

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDER LORD CHELMSFORD, 1916-1921,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE POLICIES ADOPTED TOWARDS
CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND POLITICAL AGITATION IN BRITISH INDIA

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the established view of Chelmsford's administration in the light of documentary evidence only recently available. It questions such assumptions as that policy originated in London, that the Government of India were hostile to change, and that Chelmsford was without influence. It is arranged as an analysis of policy, describing Chelmsford's method and its application to politics and reform.

The conclusion is that underlying policy there was a coherent idea, formulated in India from the Government's enunciation of the goal of Indian self-government within the Empire. The Government, it is found, had decided they must begin to resolve the contradictions between bureaucracy and Indian advancement, and give positive expression to their acceptance of the goal.

Thus, it is shown, the Government worked with collective responsibility in consultation with local governments, legislators and public - as befitted their changing role. They attacked racial discrimination, internal and international, as inappropriate to the Indians' future status. In spite of the dangers of popular activism, they evolved a tactic of non-interference with national politicians, partly because of an admission that Indian aspirations, if not methods, were basically legitimate. They repressed political 'crime' and disorders, but saw them as exceptional and as counterproductive to Indian progress; and, though the repressive habit persisted in the 'Rowlatt' Act, the 1919 atrocities were a local aberration repudiated by Chelmsford. Finally, the Government presided over constitutional reforms in which they tried for the first time to prepare for a future transfer of power.

The thesis recognises different influences on policy, limitations to Chelmsford's vision, the obscurity of his personal contribution, and the exceptional unpopularity of his rule. Failures are not disputed, but positive achievements are also presented for scrutiny. It is suggested that they encompassed a fundamental commitment to the future.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ACP</u>	Austen Chamberlain Papers (with ref. no.) ¹
AD	Army Department
C	Confidential
CC/	Chief Commissioner of
CD	Commerce Department
C&ID	Commerce and Industry Department
CID	Central Intelligence Department
<u>CF</u>	Chelmsford Papers (with vol. no.) ¹
ED	Education Department
FD	Finance Department
F&PD	Foreign and Political Department
G/	Governor(s), Government(s) of (I = India)
HD	Home Department
<u>H.Police</u>	HD (Police) Proceedings No. (with date) ¹
<u>H.Poll.</u>	HD (Political) Proceedings No. (with date) ¹
<u>H.Public</u>	HD (Public) Proceedings No. (with date) ¹
ILA	Imperial Legislative Assembly
ILC	Imperial Legislative Council
<u>IOR</u>	India Office Records (with ref. no.) ¹
LD	Legislative Department
LG/	Lieutenant-Governor of
<u>MP</u>	Montagu Papers (with vol. no.) ¹
PS (PSV)	Private Secretary (Viceroy)
RD	Reforms Department
RO	Reforms Office
<u>Speeches</u>	Speeches of Lord Chelmsford (with vol. no.) ¹
S/S	Secretary of State for India
V	Viceroy

¹See Bibliography for details.

A CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS

- 1916 5 April, Lord Chelmsford Viceroy
April, Tilak's Home Rule League formed
September, Besant's Home Rule League inaugurated
24 November, Government of India reforms despatch
December, Congress-League reforms scheme agreed at Lucknow
- 1917 March, differential cotton duties
- , unilateral ban on indentured emigration
April, Gandhi in Champaran
- , Indian members in Imperial War Conference and Cabinet
May, Chelmsford endorses demand for policy declaration
15 June, Besant and associates interned
20 July, Edwin Montagu Secretary of State
2 August, Cabinet accepts King's Commissions for Indians
8 August, Chelmsford declares policy declaration 'imperative'
20 August, Montagu Declaration promises responsible government
September, Hindu-Muslim riots in Shahabad, Bihar
17 September, Besant released
19 September, O'Dwyer forced to apologise to Imperial legislature
19 October, India Office reforms despatch
10 November, Montagu arrives in India
10 December, Rowlatt's Sedition Committee appointed
- 1918 January, heads of government's conference
27 March, Home Rule deputation refused passports
April, Rowlatt Committee reports
- , Montagu leaves with Montagu-Chelmsford report
- , Delhi War Conference
16 April, Home Department restricts use of Defence of India Act
June, Central Publicity Board formed
8 July, Montagu-Chelmsford Report published
- 1919 Llewellyn Smith's Secretariat Committee formed and reports
January, five governors agree on their own reforms scheme
6 February, Rowlatt bills introduced
30 March, riot in Delhi
6 April, Gandhi calls hartal in Rowlatt protest
8 April, Chelmsford orders firm but sympathetic policy
9 April, Kitchlew and Satyapal deported from Amritsar
10 April, firing in Lahore
13 April, Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar massacre by Dyer
15 April, martial law orders in the Panjab
18 April, Gandhi suspends civil disobedience
5 May, war with Afghanistan
14 May, Cabinet approves introduction of reforms bill
September, Indian Arms Amendment, and Indemnity, Acts
October, Hunter's Disorders Inquiry Committee appointed
15 October, all restrictions on Gandhi lifted
23 December, Government of India Act receives royal assent
- 1920 March, Gandhi calls hartal in Khilafat protest
May, harsh peace terms offered to Turkey
26 May, Hunter Committee Report published
28 May, Central Khilafat Committee adopts non-cooperation
July, Hijrat movement
19 October, Gandhi's arrest considered after Lucknow speech
November, government proclamation on non-interference

1921 January, Nagpur Congress
 - , reforms scheme operative
 - , disturbances in Rai Bareli
 March, Home Department urges local prosecutions of
 agitators
 2 April, Lord Reading Viceroy

PART ONE CONSULTATION

Chapter 1. The System

Lord Chelmsford arrived in India when the world was at war; he left as the subcontinent faced internal disruption. In India the war and its aftermath had brought a few people wealth, confidence and ambition; to many more it had brought hardship and disease. India had lost much and been promised much. Chelmsford had to remedy the deprivation and redeem the promises. He sought change, and was overtaken by it. He had to govern in the years when the war seemed long, and in those, after the war, when the rewards seemed small.

His viceroyalty saw the worst disturbances since the Mutiny, and perhaps the most important new direction in the history of the British Indian constitution. His name was associated with repression of a brutality unprecedented in British times, and with a report which rivals that of Durham in its contribution to Commonwealth evolution. Under Chelmsford the British recognised that India's future belonged to the Indians, and ensured that its present remained firmly in British hands. Probably no earlier period had seen such rapid shifts in the British position, but perhaps never before was that position so rigorously challenged. Chelmsford's five years coincided almost exactly with the period in which national leadership was assumed by Mahatma Gandhi. In Chelmsford's time the Indian National Congress and the nationalist movement as a whole changed almost beyond recognition. They emerged with new weapons - not only Gandhi's satyagraha, but the Home Rule Leagues' powers of popular appeal and permanent concerted opposition; not only a new discipline within the Congress, but an unparalleled cooperation with the Muslim League; not only powerful slogans and ideals, but a fusion of religion and politics and a common cause in demanding swaraj. Change, readjustment, instability, progress were the hall-marks of this viceroyalty. Under Chelmsford the course of British history in India was altered.

On all sides we are told that the alteration had nothing to do with Lord Chelmsford. Leading Indian and British scholars have been unanimous on this point. R.C. Majumdar has told us that 'Chelmsford cannot be regarded as an able administrator or a successful Viceroy in any sense. He lacked personality and independence of judgment and was more or less a tool in the hands of the bureaucracy'. Percival Spear has claimed that Chelmsford 'was more nearly an agent, and less of a policy-maker than any other Viceroy in the last period of British Rule'. Chelmsford's colleagues

have been almost alone in having any doubts. Edwin Montagu, often grudging in his assessment, told Chelmsford he would be 'one of India's foremost Viceroy's'. In 1921 the official Moral and Material Progress Report enumerated the achievements of the viceroyalty, and stated that, by the end of Chelmsford's term,

India's future within the Empire no longer remained undefined; she could look forward to Responsible Government as an entity of Dominion status. She was actually operating a progressive scheme leading directly to Self-Government, a scheme holding out before her infinite possibilities of advancement. In token of her changed position, many of those anomalies which aroused such bitter feeling had been removed. The racial stigma was gone from the Arms Act. Indian soldiers were holding King's Commissions. Indian youths were being trained for Sandhurst In industrial and educational spheres, steady and substantial progress had been achieved, while local self-government had made notable advances. In brief, as a result of the labours of Lord Chelmsford and his Government ..., the face of India was changed in half a decade.

The Report had summed up Chelmsford's contribution thus: 'To few Governors-General has it been given to accomplish so much towards the enduring welfare of their great charge; to fewer yet has the need of praise and appreciation been so scantily rendered'.¹

The latter remains true; the contemporary vilification has run deep. And it continues on the original basis - a discounting of Chelmsford's role as a reformer, accompanied by a sense of abhorrence at the repression in the Panjab during the disturbances of 1919. Thus Sachchidananda Bhattacharya, in his Dictionary of Indian History, may not be accurate in all details, but certainly the entry on Chelmsford sums up the orthodox view and demonstrates its basis. First there is the usual disclaimer: 'Lord Chelmsford had little initiative of his own and he had little influence on the framing of the Indo-British policy which led to the famous announcement made on August 20, 1917 Lord Chelmsford also had little to do with the framing of the Government of India Act, 1919 ...'. After this the entry concentrates on the repression in the Panjab: 'Lord Chelmsford who was aware of all these enormities did little to stop the barbarities failed to repress effectively and immediately

¹ R.C., with A.K., Majumdar, edd., The History and Culture of the Indian People Vol.XV, Struggle For Freedom, Bombay 1969, 8; Percival Spear, The Oxford History of Modern India 1740-1947, Oxford 1965, 323; Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 Jan. 1918, CP4; Moral and Material Progress Report, 1921, 54-56. See also The Dictionary of National Biography under Thesiger (Chelmsford). For another favourable view, see the Maharaja of Mysore (speech of 2 Dec. 1919) in Speeches II, 346; also below, note 44 & pp.256-258, 282 & 310.

the official criminals, ... and thus alienated Indo-British feelings more deeply than any other viceroy since the Sepoy Mutiny'. Such concentration on negative elements has meant that the verdicts have been partly emotional. In the Dictionary this is emphasised by something rather puzzling: Chelmsford is criticised first for having done nothing, playing a 'passive part in the dynamic politics of India', and then for having created a desperate crisis, handling the political situation 'very clumsily'.² The indignation at Chelmsford is still partly a product of Indian grief and British shame.

Chelmsford governed in a period of great and fundamental change; the consensus is that he played no part. Chelmsford had to meet a major challenge and severe problems; the consensus is that he handled them badly. It is now time to examine the record. We will concentrate on the twin spheres of politics and reform - on precisely those spheres, of nationalist agitation and the constitution, on which the traditional interpretation has been based. But first we shall look at the system within which Chelmsford had to work, and at some of the methods he employed.

The system of government in India bore all the traces of a mixed evolution. At the top the viceroy ruled, at least in name. On one hand he was the sole representative in India of the King-Emperor. On the other hand he was a British government nominee, responsible to the Secretary of State for India, who was in turn responsible to the Cabinet and to Parliament. The Secretary of State was also advised by the Council of India, a body of retired dignatories with a few suitably anglicised Indians, and assisted by the India Office, a branch of the British civil service having no formal link with its Indian counterparts. The Viceroy was advised in some, though not all matters, by his Executive Council, comprising the Commander-in-Chief, who also enjoyed certain independent rights, and a group of officials who were each thought of as representing one of the great departments of the central government, departments which nevertheless through their Secretaries maintained their own independent relationship with the Viceroy, departments which, moreover, were each more or less a

² Sachchidananda Bhattacharya, Dictionary of Indian History, Calcutta 1967, 221-222.

compendium of diverse interests and responsibilities. Below this central structure came a confusion of subordinate authorities. The most important were the Presidency Governors of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, who with their own Councils exercised sway over semi-independent empires, theoretically subject to the Viceroy, but usually appointed from outside the Indian services and guarding a right of independent communication with the Secretary of State. These Governors communicated with the Viceroy, as it were, as government to government; nevertheless the Government of India was able to exercise control, mainly by a right of financial scrutiny and veto.

Beside the Governors stood the Lieutenant-Governors, promoted from the Indian Civil Service, and sharing in some cases the independence of the Presidency Governors, in others subject to the closer control exercised over the next and lesser breed, the Chief Commissioners. These were in charge of areas of greatly differing importance but were all responsible directly to the Government of India. In a not dissimilar situation (except where they dealt with local governments) came the multitude of Indian princes and chiefs, varying enormously in power, independence and influence, subject to a great profusion of treaty rights and obligations. Thereafter, in the British system, followed hierarchies of minor officials - divisional commissioners, revenue collectors, district officers, judges, magistrates, police, medical officers, inspectors of education - each organised slightly differently (often with further variations between provinces) and subject to the appropriate department of the local government. The Government of India or the Viceroy also exercised some quite separate powers of supervision at this level - over Calcutta University (a legacy from Calcutta's days as the capital), over the Anglican church, over the railways, in some respects over the judiciary and the revenue collection. In most departments, therefore, the Indian services were divided into two sections, imperial and provincial, and of all of these the Indian Civil Service was the greatest, or at least the most exclusive. The system was a distended bureaucracy; its methods autocratic.

But the British had also tried to make this machine the vehicle for liberal gestures towards Indians. At one level this had meant attempts to include Indians in the bureaucracy through the progressive indianisation of the services. To some extent, in so far as limited practical power and opportunities for initiative rested on district officers and depended upon their diverse enthusiasms, this did mean real opportunities for Indians to take over some of the

affairs of their country. But it was never suggested that it was necessary to change the system and not merely to include Indians in it. Yet the system was not only paternalistic in its role and traditions, it was paternalistic in its structure - devised for alien administrators who were intended to rule (not to advise), combining executive and judicial powers, separate, authoritarian. Thus too there was talk of giving Indians commissions in the Indian army; but there was no suggestion that the army might also have to modify its role as the ultimate weapon of an occupying power or its structure as a great imperial force, unified with other imperial forces, designed (or was it inflated?) as an expensive instrument for imperial policies decided in London.

On other levels, it is true, there were attempts which looked like the beginnings of modifications in the system. There had been high sentiments and rather less noble efforts expended on experiments in local self-government, involving Indians to various degrees, though seldom in very much responsibility. The local governments were all great advocates of the devolution of responsibility, but they usually had in mind their own standing vis à vis the Government of India (who in turn looked for concessions from the Secretary of State); there was less practical enthusiasm for devolution of responsibility to local and district boards. More important, legislative councils had been tacked on to some governments and were planned for more. But they did not really fit into the system, and were often regarded as a wilful irrelevancy which twice a year interrupted official business. They had been improved in size by a series of reforms; the latest of these had even made possible non-official majorities. But the numbers were tiny; the minority of members who were elected were chosen by cumbersome machinery of indirect election, involving a few hundreds out of the millions; and the councils had not advanced from their original purely advisory role. Of course a few Indians had also been included in what were in name the highest posts of government, memberships of the Executive Councils. Both these intrusions and the handfuls of Indians in the legislatures were in fact to be of enormous importance in changing British attitudes, advancing them further than the stage which these concessions themselves represented. Not always - perhaps seldom - will real influence strictly follow the lines of formal responsibility. But nonetheless the liberal aspects of the Indian constitution in 1916 looked like, and in some senses were, a show-case and a sham.

Progress had been piece-meal. But the heyday of incoherent and often inconsistent experiments was almost over. What was needed was a wholesale re-evaluation of the entire system. It had to be re-designed to fit the liberal purpose which some of the British had long professed to be the object of their rule. The new direction had to come from the top; and it was too great a task for one man or one viceroyalty. But prewar promises and wartime pressures were bringing matters to a crucial stage. The process of rationalisation, as yet uncomprehended, was already underway. It was inherent (though vehemently denied) in Morley and Minto's reforms; they had created legislatures which, though strictly advisory in conception, had become such self-conscious vehicles for Indian opinion and guardians of Indian hopes - all this perhaps in the person of G.K. Gokhale alone - that already it was natural that one day they would be replaced by responsible parliaments. The same process could be discerned in ideas put forward by Chelmsford's predecessor, Lord Hardinge, for future remedial measures - even though they were conceived as appeasements for Indian opinion and not as a coherent plan to reform Indian government. Chelmsford was presented with the increasingly urgent need to reconcile the two halves of the system, the apparently immovable bureaucracy and the yet unformed democratic alternative.

