals of the Commission can only be judged in connection with the inexorable truths which they have fearlessly presented with rare lucidity. They contemplate a Federal Constitution as the only system which can place the Native States in their rightful position in the polity of India,†, and they exclude Burma, wrongly brought under the Montagu Reforms,‡ which destroyed its former felicity and contentment. The constitution suggested, which is in part lightly sketched, but elsewhere drawn in firm lines, is so designed as to fit into a Federal form by gradual evolution, for which provision is made. It is most natural that, in a country so vast, with a population so huge and so diverse, the

* In the United Provinces alone about 28,500 Indians.

† With Burma excluded, the native states comprise about half the area of India.

‡ I begged in the House of Lords that this should not be done.

INDIA IN PERIL

Federal solution should be suggested ; but a Federal Constitution is always difficult to work and is quite impossible in the India of to-day.

The military question—vital to the security, internal and external, of India—is discussed at length with the gravity it deserves, since a constitution is waste paper unless the frontiers are safeguarded, and law and order are maintained. The Commission realize

the impossibility of placing British troops under the uncontrolled orders of elected Ministers for the purpose of quelling disturbances of the peace.

They have found that the use of troops for this essential service has become more frequent in late years, and that, "on these occasions, the practically universal request was for British troops," as is natural and inevitable. They, therefore, leave the British and Indian armies under the authority of the Viceroy and administered by the Commander-in-Chief, whom they wisely remove from the Central Cabinet.

It is suggested that

exceptional expenditure, rendered necessary by the organized attack of a foreign power,

should be shared by the Imperial Government, which is just to India. With statesmanlike grasp of realities, they note that

The outstanding fact is that the urgency and extent of the problem of military defence in India are without parallel elsewhere in the Empire, and constitute a difficulty in developing self-government which never arose in any comparable degree in the case of the self-governing Dominions.

The illuminating map, which is provided, shows at a glance that the fighting races of India are mainly centred in the Punjab, the independent state of Nepal, and the United Provinces.* Incidentally, this map indicates where political power would reside if British authority was withdrawn from India.

In the reconstruction of the Central Government, the Indian Assembly of 145 members, of whom 105 derive

* These three areas contribute respectively 86,000, 19,000 and 16,500 to the combatant ranks of the Army, the rest of India being negligible. In the war, the Punjab alone supplied 360,000 men, one half Muslims, one-fourth Sikhs and one-fourth Hindus, out of a total contingent of 683,149 combatants.

INDIA IN PERIL

nominally from 1,500,000 voters and actually from about 500,000, is replaced by a "Federal Assembly" of 250 to 280—too large for the expeditious transaction of business*—recruited from the Provincial Councils by proportional representation, to which the Commission attach "very great importance," rashly believing that, in Indian conditions, the representation of minority communities can thus effectively be safeguarded.

The Upper House, "Council of State," is to be formed on Federal principles from 3 members from each of the eight Governors' Provinces, with 3 seats for Minor Provinces, and two members from Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, representing Indian and British commerce equally, the Viceroy to be able to nominate not more than 20 officials. The Commission extend the normal life of the Assembly from 3 to 5 years, and that of the Council of State to 7 years—a sound reform.

In accordance with the Federal ideal, a consultative "Council of Greater India" is suggested, consisting of 10 members nominated by the Chamber of Princes, and 20 from the "Central Legislature, by the use of the transferable vote; others may be nominated by the Viceroy." This representation of non-British India is inadequate and illusory.

The Viceroy is to appoint his own Cabinet, and the statutory provision, which ensures that it should contain at least three members "who have been for at least ten years in the service of the Crown," is to be replaced by rules "subject to alteration," which might, in the future, lead to the Central Executive being composed wholly of untrained political careerists who would generally know little or nothing of India outside the Province they came from. To conserve the connection of the Central Government with the home administration, it would be far better that Cabinet Ministers should be appointed, as now, by the Crown, in consultation with the Viceroy.

The respective functions of the Central and Provincial Governments are carefully defined, and the latter receive a measure of autonomy, financial and other, which they have never enjoyed. The proposal that all the Provincial High Courts and the so-called "backward areas" should be administered from Delhi and Simla is destructive of the Federal idea. Every State in America and Australia

* The House of Commons of Canada numbers 245.

INDIA IN PERIL

and each Province in Canada has its own High Court, with full jurisdiction, except in Federal matters, and an Indian Province, with the High Court divorced from its Government, would be maimed as a political entity. There are also conditions peculiar to India which strongly militate against this proposal. In the distant future, India will, of course, require a Supreme Court. Similarly, it is undesirable that the Central Government should have direct territorial responsibilities, and the backward areas should be left under the Provincial Governments to which they are now attached, where the Governors can watch over their interests in ways impossible to a Viceroy.

With certain reservations, the proposed reconstruction of the Central Government is a step in advance. The Commission seem to realize that any weakening of authority at the head would be disastrous, and the new Federal Assembly is less likely to contain a powerful faction using its endeavours to bring authority into contempt, as happens under the Montagu Reforms.

The changes in the provincial sphere are more drastic and, in certain respects, less happily conceived than those proposed in the Central Government. The Commission have carefully explained the farcical nature of democratic elections in India, and have provided a specimen ballot paper, showing that it is necessary to represent an aspiring legislator by pictorial emblems, such as an elephant, an umbrella, or a sword. They, nevertheless, more than treble the existing electorates, adding hugely to the mass of illiterate voters, and they make special provision for married women and widows of 25, which is premature.* Although Pandit Motilal Nehru, in his amateur constitution, proposed electorates totalling 100,000,000, it is by no means certain that Indian politicians will welcome this great extension, adding largely to their election expenses. Communal electorates are retained, and the Commission have given careful thought to the representation of all classes. The resulting complication is inevitable, and far beyond the scope of this article. Until a democracy exists in India, Western democratic institutions are obviously impossible, and it becomes necessary to resort to devices. That of reserved

* The exclusion of Muslim women in *purdah* would give an unjust advantage to Hindus, and this change would add largely to the gross irregularities already present at Indian elections.

INDIA IN PERIL

seats in general electorates, which the Commission favour, may fail hopelessly. It has happened that candidates have been set up who have been committed, or even bought, to support political factions, and not the interests of the community they are supposed to safeguard. The basic principle of Fascism, which discards territorial electorates, and gives representation *in proportion to their national importance* to great corporations having common interests, is far better suited to India than diluted democracy, but would also present many difficulties.

The Provincial Legislative Councils are to be increased to "between 200 and 250" in the Major Provinces, which will tend to waste of time, and their normal life is extended from 3 to 5 years. The Commission, on grounds which are not clear, propose to abolish the "*official bloc*," which is highest (15) in Bombay and the United Provinces. This *bloc* consists of the only members experienced in administration and with wide knowledge of the Province whom a Council may possess, and were it not that business men have been found willing to undertake political duties, the absence of necessary knowledge of affairs might easily be crippling. The *bloc*, as is pointed out, has often been able to support a "Minister," whose measures were opposed by factions, and it has acted as a steadying influence. As Indian politicians are largely drawn from very few classes, there seems to be no valid guarantee that the enlarged Councils will be adequately equipped for dealing with matters vitally affecting the life of the humble cultivators, who form the vast majority of the Indian peoples.

The Governor is to select the members of his unitary executive, dyarchy being happily relegated to the limbo of fantastic ideas, and he may, in one or two cases, go outside the elected members of Council. There is to be a "Chief Minister," whose position *vis-à-vis* the Governor may become exceedingly delicate. Hitherto the executives have always contained able Civil Servants of wide experience, who, as a rule, understand the conditions of a Province far better than any urban politician. Cabinets containing one half officials, who need not be all British, as proposed by five most experienced Lieutenant-Governors in January 1919, would at least ensure adequate knowledge in the Provincial Executives. Successful government in a Native State depends mainly

INDIA IN PERIL

upon trained administrators whom the Chief appoints and sometimes borrows from British India. It is right that the Governor of a Province, on whom heavy new responsibilities are placed, should not be cramped in this respect.