We shall be considering this dichotomy further, in the specific context of attitudes to political agitation. Before leaving the topic for the moment, however, it is worth remarking that the same division may be discerned at the personal level as at the institutional. Thus the local governors in Chelmsford's time reflect the contradictions we have observed in the system itself. Sir James Meston in the United Provinces and Sir George Lloyd in Bombay embodied one impulse, the 'liberal'; Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Lord Pentland, in the Panjab and Madras, embodied the other, the 'conservative'. The remainder fell somewhere in between. But we should not assess the division too simply. O'Dwyer and Pentland were vilified by politicians, but in some ways their positions were unexceptionable - Pentland for example had opposed further press restrictions in 1914 (on the grounds that it would be 'a first-class political blunder' to ascribe to sedition something 'due to ignorance') - and their administrative abilities, especially in the case of O'Dwyer, and their dedication to India, in their own terms, cannot be doubted. It was their perspective that was narrow. They were suspicious of change and appreciative of the workings of the autocratic system. They had little sympathy with those elements in which Indians had begun to count. These men were

paternalists, not only in their manner and their instincts, but in the exclusion from their ideas of government of any commitment to Indian involvement. When asked why Indians did not participate, they replied it was because Indians had no experience. When asked why they had no experience, they replied it was because they did not participate. When asked why this state of affairs was allowed to continue, they referred to the virtues of British rule.

Thus this attitude was expressed chiefly during the discussions on constitutional reforms. O'Dwyer argued that an elected majority in the legislature was out of the question, and begged that at least the Panjab should be saved from this fate; Pentland opposed any discussions of reforms during the war, objected strongly to the terms of the Declaration of 20 August 1917, dissented from his own Council in refusing any transfer of responsibility, and obstructed the work of the committees set up under Lord Southborough to fill in the details in the proposals of Montagu and Chelmsford. But this attitude was not confined to the reforms; it affected all aspects of policy - determined priorities and the assessment of what was reasonable. And thus both O'Dwyer and Pentland were suspicious, even outraged, when the politicians made (as they thought) impossible demands, and both believed such irresponsible nonsense should be put down with a firm hand; both concentrated their attention and bestowed their good will on those Indians who supported the status quo or those who were inarticulate but acquiescent, and both were dedicated to measures which would benefit such people. And it should not be forgotten that in 1916 these categories undoubtedly comprised the majority of the population, and that there was some credibility in the paternalist demand that the British must continue to rule as the sole impartial element amongst the divisions of Indian society. Indeed, 'liberalism' was no guarantee of popularity among Indians. O'Dwyer was made the subject of effusive and affectionate eulogies during the course of his governorship - until the 1919 disturbances he was thought of as a popular administrator, and there were public meetings in his support even after the tragedy.³

³ Most of this introductory material is discussed in detail later, and full references are not given at this stage. For Pentland's attitude to the press, however, see Lady Pentland, The Right Honourable John Sinclair, Lord Pentland, G.C.S.I., A Memoir, London 1928, 242-245; & for O'Dwyer's attitudes, see Sir Michael O'Dwyer, India as I Knew It 1885-1925, passim.

There can be no clear division, then, according to the degree of commitment to particular policies. Sir James Meston favoured a conciliatory approach to agitators and was one of the most important positive influences on the Government of India, but he too could adopt a conservative stance, as in his early exposition of the impossibility of divided responsibility at the provincial level, or his reluctance to see the transfer of higher education to Indian control. Again, Lord Ronaldshay in Bengal espoused a sympathetic understanding of Bengali terrorists, but was perhaps the prime mover in the decision to take executive powers to repress them. George Lloyd, though sceptical of 'dyarchy', supported the reforms as a pressing need, yet was luke-warm in his advocacy of the complementary policy of non-interference with national leaders. Lord Willingdon, in Bombay and then in Madras, by and large supported rapid constitutional change, but he did not envisage any diminution of his own influence: his 'liberalism' was the product of a confidence in his ability to lead Indians, not of a readiness to step aside. He professed to intend participation, but his means were paternalistic: the latter was a contradiction of the former. Not surprisingly, he too favoured a strong line with those politicians who demanded more than he offered. Thus attitudes varied: what remained the same was the philosophy behind them. It is at this point that the line between governors can safely be drawn. Administrators in India came to different conclusions on specific issues, but each had a concept of British rule and a view of its purpose. The division was between those whose aims (however expressed) were primarily paternalistic, and those whose aims were primarily educative. Thus the men mirrored the contradictions of the system.

But at the personal level also the contradictions were being resolved. It is instructive to look briefly at the appointments made under Chelmsford. Ronaldshay replaced the more rigid Lord Carmichael in Bengal. Sir Edward Maclagan, a man of more flexible mind, followed O'Dwyer in the Panjab. Willingdon replaced Pentland in Madras, and in Bombay was himself replaced by Lloyd. Meston, singled out by Chelmsford for confidence and advancement, joined the Government of India with a special responsibility for reforms. Sir Reginald Craddock, a 'conservative', was replaced as Home Member by Sir William Vincent, who was considered 'persona grata' with Indians; O'Dwyer had been considered, but on his own admission was disqualified by his lack of rapport with Indian politicians. Finally, Lord Sinha, the first Indian governor, replaced Sir Edward Gait in Bihar and Orissa. The trend is plain. Increasingly the first criterion for judging

administrators was not their administrative ability (the qualities of the old paternalism) but their attitude to Indians and to constitutional reforms. Thus the school of Pentland and O'Dwyer was gradually discredited; and central in this process had been their failure to adapt to the reforms and to accept the policy of non-interference with politicians - the explosion of 1919 delivered the coup de grâce. The newer men - Lloyd and Ronaldshay, in the tradition of Meston - gained in influence, accepted by Government of India and Secretary of State as the most articulate, subtle, able and reliable of their subordinates. Willingdon on the other hand, though respected, was thought rather heavy-handed and old-style in method. His credibility and influence declined accordingly - thus he was ruled out of consideration as Chelmsford's successor, an advancement he had rather expected.⁴

It would be going too far to suggest that this trend in appointments was smooth or even deliberate. After all Willingdon did eventually become Viceroy. Moreover it remains ambiguous what even the most 'liberal' of these appointments, even Sinha's, represented in the eyes of the government and, equally, of the Indian politicians. Nonetheless it is true that the trend existed. Indeed it was an inevitable concomitant of Indian participation that the British would appoint officials with whom participation would be possible, and it was unavoidable that a reforming administration would advance those who agreed on first principles and would support its changes. And of course Indian participation increased in this period: officials had to be appointed who would not only work with Indians, but also accept them as colleagues and equals, be prepared to be outvoted by them, even take orders from them. Thus the future had begun to assert itself.

Chelmsford's appointment was also significant. He was selected by Asquith as a liberal conservative with a respectable proconsular record. He was chosen from among men of his own type, and in replacement of Hardinge who had been ruled out for a second term because Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State, believed he was becoming impatient of control and feared that an extension of his term would lead to 'very unfortunate friction'. Thus to some extent Chelmsford was thought of as a man who would be easy to work with, and who would not create difficulties during the war. But he was also to be the Viceroy after the war, and thus, in so far as it was

⁴ See Willingdon to Montagu, 7 Feb. 1921, MP21, & Lloyd to Montagu, 24 July 1919, & also 1 & 26 Dec. 1918 & 25 Jan. & 17 Aug. & 2 Oct. 1919. MP24. The appointment of Vincent as Home Member is discussed below, at p.78; but see also O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 27 Aug. 1916, CP17.

recognised that changes would then be needed, his appointment was deliberately as a safe man who could be trusted to be flexible and open to ideas but not to countenance anything drastic or revolutionary.⁵ And if Chelmsford was to put his name to proposals far beyond what a liberal conservative would have allowed himself in 1916, it was not that Asquith and Chamberlain had been wrong in their assessment. Perhaps they had not altogether understood their man, whom neither of them knew personally; it is true, for example, that in his method and also his acceptance of the goal of Indian self-government Chelmsford was strongly influenced by his experience as a constitutional governor in Australia, especially in New South Wales where he had helped shepherd the first Labour government through its early years - and this experience no doubt had something to do with his acceptance of office as First Lord of the Admiralty in the first Labour government in Britain - but nonetheless Chelmsford's policies as Viceroy in no

⁵ Curzon had pointed out that the appointment was very important and that the new viceroy would have to introduce the postwar policies; see Curzon to Chamberlain, 9 June 1915, ACP14/1/4. Asquith and Chamberlain considered candidates with either proconsular or parliamentary qualifications; almost all were peers and had had impeccably conservative backgrounds, schooling and careers. The criteria for choosing among these seem to have been (1) sufficient authority and range of mind - Asquith rejected Lord Islington by this standard; (2) intelligence - Asquith ruled out the Duke of Devonshire for being 'slow-gaited' in this; (3) sufficient youth - Chamberlain thought Sir Thomas Buxton too old (rightly, for he died the next month); (4) cooperativeness - thus Chamberlain and Crewe vetoed a renewal for Hardinge; (5) experience - Asquith opposed Chamberlain's first choice, Lord Crawford, on these grounds, and, presumably for this reason, seems to have favoured proconsuls over parliamentarians (he approved of Chelmsford's 'excellent' record in Australia). The appointee had to be politically acceptable too - Asquith ruled out Montagu (who wanted the post) because he was a Jew. Only in Chelmsford did Chamberlain's and Asquith's choices coincide; for the Prime Minister he was first choice with Viscount D'Abernon, and for the Secretary he was a 'better man' in the same type as Sir Arthur Lawley, that is among the proconsuls. We may be able to guess at other factors. Asquith did not appoint (1) D'Abernon, whose talents were chiefly financial - perhaps he decided to seek in Chelmsford a man whose experience was more of governing (to lead, rather than conduct, administration); (2) Lord Salisbury, Chamberlain's second choice, who was to lead conservative opposition to Indian self-government in 1934 and 1935 - perhaps Chelmsford at 47, with his Australian record, seemed more open-minded; and (3) Lord Donoughmore, third on Chamberlain's list, who was more genial than vigorous - perhaps in Chelmsford Asquith looked for something more enterprising. Thus safety plus ability was the formula, but it may be that more constructive impulses also were expressed. See Chamberlain to Prime Minister, 24 Sept. & 30 Nov., & Asquith to Chamberlain, 25 Dec. 1915, ACP15/1/5 & 7-8; & also S/S to V, 17 Dec. 1915 & 13 Jan. 1916, ACP45/2/8-9, & Hardinge of Penhurst, My Indian Years 1910-1916, London 1946, 122. For short notes on those mentioned above, see Appendix.

way represented concealed radicalism coming out of hiding; the strongest force moving him was always the force of events, and logic, of changing situations, increasing needs, burgeoning demands. Thus Chelmsford leant towards that side of Indian Government which we may call the side of the future, but was not necessarily committed to it in all its forms: his was the liberalism of the pragmatic not the doctrinaire.

Edwin Montagu's appointment as Secretary of State, made by Lloyd George, was a quite different matter. He was known for his energy and enthusiasm - some would have called him unreliable and unstable. Lord Islington, the Under-secretary of State, a man in Chelmsford's mould, refused to work with the new Secretary (until persuaded by the Prime Minister and the urgent need to continue Chamberlain's policies). On 12 July 1917, in the House of Commons, Montagu had denounced the Government of India, calling it 'too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too ante-diluvian, to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in mind'. The speech had caused a sensation. On 20 July Montagu was Secretary of State for India: the dragon-killer made keeper of the dragon. Whether this was calculated or not is uncertain - it was true for example that only the prize of India would have brought Montagu into the coalition in betrayal of Asquith. But, if Lloyd George was not conscious of the significance of his choice, and of the excitement (or alarm) it would create in India, then we can only conclude that he showed remarkable insensitivity to the consequences of his actions.⁶ Chelmsford's appointment had taken into account the fact that change was necessary; Montagu's could only be a declaration of intent to begin at once.

It is tempting to relate this to the trend we have noticed in appointments. It would be neat to assume that Montagu was the driving force introducing change, and Chelmsford the conservative

⁶ Montagu had told Lloyd George of the significance of the appointment while accepting it; see S.D. Waley, Edwin Montagu, London 1964, 127-131. Islington criticised his 'theories' and lack of 'practical experience', and Chamberlain had suggested Islington as his own successor; see Islington to Chamberlain, 19 & 24 July, & Chamberlain to Prime Minister, 13 July 1917, ACP15/4/70, 72 & 82. Holderness later reported a conservative Panjab official concluding after an interview that Montagu was a 'thoroughly sound man' - from which Holderness concluded that Montagu was not 'without a certain capacity for adapting himself to the environment'; see Holderness to Chamberlain 11 Feb. 1918, ACP21/5/9.

restraint ensuring that change was acceptable to Parliament and the Government of India. But the facts deny this simple pattern. Most of the changes introduced in this period were under consideration before Montagu took office; and in some respects, notably in the response to Gandhi's satyagraha after 1920, Montagu tended to lend his weight towards an active, repressive approach rather than a passive one - this in spite of his suspicion of the police and their attitude to Indian politics. It is better, in these circumstances, to note the difference in temperament, but to judge the respective contributions to policy separately as each case arises. The point which immediately strikes us, is that in 1916, quite apart from native inclination, Chelmsford was faced with a situation in which it was apparent at once that the whole administrative system would have to be reviewed - both for the war effort and for postwar changes. The point was reinforced in 1917, when the Mesopotamia Commission reported on the bureaucratic incompetence and over-centralisation of the Indian army administration. Austen Chamberlain resigned, and admitted that he would have had to recall Lord Hardinge if he had still been viceroy. In 1916, therefore, Chelmsford had had to begin by reorganising the Army Department to relieve the burden on the Commander-in-Chief and to assert the collective responsibility of the Viceroy's Council. The army remained his personal daily concern until Sir Beauchamp Duff was replaced by a new Commander-in-Chief, C.C. Monro.⁷ In the reaction to these circumstances, we shall find, finally, that in terms of philosophy Montagu and Chelmsford were fundamentally on the same side.

Chelmsford was faced with a complex system subject to two contradictory impulses. As an outsider, with a methodical, lawyer's mind, his obvious response was to try to impose some order on the muddle. The attack was to be on several fronts. In the course of the viceroyalty, the attention of the government was to be forced to centre increasingly on the problem of and responses to political agitation. Chelmsford's own preference would have been to carry out

⁷ On the Mesopotamia Commission, see Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 18 July 1917, CP3. (He had earlier expressed anxiety; see Chamberlain to Hardinge, & to Willingdon, 24 Feb. 1916, ACP12/31-32.) On the army, see Speeches II, 480; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 27 May, 29 July, 11 Aug., 18 Oct. & 10 Nov. 1916, CP2, & 7 & 30 June, & to Montagu, 18 Oct. 1917, CP3. For other criticisms of the Government, especially arguments for devolution, see Montagu to Lloyd, 2 Oct., MP22, & Lloyd to Montagu, 18 March 1919, MP24; Willingdon to Montagu, 30 July 1918, MP18; & Curtis to Kerr, 25 March 1917, Lothian Papers GD40/17/33. For Montagu's suspicion of the police, see Montagu to Lloyd, 8 Sept. 1919, MP22.

positive reforms in industry, education, the public services and local self-government - reforms consciously directed towards a slow modification of the British role in India, and seeing the European administrators as trustees preparing India for self-government. The increasing militancy and strength of Indian political movements made this slow progress impractical and time and energy (among a seriously depleted cadre) were diverted to the pressing need for constitutional concessions and to the immediate problem of Indian unrest. But, if events overwhelmed Chelmsford's cautious and systematic approach, the main directions of his policy remained more or less clear. If bureaucracy and Indian involvement were to be reconciled, both of them would have to be changed. The administrators would have to adapt to a new role, in which they were not autocrats but aides; and the legislators would have to be prepared for the time when they would choose and control their rulers and not merely rail impotently against them. The Viceroy himself would also have to change, in his relations to the legislators and the people, but also, just as important, in his functioning as the head of the bureaucracy. Of course Chelmsford did not see all this at once, though circumstances were forcing the recognition upon him. His first moves were exploratory. The first task seemed to be to open lines of communication on the main issues that were crowding in on the government. In some cases this led to substantive changes - we shall consider these in due course. First, we shall look at Chelmsford operating within the system.

Two points about his administration immediately made themselves evident. The first was native caution, qualified by an energetic concern for concerted advance planning. The second was an insistence upon consultation as a means of decision-making. Both may be related to the changes needed in the Indian government.