The new Ministers are to take charge of all Provincial services, and the reservation of the Police, which some Indians openly, and many in secret, consider necessary, has evidently caused heart-searchings to the Commission, who decide against it. The effect would be that the administration of the First Line of the security forces might be in the hands of an unsympathetic or hostile Minister. The Governor, who is equipped with large powers to deal with an emergency, might thus find himself without efficient instruments for discharging his heavy responsibilities, and their changed prospects might cause discouragement to the police forces, which have shown admirable fortitude and loyalty in most trying circumstances.

India is the creation of the great public services, now tending to wither away. The Civil Service—Mr. Lloyd George's "steel frame"—has initiated or put in operation all the administrative reforms which have benefited the Indian peoples, and no constitution could be set up and worked in orderly fashion without its agency. British engineers have transformed huge areas, adding vastly to the production and prosperity of India as a whole, and have built up a railway system of nearly 40,000 miles. British medical officers, working amid many difficulties, have brought sanitation to bear, with great gain to public health, and have established excellent hospitals throughout India for the relief of suffering. The Agricultural and Forest Services stand close to the life of the masses, and on the Educational Service, which came mainly under Indian control too soon and with some deplorable results, depends the maintenance of Western standards of culture. The happiness and contentment of the Indian peoples rest far more upon the continued efficiency and incorruptibility of these seven great Services than upon any political changes, and, for some years to come, they must, in part, be recruited from this country. The Commission, which often and very attractively does its thinking aloud, decides that the Civil Service and the Police, as the primary "security

INDIA IN PERIL

services," should continue to be All-India Services, recruited partly from home, and they recognize that irrigation and forests stand in the same category, though, quite naturally, they are not fully aware of the possibilities of corruption and oppression provided by the Montagu Reforms,* and capable of being checked by British supervision alone.

Absorbed in constructing a complex political machine, the Commission perhaps forgot that the only real test of the intrinsic merits of a Constitution is whether it succeeds in bringing into responsible posts persons capable of undertaking the difficult task of government in varied forms. The steady and remarkable progress of India from 1858 to 1918, which the Commissioners might well have studied in comparison with that of some European States, is due entirely to the fact that every administrative office was held by a trained and experienced Briton or Indian, selected in India or at home on the grounds of special fitness for special duties. Selections are not always satisfactory, and the qualities of individuals are unequal; but there can be no doubt that this flagrant violation of democratic principles, which raise to high office persons who may possess no claims based on knowledge and experience, was immensely beneficial to the Indian peoples. The whole standard of administration, as well as its purity, markedly declined as the necessary result of the Montagu Reforms. The adoption of some of the proposals of the Statutory Commission would entail further decline, with unhappy reactions upon the life of India. Hindus and Muslims alike have produced great administrators in the past and can do so again; but trained and well-qualified Indians will emerge from democratic elections only by accident.

I have been able only to glance at some of the outstanding features of the great constitutional edifice, on which the Commission have expended infinite care and thought. Broadly speaking, the defects, which will occur to anyone who has made a study of the life of India, and who thinks first, last and always of the welfare of the excitable, credulous millions, knowing nothing of politics and constitutions, who have hitherto looked to British rule, and not in vain, for protection from traditional

* In one Province, a subordinate of the Forest Service, dismissed for corruption, subsequently became a Minister in charge of Forests!

INDIA IN PERIL

oppression, for justice and order, and for sympathy, fall into three categories.

1. The Commission emphasize the responsibility of Parliament, which was reaffirmed in the Government of India Act, and cannot be discarded without national dishonour. But responsibility without power to exercise it is a dangerous delusion, and in several respects this necessary power is distinctly curtailed, and at a time when the dominant political faction has demonstrated before the world its reckless irresponsibility and unfitness to be trusted with the destinies of India.

2. For reasons which I have partly explained, the rights of minorities generally, and especially of the Princes and Chiefs, governing half India, if Burma is excluded, and of the large Muslim population, which cherishes traditions of conquest and dominion, are insufficiently safeguarded, while the depressed classes, nearly as numerous, which have benefited largely from our rule, will be progressively deprived of the protection they will need for many years to come. The Commission refer to the "personal touch,"* which means so much to these age-long unfortunates, whose hopes centre upon the Raj; but the measures they propose will tend, in no long period, to replace these personal influences by race and caste prejudices, and the political protection provided is largely illusory. Conversely, urban-minded Commissioners, coming from a country politically dominated by the towns, with disastrous results to the greatest primary industry, to India where 80 per cent. of the population depends on the land, have made no adequate provision to safeguard the interests of the overwhelming majority of agriculturalists from neglect or evil exploitation by the mainly urban Indian politicians.

3. If India is to continue to advance on Western lines, as is contemplated, at least by some of the politicians now "endeavouring to promote revolution through the overthrow of the Government,"† it is essential in the interests of the Indian peoples to supply a British element to leaven the seven great public services, to which I have referred. The Commission, though with some mis-

* "The great mass of the people desire personal rule, and we believe that, for many years to come, there can be no adequate substitute for it." Report.

† Statement by the Government of India.

INDIA IN PERIL

givings, make this provision only for the Civil Service and the Police.

The Act under which the Commission was appointed empowered them to "extend, modify, or restrict the degree of responsible Government" which could safely be granted to India, and Mr. Montagu's Proclamation in 1917 laid down that, in judging whether further advances would be justified, His Majesty's Government "must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred." They have, nevertheless, felt constrained—"we can do no other"—to advise a very large increase of electorates, which their admirable First Volume shows to be futile in existing conditions. I think that this apparent anomaly may be due to the difficulty of obtaining fearless evidence of the results of Mr. Montagu's Reforms. When the Commissioners landed at Bombay, they could not be aware of the far-reaching intimidation from which India suffers, and by arranging that a Central Committee of eight Indian politicians should sit with them "on equal terms" and cross-examine witnesses, it was made inevitable that only a few stalwarts would speak the truth that was in them.

At the same time, it was almost impossible for the Provincial Governments to tell all that they knew, which might cause them to be violently attacked in their Legislative Councils. Of the working of these pseudo-democratic bodies, the Bombay Government reported: "On the whole, it [the Council] has not been unreasonable," which, reading between the lines, was not reassuring. The Bengal Government bluntly reported that "Recognition of responsibility to electors is absent," which plainly indicated that the first principle claimed for democracy had broken down. Only the Government of Bihar and Orissa sounded a clear note of alarm, pointing out that the whole machinery of government for the protection of the rayats has markedly deteriorated, and that the Congress Party has established a "dangerous hold on the primary schools," turning them into centres of propaganda, while in many districts, "the District Board Staff and the village schoolmasters" have been converted into an "electoral organization," with great success to the Swarajists in the 1926 election. The police were reduced by "nearly 800 officers and

INDIA IN PERIL

men"; "the District Boards and Municipalities" are "travelling down the easy descent to chaos and bankruptcy," and the sufferers throw the blame on British Rule, no longer permitted to prevent gross abuses. Most of the Provincial Governments could have been as revealing as that of Bihar and Orissa; but they felt the perfectly natural restraint, which also afflicted most of the oral evidence.

The Commission, in their "Conclusion" to Vol. II, state that they have made no allusion to recent events, which have become far more grave since their "principal recommendations were arrived at," and that they

have not altered a line of our report on that account, for it is necessary to look beyond particular incidents and to take a longer view.

The present distracted and menacing state of India, where lawlessness is widespread and the insidious operations of Bolshevism, to which the Commission do not refer, are plainly visible, can hardly be described as "particular incidents." They stand in the forefront of what the Commission describe as

stubborn facts, which no amount of rhetoric or appeal to first principles can alter.

The "facts" (lawlessness in many forms), they add, "must be faced," and it is therefore a pity that they did not present the public with an independent study of the reactions of the Montagu Constitution—ushered in by "open rebellion"* upon the peace of India—and especially of the ominous growth of corruption, not confined to subordinate officials, and threatening to eat like a cancer into Indian politics and municipal institutions.