In general, Chelmsford's view was that the war should not be used as an excuse for procrastination. Under Hardinge a moratorium had been placed on controversial questions, and Chelmsford found that this had been interpreted as meaning a postponement of any advance planning. 'To my mind,' he reported to Chamberlain, 'this is the moment when the Government should consider the future legislative proposals; I have pressed this course on Members and Secretaries, and

I am glad to say they agree'.⁸ Thus the Foreign and Political Department soon found itself considering a scheme for a Council of Princes; the Industries and Commerce Department began to be reorganised, with the Munitions Board and later in 1916 the Indian Industrial Commission, with a view to the better prosecution of the war and the eventual advancement of Indian industry;⁹ the Education Department was soon to embark on a major review, in particular with the Sadler Commission on Calcutta University;¹⁰ the Home Department was faced with the very large questions of constitutional reform, future measures against 'anarchism', and changes recommended by the Public Services Commission. In 1916, Chamberlain wrote to Chelmsford claiming to have seen, in his administration, 'such evidence of energy and activity as only great industry and keenness could produce'.¹¹

The Viceroy's Council had been disposed to show caution, and, being inexperienced, Chelmsford could not at first ignore their advice. Thus, changes in the public services were not taken up with the directness later shown over the Indian Industrial Commission - and this prompted from Montagu what Chelmsford called 'an excellent homily' on delays. But even in this case Chelmsford was able to reply: '... if I had adopted Hardinge's policy, acquiesced in by the India Office, the Report

⁸ See Chelmsford's reply to a speech of welcome, 4 April 1916, Speeches I; & Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 5 May 1916, CP2.

⁹ For Chelmsford's interest in the development of Indian industries, see Chelmsford to Nair, 15 June 1916, CP17; for measures to expand wartime production, see Note by T.H. Holland, 20 Oct., with Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 26 Oct. 1916, CP2, & Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 26 Jan. & 14 June 1917, CP3; for postwar policy and the beginnings of state intervention to promote industry, see Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 July & 8 Sept. 1917, CP3; for a summary of the conclusions of the Indian Industrial Commission, see V(C&ID) to S/S, 26 Oct. 1918, CP9.

¹⁰ Subsequent delays in these reforms, caused by the Secretary of State's refusal to sanction a bill based on the Sadler Report, were later very nearly to lead to an open breach between Chelmsford and Montagu. See V(ED) to S/S, 18 May & 1 & 22 June 1920, CP12; V to S/S, 22 June, CP12, 21 & 26 July & 12 Aug. 1920, CP13; Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 22 July 1920, CP25; Maffey to Chelmsford, 18 Aug. 1920, CP20; & Ronaldshay to Montagu, 12 May 1920, MP31. The question was later transferred to the Bengal legislature; see V(ED) to S/S, 18 Feb. 1921, CP14. For Chelmsford's earlier interest in expediting matters, see V to G/Bengal (for Sadler), 2 April 1918, CP20. His other educational hope, to double the numbers in primary education in ten years (see Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 July 1917, CP3), was not to receive his full attention.

¹¹ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 13 Sept. 1916, CP2, & also 2 Feb. 1917, CP3.

would still be in my safe locked up from prying eyes'.¹² In June 1916, only one local government had recommended publication of the Public Services Report, but the Government of India had advocated early consideration. This typified the new approach: they had wanted to have proposals for advance ready when they would rightly be expected, at the end of the war.¹³

In 1918 Montagu, returning from the discussions on constitutional reforms, wrote to Chelmsford calling for reforms in the public services, the Arms Act, the Criminal Investigation Departments, the Native States' treaties, the Press Act, separation of judiciary and executive, and legal procedure. He hoped also for the establishment of a Propaganda Department, and for the encouragement of better relations between Hindus and Muslims. This, he wrote, was an illustrative not an exhaustive list. Later he called for an enquiry on the railways.¹⁴ Chelmsford was able to report that many of the matters were being considered; but on legal procedure he wrote, 'Lord preserve me!' - this was a matter for a new viceroy. But the record of the viceroyalty does not support the view that Chelmsford's caution expressed itself in an inability to begin projects of reform. In addition to normal work, Chelmsford had four major reports to deal with at the time of Montagu's letter - on the public services, 'anarchism', constitutional reforms and Calcutta University. There was not really any prospect of quicker progress.¹⁵

But Chelmsford has not been remembered as a strong Viceroy. The reason is mainly that he practised a form of leadership unfamiliar in India. This brings us to the second characteristic of Chelmsford's style: he preferred consultation and worked through collective decisions. He expected his colleagues to cooperate and express their opinions forcefully.¹⁶ His policies were therefore consensus policies - he wished to administer according to wisdom or unwisdom not according to 'weak' or 'strong' principles; he tried to walk down the middle and was attacked from both sides.¹⁷ With the growth in the volume and

¹² Montagu to Chelmsford, 22 Oct. 1918, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 4 Dec. 1918, CP4. See also Chelmsford to Montagu, 5 Oct. 1917, CP3.

¹³ V(HD) to S/S, 21 June 1916, H.Public (C) 88, June 1916.

¹⁴ Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 Jan., 17 April, 10 Oct. & 23 Dec. 1918, CP4. See also Chelmsford to Montagu, 30 May 1918, CP4.

¹⁵ Chelmsford to Montagu, 23 April & 30 May 1918, CP4.

¹⁶ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 15 April 1918, CP4, & to Chamberlain 11 Aug. 1916, CP2, & 23 Feb. & 20 April 1917, CP3.

¹⁷ Speeches II, 483-488.

complexity of business, accelerated by the war, the viceroy had little choice but to delegate responsibilities; but Chelmsford was also influenced by his experience as a constitutional governor in Australia - this convinced him, he claimed, that 'the Council should be consulted ... on all possible occasions'. 'My methods', he wrote to Montagu, 'are not of the sic volo sic jubeo order. I deliberately lay before myself the policy of constitutional practice I am more or less indifferent to personal credit and only want to get things done. We have a creaky and lumbering machine to work, and I believe with present conditions it can best be worked only by minimising the friction ...'.¹⁸ This method was sneered at by more traditional administrators and disapproved of by Montagu;¹⁹ but it was the method of the future rather than the past, of devolution rather than autocracy.

On all matters of importance, Chelmsford tried to obtain the 'best considered views' of the whole Executive Council. He had regular Council meetings except when he or most members were on tour. When he was away, members who were considering important matters were instructed to consult their colleagues personally, and send the file and their comments to the Viceroy. Chelmsford also introduced a new practice of meeting each member informally once a week - a privilege formerly confined to departmental secretaries. At these weekly meetings Chelmsford discussed with each member the problems of his department and any matters of general interest.²⁰ In Chelmsford's own Department, the Foreign and Political, all telegrams were circulated to other members as soon as they were printed.²¹ Chelmsford also kept himself and his colleagues informed, on a longer view, by instituting an annual review of important decisions - formerly undertaken only at the end of a viceroyalty - and after 1917 by maintaining a personal collection of important despatches.²² During his viceroyalty, Chelmsford claimed, the Government of India was 'that of the Governor General-in-Council, not only in spirit but also in letter!'²³

¹⁸ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 18 Aug. 1916, CP2, & to Montagu, 28 April 1918, CP4.

¹⁹ See E.S. Montagu, An Indian Diary (ed.: Venetia Montagu), London 1930, 41, 72 & 110-111.

²⁰ Chelmsford to Montagu, 18 Oct. 1917, CP3, & to Chamberlain, 5 May, 18 & 25 Aug. 1916, CP2.

²¹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 18 Oct. 1917, CP3.

²² PSV to Departmental Secretaries, 29 April 1916, CP17, & 8 June 1917, CP18.

²³ Chelmsford to Montagu, 18 Oct. 1917, CP3.

Consultation meant delays. Chelmsford sought to minimise these by working as far as possible through personal meetings and not by written memoranda.²⁴ He believed members of Council should be the thinking part of the government, leaving routine matters to the secretaries.²⁵ He was willing to see, in these routine matters, some centralisation and consolidation where necessary - as when he suggested a Chief of the Administrative Staff for the army, and when a Food Controller for India was appointed during the shortage of 1918.²⁶ A certain flexibility also helped. The head of the Publicity Board, Sir Stanley Reed, who had been ready to criticise the bureaucracy as editor of the Times of India, wrote to Chelmsford in 1919 after experience at Simla:

My conviction is that there is nothing wrong with the system on which the Government of India is organised, and that it is manned by devoted and able officials. I have been agreeably surprised to find that when little difficulties arose, which might have been accentuated by a rigid adherence to rules, there was no tendency whatsoever to adhere to rules; but always a desire to get the thing done.

In fact the traditions and shortcomings of the Simla bureaucracy were not so easily overcome - and Reed himself, though satisfied with the system and its flexibility in routine, remained worried at the non-constructive spirit in the administration and the failure of decisions to 'come from the top'.²⁷

Chelmsford proposed that the machinery for routine consultation should be improved; and he sought to do this, in characteristic fashion, by appointing a committee of enquiry. He had suggested this early in 1917, but the Home Department, severely understaffed, had preferred to

²⁴ Collective decisions tended to increase paper work. One revised Rule of Business required that each important despatch should be signed by all members who had discussed it including those who dissented. Other despatches were to be signed by at least three members. A second revised Rule required that any member who wished to write a minute of dissent should confine himself to matters raised in discussion, and circulate his minute before the despatch was finally settled. It would then refer to the dissent, and if necessary include a statement on the majority view. See Rules 37A & 38A, H. Public 53-54, Nov. 1917.

²⁵ Chelmsford to Reed, 26 March 1919, CP22.

²⁶ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 18 Oct. & 11 Nov. 1916, CP2, & to Montagu, 19 Oct. 1918, CP4.

²⁷ Reed to Chelmsford, 23 March 1919, CP22.

wait until after the war.²⁸ A Secretariat Committee, under Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, Permanent Secretary at the Board of Trade, was eventually appointed in 1919. Its terms of reference were to examine the allocation of business among the departments, and to report on how the system could be made more efficient. Each department was to provide the committee with full information on its methods; and members and secretaries were to testify on existing staff deployment and delegation of responsibility, and on possible improvements.²⁹

As a result of these deliberations, certain changes were introduced in secretariat instructions during the last quarter of 1920. Some hope was offered of relieving the shortage of staff by a scheme to re-employ suitable officers on a temporary basis during the first ten years of their retirement, provided they were still under sixty-five.³⁰ Consultation was made more expeditious. It was generally to be personal, with results recorded on the file; and it was to be conducted simultaneously, if possible, when more than two departments were involved. Consultation with local governments was to be confined in general matters to the major administrations, and on special matters to the governments involved. A definite time limit was to be stated, and after this time the departmental secretary was to decide whether to proceed without waiting for any outstanding replies.³¹ In another attempt to secure coordination, it was provided that an officer would normally be placed on special duty to secure government action on any recommendations of committees or commissions of enquiry.

²⁸ Chelmsford to Reed, 26 March 1919, CP22.

²⁹ V to S/S, 29 Nov. & 29 Dec. 1918, CP9; V(HD) to S/S, 30 May 1919, H.Public 326 & see 327-340, Jan. 1920; Memorandum (approved by Llewellyn Smith), H.Public 342-343, Dec. 1919.

³⁰ H.Public 493-496, March 1921.

³¹ For attempts by Chelmsford to hurry local governments, see Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 18 Feb. & 25 June, to Lloyd, & to Craddock, 18 Feb. 1919, CP22, but also Montagu to Ronaldshay, 26 June 1919, MP27; for Chelmsford's willingness to circumvent usual procedure (to hasten Lloyd's housing schemes in Bombay), see Lloyd to Montagu, 28 Feb., 18 July & 17 Aug. 1919, MP24; for the HD circular, 9 June 1919, urging local governments to consult only a limited number of interested parties when replying to enquiries, see H.Public 6-7, Feb. 1920. Under another rule, differences of opinion were to be resolved personally (between departments) without further noting, with only the agreement embodied in a joint note.

The Executive Council was also given attention. Telegrams were being used increasingly in the interests of speed, and this tendency was encouraged by rules which tended to raise the status of the telegraphic communication - it was provided that all Council members should simultaneously be sent copies of important telegrams, those which, if sent by post, would have been in the form of a despatch.³² There had also been an earlier rationalisation in 1917, when telegrams were divided into three classes: departmental, departmental marked for attention of the Viceroy or the Secretary of State, and private (for personal information only).³³ Such prior classification could save time generally, and other ways of doing this were introduced or revitalised in 1920. Letters rather than despatches were sent to the Secretary of State when, in the opinion of the departmental secretary, the matter did not express a Government opinion or was not of importance. Such matters were not referred to the Executive Council. Also in 1920 a division of financial references into those of greater and lesser importance (with the latter able to issue directly to the Secretary of State from the spending department) abolished the Finance Department's old and time-consuming monopoly in this area.³⁴ The Executive Council was also able to deal less with routine, by having the Governor General make necessary orders on unimportant matters, and was to waste as little time as possible on controversy, by considering only final recommendations, after departmental discussions.³⁵ Some steps were thus being made to free the Viceroy's Council, already changed by Chelmsford's use of it, and to make it an effective governing device. In all the measures collective responsibility was protected, but attempts were made to limit the delays it involved.

Towards the end of the viceroyalty, Chelmsford was also concerned with the question of the proper division of subjects among Council members and departments. In December 1920 there were eight members of Council corresponding to the departments - Foreign and Political (the Viceroy), Army, Home, Finance, Legislative, Commerce,

³² H.Public 73-74, Jan., & 85-86, May 1921.

³³ PSV to Departmental Secretaries, with V to S/S, 3 Oct. 1917, CP22.

³⁴ G/I despatch (FD), 3 June 1920, H.Public 102, Nov. 1920.

³⁵ Rules 11(1) & (2) & 19, May 1920, H.Public 991-992, Dec. 1920.

Industry, Education, and Revenue and Agriculture (including Public Works). The Secretariat Committee recommended certain reallocations. Chelmsford was in favour of rationalisation but believed that the committee's suggestions were not entirely satisfactory. He wanted to see banking concentrated under Finance instead of being shared with Commerce, and he believed that railways and ports were inseparable from Commerce and Industry, as were the research projects on raw materials dealt with at that time under Agriculture. In March 1921 he suggested to Lord Reading, who was about to become viceroy, that he set up, in addition to Foreign and Political, Army, Home, Finance and Legislative, three new departments - Commerce and Industry, including agriculture, railways and ports; Education, Public Health and Revenue, including local self-government, excise and salt; and Public Works, Posts and Telegraphs, including emigration.³⁶ To Chelmsford this rationalisation seemed at once more efficient and better directed to progress - it concentrated in two departments the main areas in which he hoped to see advance. The Commerce and Industry department would supervise all economic improvements, including the public intervention in industrial projects encouraged by the war and favoured by Chelmsford; the department of Education, Health and Revenue would deal with the Government of India aspect of all local and provincial affairs, including all questions of public welfare and broadly covering the whole area of the experiment in self-government. The Public Works and Posts department would control those matters which required mainly technical or routine administration - it included emigration in order to avoid associating such a controversial subject with the Foreign and Political Department under the Viceroy. The Council would be able to work as a cabinet, each member having a more or less coherent sphere of activity which he could represent in joint discussions and to which he could independently direct his energies.

The Viceroy's relations with his Governors were clearly as important as his relation with his Council. In these too Chelmsford attempted to provide for consultation. In 1916, he had written to all heads of provinces asking them to write to him personally on any matter which concerned them.³⁷ More unusually, he attempted, on the advice of

³⁶ Chelmsford to Reading, 3-4 March 1921, CP16, & see V to S/S, 2 telegrams, 6 May 1920, CP12.

³⁷ See CP17, passim, & Chelmsford to Meston, 7 April 1916, Meston Papers 1.

Edwin Montagu, to begin a tradition of Governors' conferences.³⁸ Some Governors favoured the idea. Sir M. O'Dwyer in the Panjab and Sir B. Robertson in the Central Provinces found many topics to suggest for discussion in January 1919; in Bombay, Sir George Lloyd expressed keen disappointment when a serious mill strike prevented his attending the same Conference. Lord Willingdon in Madras was less enthusiastic. Before the Conference of 1920 he confessed to Montagu that he could not see what they had to discuss.³⁹ In general, attendance was not enthusiastic - and Chelmsford did not succeed with his governors as he had with his Council.

It was largely a matter of temperament. Willingdon, in 1920, characterised the Viceroy as 'cold and calm', and wished he could see in him 'a spark of enthusiasm'. He had long been convinced that Chelmsford had a 'personal feeling' about him, which prevented them from cooperating.⁴⁰ In the same year, Montagu had to write to Lloyd admitting that Chelmsford's coldness could be disconcerting, but stressing his good qualities - his strength, patience and loyalty.⁴¹ In February 1919, Lloyd had written of the Viceroy:

Personally I like him a good deal but he is a curious intangible personality. Just as you think he is going to become quite human he eludes your touch and leaves you wondering. He had been represented to me as being tired and anxious. I did not find him so. I thought him clear-minded and determined to pursue his course....

In September, he added:

I'm afraid the Viceroy is getting very unpopular in India. I have always got on well with him, but I fancy some other governors find it hard to do so. I don't quite know what it is. Mainly I think his cold manner and lack of any evident human sympathy. Some of the letters he writes one make one very angry, but I value his loyalty and⁴² the straightforward way he deals with things....

³⁸ E.S. Montagu, An Indian Diary (ed.: Venetia Montagu), London 1930, 17 & 224-225.

³⁹ See O'Dwyer, 2 Dec., Robertson, 6 Dec., & Ronaldshay, 6 Dec. 1918, to Chelmsford, CP21; Lloyd to Montagu, 10 Jan., & to Chelmsford, 25 Jan. 1919, MP24; Willingdon to Montagu, 7 & 21 Jan., but also 30 Jan. 1920, MP20.

⁴⁰ See Willingdon to Montagu, 30 Jan. 1920, MP20, & also 21 July & 30 Oct. 1919, MP19.

⁴¹ Montagu to Lloyd, 14 April 1920, MP22.

⁴² Lloyd to Montagu, 12 Feb. & 5 Aug. 1919, MP24. See also Lloyd to Chamberlain, 11 July 1919, ACP18/1/6: 'I ... cannot understand why he has been so much criticised - He is certainly first rate to work with, prompt, sympathetic ...'.

People who had more frequent contact with Chelmsford do not seem to have had such reservations. Chelmsford claimed his Council had been 'a very happy family' in 1917.⁴³ G. S. Barnes had written to Chamberlain in 1916: 'It would be difficult to find a more delightful man to work for and with, and this I think is the view of all the members of his Council'. Later tributes written to Chelmsford confirmed this first impression - Sir James Meston complimented him on his 'patience and consideration' and his 'Spartan courage'. Chelmsford's personality seems to have been effective in the committee room and in prolonged contact; but not in occasional conferences or at a distance. He took his Council with him on constitutional reforms; he was unable to convince the Governors.⁴⁴

Montagu diagnosed a further reason, which no doubt magnified Chelmsford's disability. He suggested that the problem was due to the course of events - firstly to the war in which the central Government used wider authority while their staff was short-handed, over-worked, and 'tending to be snappy' in correspondence; and secondly to the 1919 disturbances during which local governments drew closer to their officials, while the Government of India, 'from the continued effort to get a grip of the situation as a whole', tended to draw away.⁴⁵ To this must be added, as the evidence of antagonism is strongest after 1920, a factor which Chelmsford himself hinted at early in his term. 'In fairness to my subordinates,' he wrote, at the height of the criticism of the army administration, '... I feel bound to point out that they are becoming gravely discouraged under the shower of criticism which is pouring down on them, and their work will inevitably suffer from the feeling that whatever they do, however hard they work, blame will be their portion.'⁴⁶ It was the system not the personnel that had broken down.⁴⁷ In the deluge of criticism which followed the 1919

⁴³ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 25 March 1917, CP3.

⁴⁴ Barnes to Chamberlain, 30 April 1916, ACP12/11; Meston to Chelmsford, 31 May 1919, & see Holland to Chelmsford, 14 June 1919, CP22.

⁴⁵ Montagu to Lloyd, 30 Aug. 1919, MP22.

⁴⁶ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 15 Sept. 1919, CP2.

⁴⁷ See Lloyd to Chamberlain, 13 June 1920, ACP18/1/9: '... the machinery of Government is really vile ... but the understaffing of the Civil Service has resulted in each individual from the Secretary of State downward being so over-worked that no-one has had time ... to cope with the system.'

disturbances and accompanied Gandhi's non-cooperation campaign, it would not have been remarkable if the whole administration had felt similarly sensitive, and consequently had become difficult to deal with.

Chelmsford also attempted consultation on a wider scale. The whole tendency of his administration, while it became more and more unpopular, was nonetheless increasingly to pay attention to Indian opinion. And of course the largest task undertaken during the viceroyalty was to seek ways of improving the degree and character of this contact through the legislatures. Chelmsford welcomed the Imperial Legislative Council in spite of the burden its sessions imposed. He remarked: 'We, as the Government of India, live a very detached life, aloof from the troubles which beset the administrator in his district and even Local Governments in their provinces, and anything which brings us up against concrete facts is to be encouraged'. He encouraged this further after 1917 by removing the restriction preventing the discussion of contentious matters at the Simla session of the legislature.⁴⁸ But it was doubtful how useful or relevant the legislators' opinions could be before the reforms. There were at the centre only a handful of members from each province, and too often it was tempting to ignore or underestimate the advice of such a tiny group. In the provinces there was perhaps more influence. In an enquiry undertaken in 1918 into the working of the Morley-Minto councils in Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the Panjab and Bihar and Orissa, it was found that non-official members, nominated as well as elected, tended to vote solidly against the government whenever there were divisions, but it was pointed out that divisions were infrequent and occurred only on contentious issues; most local governments considered that legislative business, which had increased enormously in the preceding years, had not absorbed official energies to the detriment of efficiency, and all of the governments welcomed the extra contact with Indian opinion. The local governments considered that legislators had been useful and influential in changing bills before or after introduction, in putting forward resolutions especially on local questions, and in a minority of cases by use of the right to ask questions.⁴⁹ But perhaps the governments had written what they thought they were expected to write. The

⁴⁸ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 1 & 25 March 1917, CP3.

⁴⁹ ED circular, 22 Feb. 1918, & replies, H.Public, 600-606, May 1918.

true picture, as in the Government of India, was less comfortable. The changes introduced in bills or government policy were admittedly in details and never 'material'. Several governments singled out with some asperity the one or two occasions in a decade when they had been inconvenienced by having to accommodate their will to the legislature; they made no allowance for the frustrations among the legislators at being faced time and time again with the impossibility of enforcing their wishes on the government. Chelmsford set himself 'from the very beginning to ... win the co-operation of the educated classes in India'.⁵⁰ But the machinery of the legislative councils was so much in need of re-thinking, until it was reformed at the end of the viceroyalty, that it could not be used to create this feeling of partnership. While he was involved in remedying the situation, Chelmsford still had to suffer the disabilities of the past.

Thus isolation was a factor in the Government's unpopularity. Chelmsford could state the liability and try to chip it away, but he remained distant from political as from commercial and rural India. Calcutta and Bombay, each considered by its inhabitants to be the centre of Indian affairs, were both far away. 'Simla and Delhi,' Chelmsford told Montagu, 'are merely artificial conglomerations of officialdom'. He used this argument to justify the refitting of a viceregal residence in Calcutta - 'I do not want to see myself and my successors', he wrote, 'condemned to be dwellers in the limbo of things'.⁵¹ He became increasingly aware during 1917 that conditions were changing rapidly in India - and this too made it even more difficult to keep in touch.⁵² He encouraged his Council members to go on tour, and found they returned with 'minds enlarged and broadened'.⁵³ He argued that Governors too should be allowed leave from their provinces - he was 'in favour of men getting away from their surroundings and rubbing shoulders with other people'.⁵⁴ The Home Department subscribed to all the important newspapers as well as receiving regular provincial reports and press abstracts.⁵⁵ In May 1918 the Panjab

⁵⁰ Speeches II, 483.

⁵¹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 27 July 1918, CP4.

⁵² See for example Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 20 April 1917, CP3.

⁵³ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 25 March 1917, CP3.

⁵⁴ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 6 Oct. 1916, CP2.

⁵⁵ See for example Index to Home Department Proceedings 1919, 325-327.

Government wanted to prosecute one Sarala Devi for remarks she had made in a private letter to the Viceroy; Chelmsford demurred - 'It would be most unfortunate,' he explained, 'if people were to be deterred from writing freely to the Viceroy'.⁵⁶ But good intentions did not solve the problem.

Moreover isolation was not only the product of circumstances beyond Chelmsford's control. In one sense it was peculiarly his own responsibility. In January 1920, Lord Willingdon reported to Montagu: '... the atmosphere of Delhi is most depressing. Chelmsford and his lady lead a very lonely life and I am really sorry for them. They don't seem to be able to unbend and be friendly...'.⁵⁷ Willingdon, who thought the Viceroy had treated him badly over his sumptuary allowance, was perhaps not the most impartial judge; but probably the isolated atmosphere of the seat of government was partly of Chelmsford's own making. He severely underspent his entertainment allowance because of the war, and recommended reductions in the increase - more than double - which Montagu proposed for Reading.⁵⁸ Chelmsford was not easy in large social events. He was not more successful in popularising himself with legislators and politicians than with governors. His speeches were correct but seldom aroused enthusiasm. Occasionally, as in the uncompromising reply to a deputation against the Press Acts, they aroused anger.⁵⁹ Montagu remarked to Sir George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, that, throughout the debates on the 'Rowlatt' bill, Chelmsford made no speech himself - surely, he wondered, 'a public meeting, an appeal, might have had a great effect'. Lloyd in reply was sceptical of the value of such speeches.⁶⁰ But Montagu had urged on Chelmsford 'the vital necessity of teaching and instructing Government officials

⁵⁶ Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 24 May 1919, CP22.

⁵⁷ Willingdon to Montagu, 30 Jan. 1920, MP20.

⁵⁸ Chelmsford to Montagu, 27 July 1918, CP4, & S/S to V, 15 & 25 Feb. 1921, CP14.

⁵⁹ Speeches II, 249-281; H.Poll. 253-254, May 1917; Memorandum on Press Legislation, 1 July 1920, IOR J&P1589 (4468/19); Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 1 March 1917, CP3.

⁶⁰ Montagu to Lloyd, 25 June, MP22 & Lloyd to Montagu, 18 July 1919, MIP24. The importance of speech-making is perhaps demonstrated by Lord Ronaldshay who arrived in Bengal to vehement opposition in the press, but before long was being congratulated on his speeches; see Ronaldshay to Montagu, 24 July 1917, MP29.

to explain themselves and the policy of the Government';⁶¹ and it was plain that Chelmsford himself did not have this ability. His Government sought consultation and responded to public opinion, but ^{was} never fully political, never comfortable in this new role. Montagu wrote in 1917 to report that he had heard that the government had never been more unpopular than at that moment.⁶² It was to become still more unpopular by 1921.

One of the responses to this situation was to hope the government could project a more favourable image by propaganda. The Government of India, declared Chamberlain in 1917, must 'not only do right, but persuade people that it is right'. They could not rely on press support, and had to prepare public opinion themselves. But they did not do so: 'Wherever public opinion is stirred...the Departments exclaim "Say nothing! Do nothing! Pray heaven if we are quiet, the storm will pass over our heads...". I am sure this will not do...it will lead to a growing estrangement between Government and the governed...'.⁶³ Montagu, in August of the same year, also called for a 'new angle of vision': the Government, he thought, 'should learn to a greater degree than ever the methods of political life'. In his view 'publicity and frankness' were the 'remedy for most Indian evils'.⁶⁴ He encouraged Chelmsford to call a conference to improve the war effort,⁶⁵ and at first propaganda was conceived in this narrower sense, as a need arising out of the war.

In April 1918, a War Conference, of provincial delegates and mostly non-officials, was convened in Delhi. It was followed by provincial meetings of a similar type. The purpose was twofold: to help create an enthusiastic and loyal attitude towards the war effort, and to encourage practical steps to help. Thus the Delhi Conference,

⁶¹ Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 Jan. 1918, CP4, & see Lascelles to Kerr, 24 Nov. 1920, Lothian Papers GD40/17/214.

⁶² Montagu to Chelmsford, 4 Oct. 1917, CP3.

⁶³ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 21 July 1917, CP3.

⁶⁴ Montagu to Chelmsford, 3 Aug. 1917, CP3, & to Ronaldshay, 25 Sept. 1918, MP27. For a similar view, see Lloyd to Montagu, 26 Dec. 1918, MF24.

⁶⁵ See E.S. Montagu, An Indian Diary (ed.: Venetia Montagu), London 1930, 349-357, and Montagu to Chelmsford, 10, 15 & 17 April 1918, CP4.

over three days, consisted in public sessions for fine speeches and loyalty resolutions, and private committees for practical suggestions. Gandhi had arrived in Delhi intending to boycott proceedings on 'various high moral grounds' relating to the exclusion of B.G. Tilak, Annie Besant and other nationalist leaders who, in Chelmsford's view, disagreed with the Government on first principles. Chelmsford persuaded Gandhi to attend, and he made a short speech in support of the loyalist resolution. Chelmsford thought the conference had been a success as an exercise in public relations.⁶⁶ In the provinces, except in Bombay, where Willingdon provoked a walk-out of Tilak and other Home Rulers, the conferences passed off without incident, or, arguably, results.⁶⁷

The Delhi conference recommended the formation of publicity bureaux, and had led to the appointment of a War Resources Committee to coordinate activities. In June 1918, a Central Publicity Board was appointed, with instructions to establish similar boards in every province. They were to 'vivify Indian interest in war and intensify co-operation'.⁶⁸ A Library was formed for use in preparing pamphlets, and in July a liaison officer for publicity was appointed at the India Office.⁶⁹ At the head of these developments was the former editor of

⁶⁶ For the Delhi War Conference, including the exclusions and Gandhi's attitude, see Chelmsford to Montagu, 26 April & 15 May 1918, CP4, & to Willingdon, 15 May, & PSV to G/Madras & to G/Bombay, 18 April, & to Resident, Aden (for PS to Montagu), 29 April, & G/Madras to V, 22 April, & V to G/Madras, 11 May, & PS, G/Bombay to PSV, 21 April, & Gandhi to Chelmsford, 29 April 1918, CP20; & Speeches II, 82. Gandhi later offered his services as a recruiter; see Gandhi to Chelmsford, 29 April, & to Maffey, 30 April, & Maffey to Gandhi, 21 May, & to Creer, 17 May 1918, CP20, & also M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography or The Story of my Experiments with Truth (tr.: Mahadev Desai), Ahmedabad 1940, 325-331. Willingdon criticised the Delhi conference as giving 'extremists' undue prominence; Chelmsford thought his reaction 'hysterical'. See Chelmsford to Montagu, 15 May 1918 (with enclosures, Willingdon to Chelmsford, 9 May, Chelmsford to Willingdon, 15 May, & Reed to Maffey, 11 May 1918), CP4, & Willingdon to Chelmsford, 11 June, Chelmsford to Willingdon, 17 June, & Maffey to Reed, 16 May 1918, CP20. Montagu was disappointed; see Montagu to Willingdon, 4 July 1918, MP18.

⁶⁷ See H.Public 522-534, May, & 330-332, Aug. 1918 (including Proceedings of the Bombay War Conference, 10 June 1918); Willingdon to Montagu, 17 April & 8 June, & to Chelmsford, 21 June 1918, CP20; & also (for example) S.L. Karandikar, Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Poona [1957?], 505. Ronaldshay thought his conference a success; see Ronaldshay to Montagu, 10 June 1918, MP29.

⁶⁸ V(HD) to S/S, 9 June 1918, H.Public, 384-446, Aug. 1919.

⁶⁹ Central Publicity Board to United Provinces War Board, 13 July, & S/S to V(HD), 11 July 1918, H.Public, 402 & 404, Aug. 1919.

The Times of India, Sir Stanley Reed, now appointed President of the Central Publicity Board - and happily seeing himself, according to Chelmsford, as 'Northcliffe Asiaticus'.⁷⁰

The Government believed that Indians, except those in recruiting districts and perhaps the educated classes, were ill-informed about the war. It was necessary to impress on them its gravity, and also to disseminate accurate news and contradict rumours. The work was to be done locally, by largely non-official committees with financial assistance from the central government, and through posters, lectures, advertisements, newspaper articles and cinema showings. The Central Board was to coordinate and assist these efforts. The suggestion, in this form, was sent to local governments in a circular letter of May 1918.⁷¹ The response was enthusiastic in some provinces, notably the Panjab where publicity work centred on the government newspaper, Haq, and the United Provinces where this example was followed by a successful War Journal. But not all the provinces were active. Assam and Bihar and Orissa underspent their budgets, and Bengal, although exceeding its estimates on furniture and establishment, severely underspent its budget for printing and devoted almost no funds to schemes originally proposed for using religious societies and taking newspaper editors on factory tours. The publicity movement was strongest in those provinces where the central government had suggested it was needed least, namely in the recruiting tracts. Its political success was thus limited.⁷²

Nonetheless this wartime expedient of the publicity boards represented one of the first institutionalised attempts by the government in India to influence public opinion by propaganda. Some of the

⁷⁰ Chelmsford to Montagu, 13 June 1918, CP4. The work of the Board was allegedly held up by delays in the India Office; see Reed to Seton, 8 Feb. 1918 (sic;= 1919), & G.F. Adams to Seton, 21 March 1919, IOR J&P1530, 4287; H.Public 384-446, Aug. 1919. For lecture tours organised with mixed success, see H.Public 300-392A, July, 398, Aug., & 281-283, Nov. 1919.

⁷¹ HD Circular, 10 May 1918, H.Public 166, March 1919.