There are spots on the sun, and, while I have tried frankly to point out what I must regard as defects or oversights, I regard the Report as a masterpiece of constructive ability—the sound frame-work of an edifice which, with some changes, can be made to serve the onward progress of India, now arrested. Parliament—the jury—has been furnished with masses of scrupulously accurate evidence, which no "rhetoric" can disturb. The main data of the Indian problem have been stated as never before, and the jury, if not mis-directed, can see clearly that what is called "Dominion Status"—a term the Commission deliberately exclude—

* The phrase of the Government of India in 1919.

INDIA IN PERIL

would in present conditions be disastrous to the interests of the Indian peoples.

The address of the Viceroy to the Indian Assembly, on July 9 last, was unfortunately calculated to deepen the misconceptions produced by his ill-advised pronouncement last November. Whatever may have been the objects of this momentous political manifesto, the meaning in the minds of all who are now working to destroy British authority and of the so-called Moderates, who see in the Congress Party the inheritors of all power in India and trim their sails accordingly, has already been made evident. The Commission's Report is to be treated as waste paper. The Government of India is prepared on its own account to go further than Sir John Simon and his colleagues. The Round Table Conference is to supersede all the spade-work laboriously accomplished. An amnesty to all political prisoners is a near possibility, and when this and the concentration of the Conference upon Dominion Status have been conceded, the Congress Party will be willing to be represented in London. Such are some of the illusions gratuitously promoted at a critical moment. Lord Irwin may have wished to placate the implacable and to make amends for "repressive" measures adopted too late; but he has, no doubt unconsciously, added fuel to flames already burning with disastrous effects upon the progress of India.

As the situation now stands, race-hatred is being preached over a large part of India by the propagation of wild falsehoods, such as those employed to inflame the Muslims on the frontier. Murder, violence and insults to Europeans, as well as communal conflicts, are rampant, being encouraged by the belief that British Rule is already dead. Strenuous efforts to corrupt the army have for some time been in progress. Bomb attempts are becoming more frequent. Bolshevist activities second the open hostility of the Congress Party, which formally declared war at Lahore in December last, having previously delivered an ultimatum to the Government. Large numbers of sober-minded Indians are being led to believe that the sceptre has passed from our palsied hands, and that they must turn towards the rising sun of Swaraj. Even the Princes and Chiefs are assailed with doubts for the future of the Raj. Saddest of all is the fact that we have few friends able to declare themselves. A

INDIA IN PERIL

long course of graceful concessions and of preferential treatment to our enemies has alienated all who have come to believe that they cannot count upon our support. Dangerous forces are thus being generated in India that no fresh instalment of democratic government can lay to rest. The Indian demagogue is raising a storm which he will be powerless to quell. That way lies the peril which dogs all revolutionary movements.

The scheme of the Simon Commission holds the field, and nothing comparable in authority and technical completeness can be evolved. With amendments, directed to safeguard public order and administrative purity—the greatest interests of the Indian peoples—it would be a distinct improvement on the eminently unsatisfactory present regime. The Government of India will, of course, pass judgment upon it; but any further concessions put forward with the futile hope of propitiating avowed enemies should be firmly resisted. The idea that a better and an agreed constitution can be hammered out at a Conference in October, which cannot be really representative and ought to be abandoned at least until order has been restored, is visionary.

The fate of India will be decided at Westminster; but it depends ultimately upon whether the British people still retain the qualities of a governing race. If India passes out of the control of the only power which can maintain her progress and lead her towards nationhood, she will lapse into chaos deeper and darker than that which followed the fall of the Moghul Empire, and the reactions upon our Empire and the Far East would be catastrophic, while the crash of the *Pax Britannica* would have wide repercussions in foreign countries. In recent years we have plainly shown fear, which among Oriental peoples is always dangerous, and, as our government weakened, our Indian friends dropped away, and disorder and death tended to become chronic. The real issue to-day is not what the letter of the constitution should be, but whether we are prepared again to govern. If not, the efforts of our enemies to make our position impossible will succeed. That is the alternative.

—August 1930