⁷² Sec V to S/S, 28 Jan. 1920, CP12; H.Public 65-68, July 1918, & 166-230, March 1919; G/I despatch (FD), 5 April, & S/S reply, 4 June 1918, H.Poll. 369 & 372, June 1918. See also H.Poll. 162, Sept. 1920; &, for use of the publicity papers, such as Al Hakikat, H.Public(C) 302-420, March 1918, & H.Public 171-258, April 1921.

boards had already taken on more political functions during the war;⁷³ all of them were intended to explain general and not only wartime policy; and when the war ended there was widespread agreement that the boards should be made permanent. A meeting of the Central Publicity Board in March 1919 unanimously recommended that organised publicity work should continue. Sir Stanley Reed suggested the formation of a small Department of Publications under the Home Member, to advise the government on the use of existing newspapers for meeting unfair criticism, to popularise government reports and publications, and to act as an information bureau.⁷⁴

The Home Department took up this idea, admitting that the Government of India was 'perhaps of all civilised Governments the worst equipped' for propaganda. They suggested, however, a Director of Publications rather than a department which they thought might be open to public objection.⁷⁵ Reed expressed himself rather surprised at the strength of the feeling in the Government that the work of the Publicity Board should continue.⁷⁶ The Home Department had already decided on Chamberlain's advice that the Moral and Material Progress Report presented annually to Parliament should be improved so as to 'secure the wider purpose of interpreting the activities of the Government to the outside world'. They wanted it printed in octavo not foolscap, widely distributed at a low price (about Rs. 1.00), divided by subject not provinces, 'narrated in a popular style', and brought up to date. The issue for 1917-1918 dealt with events until December 1918, the time of preparation, whereas hitherto it would have stopped with the official year at the end of March. It was prepared by an officer on special duty in the Home Department - Professor Rushbrook Williams, seconded from the Allahabad University. Formerly the report had been compiled in the Home Department, in addition to ordinary duties, and mainly from materials sent in by local governments. Thus, when the Central Publicity Board was disbanded, the Government already had the

⁷³ United Provinces War Board to Central Publicity Board, 28 Nov. 1918, H.Public 214, March 1919.

⁷⁴ Seton to Hignell, 15 Nov., & to Reed, 7 Dec. 1918, & Reed to Seton, 8 Feb. 1918 (sic;= 1919), IOR J&P1530, 4287; Central Publicity Board to HD, 27 March 1919, H.Poll. 543, Jan. 1920; & see also Bombay Publicity Department to G/Bombay, 19 Dec. 1918, H.Poll. 92, Feb. 1919.

⁷⁵ HD circular, 18 Feb. 1919, ibid.

⁷⁶ Reed to Maffey, 20 March 1919, CP22.

beginnings of a small publicity organisation within the Home Department. They decided to expand it, and give effect to Reed's suggestion by appointing Rushbrook Williams as Director of Publicity. He was to be under the Home Department, with special rights of access to the viceroy and heads of departments. In February 1920, Williams was sent on deputation to study propaganda methods in Great Britain and America.⁷⁷

The main publicity burden, however, was to be provincial. The wartime boards were to be replaced, preferably by voluntary agency. The publicity newspapers were continued in the United Provinces and the Panjab (where Haq was thought to be 'a power in the land'). By the governors' conference of January 1920, when the question was discussed, only Bengal, the Central Provinces and the Northwest Frontier Province were without some permanent organisation.⁷⁸ After the disturbances of 1919 the Home Department had called for 'systematic and widespread action on a wide scale for the purpose of contradicting false rumours and reports', and had promised that the central government would provide leaflets for local distribution. Rushbrook Williams suggested that he should start sending such information directly to district officers. This idea was approved; the first leaflet distributed in this way was on Bolshevism, and came in two forms, one of which was for general use. This scheme was most popular in those provinces where local publicity organisation was weakest, and therefore to some extent provided a substitute for local efforts.⁷⁹

But printed propaganda was limited in effect. Thus, in their circular of May 1919, the Home Department suggested that local and district officers should be instructed to become concerned in propaganda, mainly through private interviews. Local governments agreed, and the idea had been endorsed generally in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. The problem was that the Government Servants' Rules of Conduct expressly forbade participation in political movements. On 9 December 1920, in order to facilitate proposals from the Panjab and Madras seeking to

⁷⁷ See H.Public 301-333, Feb., & 151-181, Oct. 1919; & H.Poll. 454-471 & 473, Jan., & 374-375, Feb. 1920; & Chamberlain to Chelmsford 14 Oct. 1917, ACP18/3/1a.

⁷⁸ V to S/S, 28 Jan. 1920, CP12; & see H.Poll. 127, 155 & 159, Sept. 1920.

⁷⁹ See H.Poll. 318, 320, 689 & 691-692, May 1919, & 241-261, July 1920.

permit officers to 'organise opposition' to Gandhi's non-cooperation, the Government of India asked the Secretary of State to permit officers to defend and explain government policy in public, provided that they avoided personal references and confined their criticisms to refuting misstatements or disloyal propaganda. The Secretary of State gave his consent.⁸⁰

This change was not very great, or probably very useful.⁸¹ But an old principle had been breached nonetheless, and it was perhaps remarkable enough that the Government of India should have taken formal concern over publicising themselves. The autocracy had to begin to talk to the people.

⁸⁰ See H.Poll. 689, May 1919; H.Public 58-67, May 1921; V(RD) to S/S, 9 Dec. 1920, CP13.

⁸¹ See Montagu to Ronaldshay, 28 June 1921, MF28, on publicity & propaganda: 'I believe we have still got to invent our system in India'.

The Government paid attention to public opinion in order to woo the educated classes. In some quarters the interests of the masses were canvassed, mostly as an argument for conservatism. But Chelmsford placed the emphasis on the need to placate that small minority whose discontent, he believed, was bound to infect the bulk of the population. What India needed, he thought, was twenty years of patient rule - and his task was to enlist the cooperation of the educated elite.¹

A section of this class, as Chelmsford recognised, was influenced by growing nationalism and alienation from the Government. The unique characteristic which distinguished the 'extremist' party was not its desire for swaraj, but its unwillingness to come to terms with the British government. Some of the leaders were 'irreconcilable'; and, while the Government did not abandon their attempts to influence all public opinion, these inevitably were directed mainly to the uncommitted. It was not difficult for their conciliation to become attempts to encourage moderate opposition to the extremists. In Bengal Lord Carmichael diagnosed the main need of his Government in 1916 as to win the 'confidence of the ordinary law-abiding educated Indians';² this aim was not identical with that expressed by Lord Chelmsford. In a few isolated cases the Government sought the formation of a moderate or pro-government party. But, as a rule, they placed little faith in this version of divide et impera, preferring to pursue policies which, in other circumstances, might have commended themselves equally to extremists as to moderates.³

In several celebrated cases the government undermined their own propaganda. They placed an officer on special duty to help the defendant and otherwise meddled in a private litigation between Tilak and Sir Valentine Chirol over alleged libels in the latter's book, Indian Unrest. Official intervention had been approved by Hardinge and was perhaps inevitable owing to an original failure of discretion when Lord Sydenham, then Governor of Bombay, had allowed Chirol access to confidential files for use in the writing of his book. But

¹ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 17 May 1918, CP15.

² Carmichael to Chelmsford, 3 Aug. 1916, CP17.

³ See below, pp. 286-296.

Chelmsford too showed lack of tact - at the height of the controversy and to the intense indignation of Tilak's paper, Kesari, he had Chirol to stay at Government House in Delhi.⁴ In another incident the government tried to be more diplomatic. Tilak and other members of a Home Rule deputation had wanted to visit England, and were allowed passports. The Home Department wired to the India Office that it would be 'inexpedient' to withhold permission, even though 'military or other authorities may regard their presence in England as objectionable or dangerous'. But the War Cabinet ordered that the passports be withdrawn. The Bombay Government, the Government of India and Chelmsford himself protested at this 'highly embarrassing' decision, and Tilak's party were allowed to proceed in the hope that the orders would be modified. But the Cabinet remained adamant, and the travellers were recalled. Five had reached as far as Gibraltar; the Home Department requested that they be treated 'with every consideration and not held in custody'. Montagu, who had been in India, persuaded the Cabinet on his return to allow Tilak to travel to England for his libel case on condition that he abstained from politics. Tilak gave an undertaking and left for England.⁵ A similar restriction was placed on Dr. T. N. Mair, an opponent of constitutional reforms; later both restrictions were removed.⁶ In September 1918, when the question of

⁴ See H.Poll. 175-177, 178 (Report by A. Montgomerie, 30 May 1916), 180A (Kesari, 30 May 1916), & 182-185, Jan. 1917, & 89 & 244-262, Oct. 1918, & 309 (Report by A. Montgomerie, 18 March 1919), Aug. 1919; Willingdon to Montagu, 13 Aug. 1917, MP18; Chamberlain to Willingdon, 24 Feb. 1916, ACF12/32.

⁵ V to S/S, 5, 6 & 9 April & 22 May, & (KD) 9 & 21 March, & S/S to V, 3, 8 & 11 April, & (HD) 2 April & 8 June 1918, CP9; Islington to Chelmsford, 12 April 1918, CP4; H.Poll. 203, 207-208, & 212, June, & 244-262, Oct. 1918. Montagu believed that the Home Government acted on a 'black picture' (of Tilak's possible activities) painted in the Home Department telegram (see Montagu's Indian Diary, 15 April 1917), and this view has been accepted by at least one of Tilak's biographers (see D. V. Tahmankar, Lokamanya Tilak, London 1956, 252) and by R. C. Majumdar (see R. C., with A. K., Majumdar, edd., The History and Culture of the Indian People Vol. XI, Struggle for Freedom, Bombay 1969, 288-289). However, the Home Department, while admitting that there might be objections to Tilak's presence, had urged that he be allowed to travel. For Tilak's activities in Britain and his libel case, see T.V. Parvate, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Ahmedabad 1958, 414-455 & passim; & Ram Gopal, Lokamanya Tilak, London 1956, 442-452.

⁶ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 13 June 1918, CP4; V to S/S, 9 Sept. & (HD) 8 June, & S/S to V(HD), 11 & 24 June 1918, CP9; Montagu to Chamberlain, & Chamberlain to Montagu, 10 June 1918, ACF21/5/35 & 32; H.Poll. 227, Oct. 1918. For Nair see Appendix.

reforms deputations was raised again, the Government of India asked for instructions, and were directed to state that the question could not be considered at that stage. They promised that assistance would be given in the following year when a reforms bill would come before Parliament.⁷

The impression thus far is of clumsiness and insensitivity - although with the deputations this was almost wholly the responsibility of the London authorities. In other matters the Chelmsford administration had more success. Chelmsford had indicated his interest in public opinion even before assuming the viceroyalty. He wrote to Hardinge that he had decided to visit Calcutta as soon as possible 'to remove any soreness resulting from the change of the Capital to Delhi'.⁸ There were two consistent and intermixed motives in his response: he sought both to conciliate or forestall agitation, and to right recognised failures or abuses. In some cases there was also a desire to reward Indians for wartime loyalty or services.

In 1917, for example, Gandhi had started elaborate enquiries into the grievances of the peasantry in Champaran, Bihar. Some of the grievances were justified - particularly an arrangement enforcing the growing of indigo at a time when prices were falling, and a certain amount of extortion and intimidation by the landlords. Thus, when the local Commissioner had Gandhi arrested, the local Government pronounced this a 'very serious mistake of judgment' and ordered the Commissioner to give Gandhi 'every reasonable facility for obtaining the information desired by him'.⁹ Similarly, when the local Government themselves decided to require Gandhi to stop his enquiries, arguing that there was a danger of violence and that Gandhi had broken a promise to restrict his activities (he had in fact refused to give such a promise), the Government of India intervened and ordered that Gandhi should on the contrary be invited to join a formal committee of enquiry into the

⁷ See ILC Proceedings, 25 Sept. 1918, H.Poll. 225, Oct. 1918; S/S to V, 3 & 18 Sept., & V to S/S, 9 Sept. & 3 Oct. 1918, CP9. Chelmsford had objected to the ban, calling Montagu's suggested excuse 'too thin for anybody' and arguing that the only real answer would be 'bluntly to say that the embargo is "not ours but yours"'. He thought a deputation would be wise on all grounds, and hoped Montagu would be able to disabuse his colleagues 'of the awfulness of this imaginary bogey'. He was disappointed.

⁸ Chelmsford to Hardinge, 1 March 1916, CP15.

⁹ H.Poll. 323, July 1917.

situation. Chelmsford stressed that he had to take a wider view and insisted that a purely official enquiry as proposed by the local Government would not meet the needs of the situation. There would be a danger that Gandhi would not agree with the decision and would force the government to take action against him - it would be impolitic to risk a storm on such a matter, especially when genuine grievances existed. A public enquiry would satisfy outside opinion, and a prompt announcement might settle the unrest within Champaran.¹⁰ A similar policy was followed over river works at Hardwar, after Chelmsford had received anxious memorials, including one from the All-India Hindu Sabha, about the interruption of the sacred Ganges. He directed that the question should be re-negotiated; a compromise was eventually agreed whereby a new channel would be constructed to provide uninterrupted flow. The Home Department recognised that the changes would be expensive and might impair the efficiency of the canal works, but Chelmsford insisted that it was worth the extra trouble and money to avoid 'a big religious row'.¹¹

Concern for public opinion also expressed itself in positive measures. Chelmsford believed that one of the basic problems in India was the racialist attitude of the European community. He had once stigmatised that 'typically Australian' tendency to look on Indians (in Fiji) as 'an inferior race', and he was determined to rid India of this attitude - particularly what he called that 'carping and sneering at the capacity of the educated Indian which cuts like a lash of a whip'.¹²

¹⁰ See H.Poll. 314-339, July 1917; V to LG/Bihar & Orissa, 22 May, & Chelmsford to Gait, 8 June, & Gait to Chelmsford, 21 May 1917, CP18. See also The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. XIII (Jan. 1915 - Oct. 1917), Ahmedabad 1964, 362-446; K.K. Datta, History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar Vol. I, 1857-1928, Patna 1957, 167-280; B.R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi, London 1958, 156-162; H.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth (tr. Mahadev Desai), Ahmedabad 1940 (2nd ed.), 300-313; D.G. Tendulkar, Gandhi in Champaran, [Patna?] 1957; Rajendra Prasad, 'The Champaran Agrarian Policy', Hindustan Review, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 227 (July 1918), 49-56; & particularly documents nos. 32, 35, 71, 77, 79, 81, 85, 95, 100, 104 & 111, in B.B. Misra, ed., Select Documents on Mahatma Gandhi's Movement in Champaran 1917-1918, Bihar (Secretariat Press) 1963; and, for 19th century background, 'Indigo Plantation - A Source of Oppression', Bengal Past and Present Vol. LXXXII, No. 154 (July-Dec. 1963), 154-160, & Vol. LXXXIII, Part 1, No. 155 (Jan.-June 1964), 56-68.

¹¹ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 20 Dec. 1916, CP2; H.Poll. 178-179, April 1917, & also 335, Jan. 1918.

¹² Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 17 May, & to Archbishop of Brisbane, 5 March 1917, CP15.

Other people agreed. Montagu worried at the ill effects on Indians of their present subordination; Willingdon thought the 'real bed rock' of their problems was the 'arrogant superiority' adopted by the English. . . if this did not change it might lose them India.¹³ Most of the positive measures under Chelmsford may be interpreted as attempts to grapple with this central problem.

His Government sought to improve Indian standing on two main fronts - by improving India's international status and by removing internal discrimination. The war had provided an opportunity for interested people, notably the Round Table group and Lord Hardinge's Government, to press for a modification of India's inferior or 'subject' role in the Empire. In 1917 Indian members, Sir James Meston, Sir S. Sinha and the Maharaja of Bikaner, were admitted to the Imperial Conference and to meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet. Sir Robert Borden and W. F. Massey, the Prime Ministers of Canada and New Zealand, moved at the Conference that India should be represented in future. Of their admission to the War Cabinet, Philip Kerr wrote to Lionel Curtis: 'It would have been impossible to have recognised the status of Indians more completely than to have admitted them to the most secret conclaves of the British Empire'. In 1918, however, the question of Cabinet membership was still considered open; and Islington, the Under-Secretary of State for India, urged that one full member should be admitted and that a representative of the Indian states should attend when appropriate, when the Prime Ministers were to be accompanied by other ministers. The Colonial Office wanted Indians represented only as 'assessors' and by invitation. The Viceroy protested at this retrogression, and argued that the precedent of Bikaner and Sinha could not be abandoned without disappointment. The War Cabinet accepted Islington's compromise of allowing only one full representative, but in the event the Native States' representative was invited to most of

¹³ Montagu to Willingdon, 9 Aug. 1920, MP18, & Willingdon to Montagu, 27 July 1920, MP20. See also Lloyd to Montagu, 5 Nov. 1920, MP25, & Grant to Chelmsford, 30 Oct. 1920, CP25; the racial point had also been raised by Congress, as in Bishan Dhar's presidential address at the 1911-1912 session, criticising the British administration 'with its vested interests, its domineering habits, its unquestioned authority, its racial exclusiveness ...', and quoted by Tilak in 1917 (see D.V. Tahmankar, Lokamanya Tilak, London 1956, 252).

the meetings.¹⁴

There can be no doubt that the personal qualities of Bikaner and Sinha played a large part in securing this foothold; but credit for the policy must go to Austen Chamberlain, and for its defence to Montagu and Chelmsford. The practical results were not great - at the 1917 Imperial Conference the Indian representatives secured agreement for the Government of India's scheme to end discrimination against Indian travellers by establishing a principle of reciprocity in the treatment of the nationals of all countries of the Empire;¹⁵ but on the other hand Sinha's presence did nothing to deter a committee of the Imperial War Cabinet from resolving in 1917, contrary to the wishes of Indian Muslims regarding the suzerainty of the Caliph over Mecca, that 'No restoration of Turkish sovereignty or suzerainty should be permitted' in Arabia after the war.¹⁶ But the principle of Indian representation was more important.¹⁷ It established the right of India to behave towards the Dominions as if she shared their independent status. The admission of India to Imperial councils was illogical in that she was still a subject nation: this, like her later admission to the Paris Peace Conference and her founder membership of the League of Nations, arose out of her contribution to the war; but the anomaly should nevertheless be interpreted as a recognition that India must eventually come to play a fuller part in her own affairs.

¹⁴ See Islington to Chelmsford, 15 March 1918, CP4; S/S to V, 17 Jan. 1917, CP8; V to S/S, 12 Feb., & S/S to V (HD), 21 & 28 March 1918, CP9; [Kerr] to Curtis, 24 April 1917, Lothian Papers GD40/17/33; Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Imperial War Conference (8th day), 22-23, ACP47/3/1; ILC Proceedings, 19 March 1918, H.Poll. 96, June 1918; ibid. 91-101. See also Chelmsford's report and reference to Borden's praise of Sinha, Speeches I, 384-387, & see also ibid., 244-245, & K.M. Panikkar, His Highness The Maharaja of Bikaner, A Biography, London 1937, 177.

¹⁵ See Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings... (Imperial War Conference, 15th day), 117-120, ACP47/3/1; Chamberlain to Kerr, 24 April, & Kerr to Chamberlain, 27 April 1917, Lothian Papers GD40/17/34. For an early suggestion of reciprocity, see ibid. GD40/17/3, p.232.

¹⁶ See Imperial War Cabinet, 'Report of Committee on Terms of Peace (Territorial Desiderata) under Lord Curzon', ACP20/9/33.

¹⁷ For Chelmsford's appreciation of this see Speeches I, 384-387. For the antecedents of the change, see, for example, Lord Islington, 'Speech to Conference of Representatives of Home and Dominion Parliaments', 31 July 1916, H.Poll. 259, Oct. 1916, and, for a survey of the schemes into which India (like Ireland) had to be fitted, J.E.Kendle, 'The Round Table Movement and "Home Rule All Round"', Historical Journal, XI, 2 (1968), 332-353.

It was only a matter of time before India renewed her demand to be allowed to behave with similar independence and self-respect towards Britain. Predictably, that conflict came to a head first over the cotton duties: Indians and British officials in India had always resented the obvious subservience to Lancashire interests represented by a system which kept taxes upon internal cotton manufacture on a level with import duties - and as other countries began to raise import duties to protect their own industries, the contrast became more obvious and galling to Indian sentiment. Lord Hardinge, with the unanimous and emphatic support of his Council and the local governors, had attempted to raise the cotton duties to 5% while leaving the excise (on local manufactures) at 3½%. Sanction was refused on the grounds that raising the question in wartime would be 'little short of disastrous'.¹⁸ Chelmsford, keenly interested in developing Indian industries, expressed a forceful view of the cotton excise: it was, he wrote to Chamberlain, 'an open political sore'; it was clearly imposed to protect British industry; it fell most heavily on the poor who bought the coarser Indian cloth; and it might be used in future as a precedent for measures against any Indian industry which showed signs of competing with British products. Its abolition, he declared, would be a sine qua non of Indian participation in any scheme of imperial preference. Inclusion of these sentiments in an official despatch brought a strongly worded objection from Chamberlain; the despatch was toned down in deference to his remarks, but Chelmsford defended himself to Montagu on the grounds that his Government were bound to put forward their position.¹⁹ The position they put forward, significantly, was an Indian one in opposition to that held in the United Kingdom.

In view of the rejection of Hardinge's overtures, there was little that Chelmsford could do. During 1916, however, discussions had taken place in the India Office, following a suggestion by Lord

¹⁸ S/S to V, 26 Jan. 1916, ACP21/1/14; Memorandum by Lord Hardinge, with appended opinions, ACP21/2/1; & see Chamberlain to Guy Fleetwood Wilson, 9 April 1913, ACP10/3/62 - Chamberlain approved of tariff reform, but only as part of a 'general Empire policy' to be undertaken after the war. George Lloyd agreed, and later urged imperial preference (partly because it would please Indians and encourage local industry) - see Lloyd to Chelmsford, 22 May 1919, CP22. See also Sinha's Congress presidential address, 27 Dec. 1915, H.Poll. 358, Dec. 1916.

¹⁹ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 14 June, & to Montagu, 5 Oct. 1917, CP3.

Hardinge, on the size of the contribution which India might be expected to make to the cost of the war. A consensus was eventually reached at a top figure of £50 million, which Chelmsford and his Council agreed could be undertaken after the war, subject to deductions if there were expensive frontier operations in the interim. The Army Department also pointed out that India had already made large contributions and that there were limits on the extra taxation that would be possible or just while India remained 'a dependency, won - and in the last resort held - by military power'. Privately Chelmsford warned that 'every additional obligation ... will increase India's expectation of the benefits she is to derive from the war'. Nevertheless the Chancellor of the Exchequer named £100 million as the sum which would be well received.²⁰

Chelmsford and his Council replied that they could agree to such a contribution if they were permitted to raise a loan in India, place a super-tax on high incomes, perhaps increase the export duty on jute, and dispense with a surplus which they had accumulated by economies on civil expenditure. But they could not take these steps unless they were allowed to raise cotton duties to $7\frac{1}{2}\%$, to provide a margin and pay for beneficent expenditure. They would also want an undertaking that they would be allowed to raise the general tariff above $7\frac{1}{2}\%$, and to abolish cotton excise (now $3\frac{1}{2}\%$) as soon as they could afford the loss in revenue. Privately Chelmsford urged that India was poor, her government was not democratic, additional taxes might be fuel for agitators, and other avenues of taxation were closed - it would be undesirable to have special exactions from landowners, or to increase the salt tax and thus the burden on the very poor.²¹ It was implicit in these remarks that the enhanced cotton duties were not only financially necessary, but essential to reconcile Indians to the large contribution.²² Chelmsford later reported that, although in his belief a considerable body of opinion shared Malaviya's view (embodied in a resolution later withdrawn) that the contribution was too high, the

²⁰ See India Office notes on contribution, ACP21/1/11 & 15-19; various correspondence, ACP21/1/21-23; G/I(AD) to S/S, 6 Oct. 1916, ACP21/1/25; V to S/S, 21 Oct., Chamberlain to the Chancellor, 23 Nov., & S/S to V, 23 Dec. 1916, & draft, ACP21/1/27, 36, 40 & 41; & S/S to V, 29 Nov. 1916, ACP21/1/32 (& CP7).

²¹ S/S to V, 5 Jan., & V to S/S, 6 & 7 Jan. 1917, CP8 (& ACP21/1/43 & 44).

²² Fiscal independence was a long-standing Indian demand, arising out of Naoroji's theory of the 'economic drain'. See R.F. Masani, Dadabhai Naoroji, Delhi 1960, 77-88 & 138, & Stanley A. Wolpert, Tilak and Gokhale, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1962, 103-113 & 144. See also Colin Forbes Adam, Life of Lord Lloyd, London 1948, 142, for an official endorsement of the idea.

politicians had 'exercised a remarkable restraint' - without the cotton duties, he explained, there would have been no 'ready acquiescence' in the £100 millions.²³

Chamberlain had taken the point, and decided that he could carry the Cabinet. He telegraphed to Chelmsford asking him to place special stress on the link between the cotton duties and the war contribution, in order to strengthen his hand in England.²⁴ To the Cabinet he echoed Chelmsford's phrase, and explained that increased cotton duties were the sine qua non of the offer. On these terms, the Indian proposal was accepted.²⁵ Chamberlain defended the increase as a necessary war measure to a deputation from Lancashire cotton interests and to the House of Commons.²⁶ At one time he thought a government defeat possible if Liberal, Irish and Lancashire interests combined; but Lloyd George remained firm, and, as Asquith did not try to use the controversy, the Commons vote gave the Government a substantial majority. Chelmsford had telegraphed warning that if the opposition were to succeed 'the demand for Home Rule would receive a great, and who could say unjustifiable, stimulus'.²⁷

To the British in India the solution was ideal. The loan created goodwill for India²⁸ - it was a showy gesture, which Hardinge wished had been made in his time.²⁹ But it was obvious also that Chelmsford was finding in the war an excuse to do what he wanted. Perhaps more important, the increase in cotton duties introduced into India's relations with the United Kingdom that same principle of national interest, that same contradiction of India's inferior status,

²³ V to S/S, 11 March 1917, CP8 (& ACP21/2/14).

²⁴ S/S to V, 2 Feb. 1917, ACP21/1/28.

²⁵ Chamberlain to Hardinge, 10 Jan., Chamberlain, Cabinet memorandum, 25 Jan., Note by the Chancellor, 27 Jan., Statement by Meston before War Cabinet, 3 April 1917, ACP21/1/45, 59-60 & 69; House of Commons questions and replies, ACP21/2/3 & 10.

²⁶ Hardinge to Chamberlain, 10 Jan. 1917, ACP12/102; S/S to V, 2 Feb. & 10 & 15 March, & (F&PD) 13 March 1917, CP8.

²⁷ V to S/S, 11 March 1917, CP8 & ACP21/2/14; & see Speeches I, 319 & 388, & II, 25-28. On Lloyd George's attitude, see Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 10 & 15 March & 2 May 1917, CP3.

²⁸ See Meston to Chelmsford, 15 March 1917, Meston Papers I.

²⁹ Hardinge to Chamberlain, 10 Jan. 1917, ACP12/102.

which appeared in this period also in the relations with the Empire. Chelmsford had promised the Imperial Legislative Council that his Government would offer the 'most strenuous opposition' if any attempt were made to reintroduce the protection of Lancashire interests. In any postwar fiscal arrangements, he declared, India's interests would have to be considered.³⁰

A reversal of old public attitudes to India and Indians also meant an end to indentured emigration. Nothing perhaps was more indicative of India's subservient role within the Empire than the way her people were shipped around the various colonies to provide labour, often under poor conditions and with unfair contracts. Lord Hardinge had publicly defended Indian rights in South Africa. He had also agreed that indentured emigration must end.³¹ Chelmsford preferred bureaucratic methods, but was not less devoted to the cause - it was anyway not practical for any Indian government to refuse sympathy on these issues. At first, however, delay was unavoidable because of the agreement of Hardinge and Chamberlain to negotiations with other governments before indentures were banned.³² Chelmsford had to refuse the introduction of bills in the Imperial Legislative Council on the subject of emigration, in 1916 and again in February 1917. He had disliked having to do this, stressing that the Government sympathised with the Indian view and were on very weak ground, and asking the Secretary of State to urge the colonies to accept the position.³³ Indian indignation became greater with the revelation of an agreement, made but not announced by Hardinge, whereby a maximum delay of five years was to be allowed before a final abolition. About the same time the Government heard details of the degradation, including stories of sexual horrors, suffered by Indian women in Fiji. Chelmsford received a womens' deputation, and privately expressed his alarm at the possibility of the Fiji stories becoming known.³⁴ Unaware of Hardinge's agreement to the five year limit, he criticised the delays that had been allowed to 'creep in'; he insisted

³⁰ Speeches I, 388.

³¹ Sec B.R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi, London 1958, 116-117.

³² Chamberlain to Hardinge, 24 Feb. 1916, ACP12/31; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 28 Sept. & 24 Nov. 1916, CP2.

³³ See Speeches I, 46-49; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 28 Sept. 1916, CP2; V to S/S, 6 Oct. 1916, S/S to V(C&ID), 12 Jan. & 1 Feb., & V (C&ID) to S/S, 20 March 1917, CP8. In refusing the second bill Chelmsford used the excuse that investigation was needed and that legislation, when it came, should be a government measure; see Speeches I, 226-228.

³⁴ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 9 Feb. & 10 March 1917, CP3.

that agitation was 'very serious' and that 'the time for palliatives' was past.³⁵ The Commerce and Industry Department alleged that the Secretary of State did not realise the gravity of the situation, which had 'all the potency of a moral crusade'. Gandhi announced that he would try by force to prevent the recruiting of indentured labour, placing the Government in the odd predicament of perhaps having to prosecute for interference with a system which they had publicly condemned.³⁶

In the midst of this debate the Army Department requested that assisted emigration be prohibited under the Defence of India Rules in order to encourage army recruiting. Chelmsford decided that in this he had found 'an opportunity of finishing a vicious system' - if it were once banned, he believed, 'hard facts' would 'prevent its re-institution'. He pointed out that the Secretary of State could not claim he had not been warned of the growing agitation.³⁷ Chamberlain considered some of the alarm hysterical; he was not an admirer of Hardinge's policy on South Africa, and thought Chelmsford had no justification for adopting a similar approach when the colonies were not intransigent - Meston and Sinha, in a separate negotiation during the 1917 Imperial Conference, were able to secure agreement that the system must be ended.³⁸ But Chamberlain's hand was forced; habitually he was unwilling to interfere with the Government's discretion when it meant asking them to accept responsibility for an important policy of which they disapproved and on which they might be thought to be better informed - the scandals of the Mesopotamia campaign, then under investigation and attributable mainly to over-centralisation, could only have increased his reluctance. The Government of India, by invoking the twin arguments of agitation and the war, succeeded indirectly in prohibiting indentured emigration.

³⁵ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 15 Feb., & Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 2 March 1917, CP3; V to S/S, 16 & 28 Feb., & 9 March, & (C&ID) 9 March 1917, CP8.

³⁶ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 6 Oct. 1916, CP2, & 9 & 15 Feb., 3 & 10 March, & Reed to Claude Hill, 28 Feb. 1917, CP3; V(C&ID) to S/S, 18 Sept. 1916, CP7. Bonar Law, in the Colonial Office, requested 12 months' delay for the most minor changes; Chelmsford objected strongly; See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 6 Oct. 1916, CP2.

³⁷ See Speeches I, 286-287 & 295-296; V(C&ID) to S/S, 20 March 1917, CP8; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 3 March, & Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 16 & 29 March 1917, CP3.

³⁸ Speeches I, 387-388; Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 2, 16 & 29 March, & Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 3 March 1917, CP3.

In reply to Chamberlain's criticism, Chelmsford explained that he did not fear agitation except when it was strengthened by a moral issue; this came near to an admission that he had decided on the ban, not in the interests of order or the army, but because, as with the Lancashire cotton protection, he personally agreed that the system should be changed.³⁹ Chamberlain had also complained that Chelmsford had sacrificed negotiations and provided no alternative - but in a telegram of 19 March the Government of India had set out a scheme for safe-guarded free emigration,⁴⁰ and moreover the conference organised by the Colonial Office continued its work in July and recommended a scheme which was rather less liberal than the Government of India had wanted but which still provided, as Montagu urged, unprecedented advantages for Indian colonists.⁴¹ The conclusions were, however, largely academic, as the Government of India refused to consider the introduction of any new scheme until Indian opinion had begun to ask for one.⁴² They continued to look after Indian rights overseas, sending deputations to Ceylon, Fiji and the Malay States, and attacking discriminatory legislation in South and East Africa - Chelmsford considered that he had pledged himself 'in the most unmistakable way to stand up for Indian rights in Crown colonies'.⁴³

At the end of 1920 the emigration controversy was reopened when C.F. Andrews reported on further terrorisation of Indians in Fiji. Towards the end of January, the Government, having sent yet another deputation to investigate in Fiji, decided to introduce a bill on emigration both because the Defence of India Act was due to expire and

³⁹ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 28 April 1917, CP3. He had 'complete sympathy' with the Indian point of view: see Chelmsford to Archbishop of Brisbane, 5 March 1918, CP15. For some Indian attitudes to indentured emigration and the campaign for its abolition, see Padmini Sengupta, Sarojini Faidu, London 1966; Benarsidas Chaturvedi & Majorie Sykes, Charles Freer Andrews, London 1949, 120-123 & also 154-156; M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography ... (tr. Mahadev Desai), Ahmedabad 1940 (2nd ed.), 295-297; & The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XIII (Jan. 1915 - Oct. 1917), Ahmedabad 1964, especially 339 & 354-355. See also earlier campaigns and a description of conditions in South Africa, in B.R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi, London 1958, especially 46-50.

⁴⁰ V(C&ID) to S/S, 19 March 1917, CP8.

⁴¹ S/S to V(C&ID), 1 Feb. & 29 May, & V(C&ID) to S/S, 3 June 1917, CP8.

⁴² See, for example, S/S to V(CD), 7 & 25 Jan., & V(CD) to S/S, 15 Jan. 1921, CP14.

⁴³ Speeches II, 242-245 & 453-456; Chelmsford to Montagu, 29 Jan., 4 Feb. & 7 July 1920, CP6.

because renewed public interest made it necessary for them to formulate their policy. Chelmsford had already insured that there would be no return to the indenture system - at the time of the ban he had announced to the Imperial Legislative Council and to the women's deputation that, in his view, reintroduction was impossible. The Government, therefore, proposed to prohibit all assisted emigration to countries where Indians did not enjoy the same political rights as other British subjects, to permit and even encourage other free emigration, and to appoint agents in appropriate countries to protect the interests of Indian settlers. Their bill permitted the emigration of skilled workers under certain conditions, except to any country specifically excluded; and prohibited the emigration of unskilled workers except to any country specifically approved.⁴⁴ Thus India had asserted her right to pass laws, against the interests of other parts of the Empire, without any prior agreement having been reached. The eventual legislation may not have violated the understanding reached with the Colonial Office, for it was open for certain countries to be approved for emigration; but, like the Indian policy which preceded it, the new law made such London-based agreements irrelevant. The Government of India were taking the sort of action normally taken only by independent nations.

Under Chelmsford there was a willingness also to consider the removal of racial discrimination in internal policies. As Indians participated more, and more equally, in government, certain adjustments were inevitable. Obvious steps, however, were not always easy. Throughout the viceroyalty, for example, the Government of India tried to persuade the Secretary of State and the Council of India to modify the rule forbidding British officials to receive presents from Indians - in many cases this rule was now absurd, embarrassing to the British and offensive to Indians. But the London authorities refused to change - the best Montagu could do was advise Chelmsford to do a little 'judicious rule-breaking'.⁴⁵ But in other more important matters the response was less wooden and bureaucratic.

⁴⁴ See V(CD) to S/S, 20 Dec. 1920, CP13, & 15 & 20 Jan., & S/S to V(CD), 7 Jan. 1921, CP14.

⁴⁵ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 17 March (with enclosures: Shafi to Chelmsford, 11 March, & Chitnavis, & Currimbhoy to Chelmsford, 17 March) & 30 Oct., & Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 & 15 April & 10 Nov. 1920, CP6; G/I(HD) to S/S, 7 Sept. 1917 & 16 July 1918, S/S to G/I, 14 Dec. 1917 & 30 Jan. 1919, & HD Circular, 13 Oct. 1919, & replies, H.Public 86, Sept. 1917, 76-77, July 1918, 367-388, Oct. 1919, & 43-54, May 1920.

The Arms Act, prohibiting the bearing or ownership of arms by any except specially exempted Indians, was one great source of discontent.⁴⁶ In Hardinge's time, the Government of India, admitting that the racial distinction - no European was subject to the Act - was 'invidious', proposed an all-inclusive licensing system, with moderately high fees except for persons required to carry arms in the course of their employment. Local governments generally approved the proposal, but the Government of the Panjab and later, in London, the Council of India pointed out that there would be ill-feeling if all Indian exemptions were abolished. Under Chelmsford the Government of India agreed to retain some personal as opposed to racial exemptions. This decision made delays inevitable,⁴⁷ and the Home Department had recorded that local government replies had generally strengthened their belief that a complete licensing system would be preferable. The decision to allow some exemptions was in fact made under pressure from London - Chamberlain had endorsed the Council of India's interpretation and urged it upon Chelmsford.⁴⁸

The Home Department began by consulting local governments on the exemptions to be retained. They suggested two categories for consideration: full exemption for a limited number, including heads of governments and great zamindars; and exemption from enquiry before receipt of a license for persons gazetted by name at the discretion of the local government.⁴⁹ Four provinces, Bombay, the United and the Central Provinces, Burma and the Northwest Frontier Province, continued to support total licensing, but the remainder were unwilling to see hereditary privileges taken away - there was a feeling that they should not risk disaffecting a loyal class in order to appease politicians.⁵⁰ The Government of India, after considering these replies, produced a third plan, a compromise which moved as far as possible in the direction of full licensing while still retaining an element of the former privileges. They suggested, in July 1918, an even smaller number of

⁴⁶ See Speeches I, 389.

⁴⁷ Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Nov. 1918, CP4.

⁴⁸ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 5 April, & 16 May 1916 (with minute by Daljit Singh, 13 May), CP2; H.Poll. 146-147, March 1916, & 136-148, March 1917.

⁴⁹ HD circular, 20 March 1917, H.Poll. 149, March 1917.

⁵⁰ H.Police 81-83, Aug. 1918.

full exemptions, but a very wide class of persons to whom licenses would be issued without investigation. The proposed list was generous to Indians, although not to officials - it included all princes, title-holders, Coorgs, various local notables, but only senior executive officers.⁵¹ The aim was clearly to introduce a licensed system with the least possible inconvenience to those who might be offended at the loss of their privileges. There was little concern about European sensibilities - the Government ignored the more fundamental complaints from the European Association of Calcutta, and later were unmoved by criticisms in the Anglo-Indian press.⁵²

After two years the Government had produced what seemed like a workable and sensible plan. There remained the need to render it acceptable and to reassure any doubts about their intentions. At the second session of 1918, the question of the Arms Act was referred to a committee of the Imperial Legislative Council, with which official representatives of the provinces were associated.⁵³ A year later new regulations were issued.⁵⁴ Chelmsford explained that they were governed by three principles - racial discrimination was ended; arms were readily available to suitable persons; and they were kept from the unsuitable.⁵⁵

Another outstanding grievance, of deep political significance, concerned the Indian army. Many of the attentions lavished on the army under Chelmsford - improvements in pay and conditions, land grants and

⁵¹ HD circular, 26 July 1918, ibid.

⁵² H. Police, 131-136, Feb., & 157-209, Dec. 1920. (They were ready to discuss details, but not the underlying objection that changes in policy had virtually disarmed the Europeans; see also below, note 55).

⁵³ See H. Police 131-156, Feb. 1920; V to S/S, 9 July, & (HD), 21 Oct. 1918, CP9. The immediate reason for the Act was to avoid a situation in which people no longer exempted would be breaking the law - see the following, note 54.

⁵⁴ The main provisions of the new regulations followed the earlier suggestions - a removal of any racial exemptions and a general curtailment of persons formerly exempted by the discretionary powers allowed under section 27 of the Indian Arms Act 1878. The Arms Amendment Act of 1919 provided an opportunity for the Government to explain and gain approval for its new policy, but the Act's provisions merely substituted a new section 16 in the 1878 Act, to allow deposit and sale of arms by persons no longer exempted.

⁵⁵ Chelmsford to Montagu, 13 Oct. 1920, CP6. (Chelmsford was rejecting the 'strain of antagonism' which underlay detailed criticisms of the new regulations.)

pensions for discharged soldiers, even the establishment of a school for the sons of officers - were essentially in the nature of rewards for services.⁵⁶ The most important innovation, however, was a political gesture in answer to public opinion. Under Chelmsford, the racial barrier within the army was breached for the first time, and Indians were permitted to hold King's commissions. The decision was political also in its repercussions: if India was to be held by force, then the ultimate control of the Indian army had to be retained in British hands; alternatively, if Indians were to govern their own affairs, they would have to be admitted into partnership in the leadership of their own army - whether European officers liked it or not.

Commissions for Indians were not a new cause. Minto had strongly supported the proposal; and Hardinge had given it prominence in his famous memorandum on postwar questions. Under Hardinge, however, there had been disagreement on details - the Commander-in-Chief and a minority of the Council and the local governors being more cautious than the viceroy.⁵⁷ Chelmsford recognised that while divisions continued in India there was little hope of convincing the military authorities in London. He considered asking the army to place one or two men on duty to formulate a plan.⁵⁸ In the meantime progress had been blocked in London. The Secretary of State had suggested a few immediate commissions as a provisional measure; even this had been turned down by the War Office. The Cabinet were too busy to consider the question.⁵⁹ In February 1917, however, Chamberlain was ready to try again. He thought he could convince the War Office if he confined his proposal to commissions for a few Indians of 'unquestionable suitability'.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 12 Oct. 1916, CP2; Speeches I, 381-383.

⁵⁷ See Mary Kynynmond, Countess of Minto (ed.), India, Minto and Morley, 1905-1910, London 1934, 265; Hardinge, Note on Grants of Commissions to Indians (with enclosures), ACP21/3/2; S/S to V, 17 Nov., V to S/S, 24 Dec., Hardinge to Duff, 18 Dec., & Duff to Hardinge, 21 Dec. 1915, ACP21/3/3. The demand had also been put forward by Sinha in his Congress Presidential address, 27 Dec. 1915; see H.Poll. 358, Dec. 1916.

⁵⁸ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 21 April 1916, CP2.

⁵⁹ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 5 April, & see also 22 Aug. 1916, CP2.

⁶⁰ S/S to V(AD), 5 & 19 Feb. 1917, CP8. See also Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 14 Feb. 1917, CP3.

But by this time the Indian army plan was complete; the Army Department suggested four lines of advance. In future, for suitable, educated and well-born Indians, there should be ten places a year reserved at Sandhurst; for promising Indian soldiers, there should be a non-commissioned officers' school established in India - exceptionally brilliant graduates might also be awarded British commissions. For the present, Indian officers of distinguished service would be granted British commissions, and honorary commissions, with increases in pay and pensions, would be awarded to one or two Indian officers from each unit.⁶¹ The India Office was at first unhappy about the suitability of Sandhurst training for the posts which, in their view, Indians would be likely to hold; but the Government of India insisted that only Sandhurst education would mean equality for Indian officers and prevent any exacerbation of racial feeling - British and Indian officers were to consider themselves part of the same cadre. Chamberlain accepted this view and placed it before the War Office. It was rejected. Chamberlain prepared a minute to take the matter to the Cabinet.⁶²

At this point Chamberlain resigned as a result of the findings of the Mesopotamia Commission. Edwin Montagu, on taking up office, found Chamberlain's minute and circulated it with his support.⁶³ On 2 August 1917, opposition having been overcome by Montagu and Curzon, the Cabinet accepted the principle of commissions for Indians. Nine named officers were to receive immediate commissions under one part of the Indian army scheme. The remainder of the recommendations were still in doubt.⁶⁴ The Army Department sent a despatch embodying a full version of their proposals. Most of the cadets were to be educated at Dehra Dun, on public school lines, before being sent to Sandhurst; on gaining commissions, they were to be able to elect to join the Indian army (after one year's service with a British regiment), thus bypassing the Unattached List, from which permanent commissions were awarded in strict seniority or by place at graduation.⁶⁵ The War

⁶¹ V(AD) to S/S, 8 March 1917, CP8.

⁶² S/S to V(AD), 28 March & 5 May, S/S to V, 29 March, & V(AD) to S/S, 17 April, CP8, & see S/S to V, 19 Oct. 1917, ACP21/3/7.

⁶³ Chamberlain, Memorandum, 10 July, & Montagu, Note, 20 July 1917, ACP21/3/4.

⁶⁴ Montagu to Chelmsford, 3 Aug. 1917, CP3; S/S to V, 2 Aug. 1917, CP8; Curzon to Chamberlain, 25 Aug. 1917, ACP14/1/5a. The agreement was announced; see S/S to V(AD), 16 & 18 Aug. 1917, CP8.

⁶⁵ G/I(AD) to S/S, 3 Aug. 1917, ACP21/3/6.

Office prepared to fight a rearguard action against anyone schooled in India and against the admission of Indian officers to any but the Indian army. But the Government of India accepted their objections to Dehra Dun, and, although they reacted sharply against any formal 'colour bar', pointed out that the War Office could refuse any posting to the British army on their own discretion.⁶⁶ In April 1918, after a conference between the India and War Offices, agreement was finally reached along these lines. The total number of commissions, from Sandhurst and in promotions from the ranks, was not to exceed twenty in any one year. The Government of India had asked that no limit be stated.⁶⁷

Chelmsford had never expected that the proposals would satisfy 'vocal politicians', but he knew that greater concessions were unlikely from the War Office.⁶⁸ The decision in 1918, however, following on the expectation raised by the first nine appointments of the year before, seemed particularly inadequate. Chelmsford at first decided he would make no special announcement, unlike in 1917. He wrote to Montagu: 'It is useless to display a crumb and say "gentlemen, believe me, this is really a loaf"'.⁶⁹ The Army Department, on the other hand, suggested that they should be allowed to announce, in addition to the permanent changes, that up to two hundred temporary wartime commissions would be awarded. The Cabinet, while accepting the permanent measures, rejected this proposal, and then asked for more information. Their position was uncertain - and Sir T.W. Holderness at the India Office believed that a difference of opinion was revealed in the different tones of the private and official telegrams reporting the decision to India. The Prime Minister, in the words of his own addition to the private telegram, was chiefly 'anxious to have a fuller statement' of the military reasons, whereas Curzon and Chamberlain had expressed 'more decided disapproval'.⁷⁰ The ambiguity was to prove useful. Montagu, who was

⁶⁶ S/S to V, 19 Oct., & V(AD) to S/S, 13 Nov. 1917, ACP21/3/7.

⁶⁷ See Montagu to Chelmsford, 16 May & 15 June 1918, CP4; S/S to V(AD), 5 April 1918, CP9 (& ACP21/3/7).

⁶⁸ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 13 May, & see Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 11 April 1917, CP3.

⁶⁹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 28 April 1918, CP4. A communique was issued on 21 June; see V(AD) to S/S, 13 July 1918, CP9.

⁷⁰ S/S to V, 23, 24, 26 & 27 April, & (AD), 22 & 28 April 1918, CP9 (& ACP21/3/8); ACP21/3/9-11.

in India, launched a vigorous memorandum asking for reconsideration. He claimed that the two hundred commissions were essential to India's recruiting efforts, in which the home Government had recently asked to see improvements.⁷¹ The Government of India also protested, and promised up to half a million new recruits if they were allowed to offer the stimulus of the temporary commissions - they had in mind about fifty of these every six months. They insisted that there would be no lowering of standards; and they rejected a suggestion that the Indian Land Force cadre might be revived as an alternative - this, they held, would merely perpetuate an irritating racial distinction.⁷² Lord Curzon rounded on these pleas with a strident Cabinet minute. This meant, he claimed, that commissions were to be used as 'political rewards'; this was not the type of officer they wanted; this would discredit the whole commissions scheme.⁷³ The question came before the Cabinet after Montagu's return. Chamberlain, irritated by Curzon's interjections, became a vigorous supporter, while the War Office, in Montagu's description, tried to get a hearing but were routed. The Cabinet's main fear on the commissions - that British cadets would be discouraged from applying - did not apply to the temporary arrangement. The two hundred commissions were approved. There was one rather important proviso, imposed for fear of unduly raising Indian hopes. The concession was not to be published - presumably the effect for the benefit of recruiting was to be gradual.⁷⁴

One of Curzon's objections had had more than immediate significance, and its rejection by the Cabinet was of far greater importance than the immediate decision. Curzon claimed: 'The more you hand over the civil administration of India to the Indian, the more you will have to depend in the last resort for the stability of the British connection upon the prestige and authority of the army.' It was precisely this belief that the policy of Indian commissions had sought to contest; it was precisely this view of the British raj which the whole tenor of Chelmsford's positive measures sought to deny. The

⁷¹ See Montagu to Chelmsford, 16 May 1918, CP4; Montagu, Cabinet Memorandum, 27 May 1918, ACP21/3/12.

⁷² V(AD) to S/S, 18 May 1918, CP9 (& ACP21/3/12).

⁷³ Curzon, Cabinet Note, 3 June 1918, ACP21/3/13.

⁷⁴ S/S to V, 13 June, & (AD), 12 June 1918, CP9; Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 June 1918, CP4.

question was how India was to be held. The logic of Chelmsford's policy - and the issue of army commissions now formed part of a consistent whole - was that India should be held not by force but by partnership and transfer of power.

All these positive measures Montagu related directly to public opinion and constitutional reform, calling them 'lubricants'. He wanted rather more of them than one overworked and understaffed administration could have tackled. Chelmsford and the Government of India placed more emphasis on the virtues of each measure in itself. Chelmsford identified three major concerns of his policy in 1917 - to reward the Indian army; to remove all Indian grievances, whether material or sentimental; and to define the goal of British rule, mapping out the roads which would lead to it.⁷⁵ The first two of these could have been espoused by any benevolent government; the last, as interpreted by Chelmsford, imposed a view of the British raj as a preparation for Indian self-government. Thus the removal of grievances and the definition of the goal were always interrelated: those causes of discontent which were admitted to be material, could only be put right in ways which did not contradict the general conception of the British role in India - they were part of the mapping out; they provided some of the roads. Chelmsford told his Legislative Council in 1916: 'these preoccupations [with the war] do not and will not prevent the Government of India from giving their earnest attention to the problems of this great Empire. The growing self-respect and self-consciousness of her people are plants that we ourselves have watered, and if the blossom is not always what we expect, it is not for us to blame the plant.'⁷⁶ The concern with the response to public opinion, the assertion of India's role, and the denial of racial superiority, were not only appeasements, for all the paternalism of Chelmsford's tone. They were part of an Imperial purpose, and led to Imperial partnership.

Yet relations with the influential and articulate classes worsened steadily under Chelmsford. He had emphasized the value of educated support and the dangers that a minority could infect the masses; as opposition gained a wider basis, his predictions were proved correct. He had tried to counter Simla's slowness and isolation by introducing consultation at every level of his administration, and his Government

⁷⁵ Speeches I, 380-381.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 202-203.

had attempted to use modern methods of publicity and propoganda; his and their unpopularity grew regardless. The problem was partly that Chelmsford's personality was different from Hardinge's; it was perhaps more that all Hardinge's promises had matured in Chelmsford's time, through Chelmsford's own energies and with the rapid developments in the situation and in Indian hopes as the result of the war - the time had come when fine speeches had to be given a definite form, and inevitably that form turned out to be a disappointment, under Chelmsford as it would have been under Hardinge. But nevertheless the most cogent reason for the unpopularity was probably the current belief that there was a contradiction in government policy. Much of that part of the population which was truly political, by tradition and by resources in publicity and education, presented itself to the Government as unalterably opposed to their 'alien rule'. The disaffected people recognised that some of the government measures were beneficial; but they consistently doubted the Government's good faith. They were not impressed by what Montagu rather ominously called 'lubricants'. They suggested that each concession merely sweetened the next indignity. The cry of Tilak, that home rule was more important than good rule, had been sharpened by the belief that 'good rule' was invariably tempered with repression.

But more than this, perhaps Indians were right to suspect Chelmsford's policy. When he helped improve India's status or espoused Indian causes against British or imperial interests, it was because he believed that the Indian government should try to reflect the will of the people; when he agreed to remove racial disabilities, it was because he believed the government should treat Indians as equal citizens not as subject peoples; when he urged army commissions for Indians, even if the change had to be forced on British officers, it was because he thought full participation by Indians in all aspects of their country's life was both desirable and inevitable. But these were still limited aims. It does not seem that Chelmsford did these things because he intended to help create a wholly independent India, or an independent wholly Indian army.⁷⁷ 'The question was how India was to be held':

⁷⁷ A shift to these aims was of course only a matter of time (and not much time) in view of the innovations under Chelmsford. With the army there is some ambiguity, but it seems the change came in response to the new situation after the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. In October 1920 the Esher Committee, appointed to consider army organisation, recommended closer links with the Imperial Army, and, contrary to Chelmsford's policy, a weakening in Government of India supervision. The IIA reacted with a hostile resolution on 17 February 1921, and a committee on 5 March;

Chelmsford's aim was conservative, his dispute with reactionaries over the means of preserving British supremacy. He postulated partnership for Indians and ultimately a drastic reduction in British involvement, but alongside the continuance of British Empire. He looked forward to the transfer of power, not of sovereignty. In practical terms the distinction was meaningless, but this was just what was alarming - for might not the reservation of sovereignty be used in practice, as it was in the 1919 reforms, to limit the transfers of power which had been conceded in principle? Thus, although the suspicion may not have been formulated precisely at the time, the limit to Chelmsford's imagination was perhaps crucial for the reaction to his policies. It affected his presentation of his approach; it qualified his promises; it made his intentions seem suspect. Perhaps altogether it helped jaundice his reception; we shall be considering this question again. Certainly, as far as public opinion was concerned, it is clear at least that any success claimed by the Government of India was hedged in: it had to stand against a growing and seemingly inevitable tide of nationalism, uncompromising and ethnocentric.

on 28 March in a series of resolutions it sought to establish the principles that the army should be controlled in India, increasingly led by Indian and India-trained officers, and used for Indian purposes or, if in imperial defence, then on terms of parity with Dominion armies. In 1921 the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Rawlinson, appointed the Shea Committee which (at his prompting) advised complete indianisation in 30 years. In 1944 the proportion of British to Indian officers was about 1.3:1. See R.C. (with A.K.) Majumdar, The History and Culture of the Indian People Vol.XI, Struggle for Freedom, Bombay 1969, 800-802.

PART TWO: AGITATION.

The British government in India had two replies to Indian political activity. One was repression; the other was conciliation. There were also two faces to British rule: one of a permanent autocracy, and the other of an agency preparing Indians for future self-government under British suzerainty. It would be possible to argue that repression was the weapon of autocracy, and conciliation a necessary corollary to the approval of future self-government. The later history of the British period would then be seen as a struggle between two opposed goals, two different paternalisms. Lord Curzon, who, as Viceroy, was the extreme exponent of 'good' as opposed to self-government, suppressed Indian opinion with efficiency, more by ignoring it than by incarcerating its leaders.¹ He would be represented as the flourish near the end of one tradition; other viceroys would be ranged as supporters of his or the rival school.

These polarities are useful as a framework, but otherwise are too facile. They would encourage a tendency to divide viceroys and their councillors into heroes and rogues, or statesmen and bigots. Yet governments with very different policies or reputations often had personnel and principles in common. There was never a simple division and conflict between repression preserving autocracy and conciliation leading to the transfer of power. Always both elements coexisted in the same administration. If repression sometimes found a place alongside the promise of self-government, the reason was not necessarily that the promise was false, held out by cynical bureaucrats who had no intention of relinquishing power: even the most ardent official advocate of self-government insisted that progress must be gradual, and that in the interim the British must retain control, discourage certain political ambitions, and put down violence. Many Indians agreed. It is sometimes surprising to remember how long some nationalists accepted at least the principle of this British supremacy. In June 1920, M.K. Gandhi

¹ See S. Gopal, British Policy in India 1858-1905, Cambridge 1965, 224-245, 261, 266-268 & 271-272; V.C. Bhutani, 'Some Aspects of the Administration of Lord Curzon', Bengal Past and Present LXXXV, Part II No.160 (July-Dec. 1966), 157-181; & for correspondence, S. Bhattacharya, 'Lord Curzon and the Indian National Congress', Calcutta Review 131, No.1 (April 1954). 'Good' government, the orthodox and self-centred concentration on efficiency, rampant in the secretariats, is discussed, for 1857-1907, in Valentine Chirol, India Old and New, London 1921, 102-103.

still called himself 'a devoted well-wisher of the British Empire'.²

It follows that some assessments of viceroys and administrations have been too simple. Lord Chelmsford provides a notable case in which confusion has led to an incomplete verdict. His name is associated with important constitutional reforms, and he named the future transfer of power as the goal of his government; but chiefly he has been blamed for brutal repression and a lack of sympathy with politicians. He himself, writing to Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, explicitly denied newspaper suggestions that his arrival had changed the spirit of Indian government - he cited his advocacy of reforms, and stressed the responsibility of his popular predecessor, Lord Hardinge, for drastic measures against unrest.³ Chelmsford, inevitably the heir of a policy which has been attributed also to Lord Ripon,⁴ could dispute with the educated classes only the timing not the principle of the advance. Nevertheless, during Chelmsford's viceroyalty, constructive measures were popularly attributed to the Secretary of State, after 1917 the persuasive Edwin Montagu; and as repression was often adopted on local initiative, the tendency has been to conclude that Chelmsford and his Council had very little policy of their own.⁵ The assumption has been that liberal measures and the acceptance of repression were mutually exclusive, and that, when they occurred in the same administration, each must have been advocated by a different person. There have never been any grounds for this assumption.

It was the situation in India that was changing. British policy had been undergoing a long process of adjustment to political India. A recent commentary has shown how, in the nineteenth century under Lytton and Dufferin, different policies emerged from a debate on the proper attitude to the English-educated, and revealed, in the effective exclusion of Indians from higher administration, the

² Gandhi to Chelmsford, 22 June 1920, CP24. More particularly, see B.C. Pal, The New Policy, Madras [1918], 50-53, for the acceptance of British control of the Imperial Government of India.

³ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 25 Aug. 1916, CP2.

⁴ S. Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884, London 1953, 222-223.

⁵ See, for example, R. Danzig, 'Common Ground: the Early Stages of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms', unpublished Oxford B.Phil. thesis, June 1967, 19-31 & 93-102; & above, pp.8ff. & below, pp.313-314.

ascendency of the goal of permanent autocracy. This tendency was also strong enough to prevail against the personal opposition of Ripon.⁶ Lord Curzon went ahead to partition Bengal in defiance of local sentiment, arguing that it was useless to try to persuade people, who would be convinced only by a fait accompli. He has been accused of owing more to efficiency than to vision;⁷ but he too had a kind of vision, dangerous to Indian advance, in his belief in the Englishman's sacred duty to maintain the Indian Empire. After Curzon, this position became more vulnerable, and willingness to conciliate politicians increased in rough proportion with their vehemence and popular support. Lord Minto, Curzon's successor, recognised that the Indian National Congress could not be ignored, at the same time as he prepared to deal with 'revolutionary' crime. It was no longer possible for the scorn, with which Lytton and Curzon had regarded educated Indians, to find a place in public policy - even in the Indian Civil Service, the voice of change had to be heard.⁸ 'But Minto still believed that the Congress represented a section which would never play a large part in government;⁹ and the constitutional reforms of 1909 did little more than half-consciously continue, as on previous occasions, a faltering progress which was to lead to self-determination. With the 1919 reforms, however, the progress ceased to be unwitting. During the 1914-1918 war, the need for adjustment had suddenly become more acute.

There were many reasons for the acceleration in the rate of change. Democratic ideals were abroad; Japan, an Asian nation, and Ireland, a British colony, had asserted themselves against imperial powers; in India, among other factors, wartime loyalty and hardships seemed to justify hopes of political concessions - rumour reported, accurately, that these were already being discussed by the government. As hardship grew more severe, Indian expectations multiplied.¹⁰ More-

⁶ Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, Cambridge 1968, 131-193.

⁷ Gopal, British Policy ... 1858-1905, 227 & 249.

⁸ See for example E. Maconochie, Life in the Indian Civil Service, London 1926, 251-252.

⁹ S.R. Wasti, Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement 1905 to 1910, Oxford 1964, 22-25 & 93.

¹⁰ Explanations are suggested in A. Besant, India: Bond or Free, Adyar, Madras 1939, 176-208, & Congress Speeches, Adyar, Madras 1917, 50-77 (or see excerpts in C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Annie Besant, Delhi 1963,

over, in 1916, nationalist politics had entered a critical phase. In the country and the Congress, influence and standing were being won by 'extremists', politicians who advocated more militant nationalism, short of violent revolution, under such leaders as the Hindu revivalist, B.G. Tilak, and the Irish Theosophist, Annie Besant. Tilak, in particular, had spent a lifetime gathering support, and few literate families in Maharashtra can have escaped his influence.¹¹ With the war, economic distress and burgeoning political interest, the time had come to reap the benefits of this long campaign. Congress members, on the whole, under moderate leadership, had merely informed the government once a year of their opinions as educated Indians; the new agitators tried to create a climate of opinion among people at large, and to use this support to bargain with the government. As the Congress at first was slow to change, Tilak and Mrs. Besant formed Home Rule Leagues, and, for the first time, Indian opinion confronted the government as a permanently organised and active opposition. The leagues introduced a simple demand, borrowed from Ireland, and, using this slogan in their name and in newspapers and lecture tours, sought, in Mrs. Besant's phrase, to 'awaken the masses'. Impatience with Congress politeness and petitions had already led to terrorism,¹² for which the government could have only one answer; now impatience was being channelled, more or less within constitutional limits, into a new and ultimately more dangerous activism.¹³

The older nationalism could not remain unaffected. At Lucknow

111-145); &, in more pedestrian fashion, in H.C. Mookerjee, 'The War of 1914-1918 and the Appearance of Discontent', Calcutta Review 83, 3 (June 1942) & 84, 1-3 (July, Aug. & Sept. 1942). Tilak called for Britain to 'make a start in its own Empire' with the Allies' wartime principles of self-determination and democracy; see D.V. Tahmankar, Lokamanya Tilak, London 1956, 284.

¹¹ See for example D.D. Karve (tr.), The New Brahmins, Berkeley, Los Angeles & Cambridge 1963, 114 & 125-284.

¹² See P.R. Palande, ed. (for G/Bombay), Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India Vol.II (1885-1920), Bombay 1958, 333-540; & R.C. Majumdar, 'The Genesis of Extremism', & Gopal Halder, 'Revolutionary Terrorism', in A. Gupta, ed., Studies in the Bengal Renaissance, Jadarpur, Calcutta 1958; & R.C., with A.K., Majumdar edd., The History and Culture of the Indian People Vol. XI, Struggle For Freedom, Bombay 1969, 198-235.

¹³ See Palande, op. cit., 687-694; N.C. Kelkar, Home Rule and the Home Rule League, [Poona] 1917; H.F. Owen, 'Toward Nation-wide Agitation and Organisation: the Home Rule Leagues, 1915-1918', in D.A. Low, ed., Soundings in Modern South Asian History, London 1968.

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 in 1917, as part of a new emphasis on broad representation and unity, later to be summed up in the cry of 'Hindu-Muslim-ki-jai', the Congress entered a brief but fateful alliance with the Muslim League. In successive stages Congress organisation was strengthened and made permanent at both local and national levels, using the Home Rule approach and sometimes the local branches of the Leagues. Those who favoured less forceful methods gradually left, and the Congress found, at the moment when it seemed to wish to develop as a national alternative to the British system, that it could not avoid turning into a disciplined political party. Indian nationalism acquired, if not always new people, then new perspectives and methods; the Congress came to provide, at the same time, a militant accompaniment to debates and a positive alternative to violence. Gandhi, already appealing to the masses by his championing of the grievances of the ryots in Champaran and Kaira and the mill-workers of Ahmedabad, was both the chief beneficiary and an agent of this change.¹⁴

It has been recognised that this development in Indian politics was answered by a corresponding change in government policies. Professor Dietmar Rothermund has claimed that, in the struggle with national agitation, the government 'veered away from unmitigated autocratic rule and tended toward a manipulative maintenance of power' - what I have called autocracy and conciliation. He does not, however, specifically point out that the process occurred unevenly.¹⁵ Professor D.A. Low has discerned, in policies between 1920 and 1922, a policy which he characterises as a determination to 'stalk Gandhi, not martyr him'. He too, however, has not distinguished government attitudes to different types of political activity; he dismisses the policy under Chelmsford

¹⁴ This subject may be pursued, in addition to standard commentaries and biographies, in Gopal Krishna, 'The Development of the Indian National Congress as a Mass Organization, 1918-1923', Journal of Asian Studies XXIV (1965-6), 413-430; Gopi Nath, 'The Home Rule Movement in India' (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Agra 1962), summarised in Quarterly Review of Historical Studies (Calcutta) Vol. 3, No.3; N.R. Phatak, ed. (for G/Maharashtra), Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India Vol. III (Mahatma Gandhi, Part I: 1915-1922) Bombay 1965, 46-47, 71, 76-88. On 'Hindu-Muslim-ki-jai' see D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma Vol. II (1920-1929), Bombay 1951, 5-8 & 9. On the Lucknow (or Lakhnau) Pact and wartime politics, see R.C., with A.K., Majumdar, op. cit., 242-260. For a discussion of the Congress role conflict, seeing it as the 'mouthpiece' of the Indian nation, 'Swaraj Government in exile' - 'the' not 'a' political party - see P.D. Kaushik, The Congress Ideology and Programme 1920-1947, Bombay etc. 1964, 57 ff.

¹⁵ D. Rothermund, 'Constitutional Reforms versus National Agitation in India, 1900-1950', Journal of Asian Studies XXI (1961-1962), 505-506.

before 1920 as the persistence, in the repressive 'Rowlatt' legislation and the massacre at Amritsar and other repression during the disturbances of 1919, of an early view that all agitation was seditious. He is therefore able to claim that the 'stalking' policy evolved after 1920, in response to Gandhi's non-cooperation.¹⁶ What has become clear, however, is that the challenge of 'nation-wide agitation and organisation', to which this policy was a response, had appeared earlier. The government, accustomed to the occasional debates of the Congress, had had to meet a new situation with the Home Rule Leagues, at a time when Gandhi and the Congress had not been fully converted to Home Rule and its methods.¹⁷

The results had been sufficiently alarming in 1917. Sir James Meston, the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, told the Government of India at that time that there was spreading in the countryside 'a vague notion that in some unknown way the British raj is going wrong or is going under, and swaraj is coming to put all things right'. This, Meston held, together with the 'power of challenge and obstruction' introduced in 1909 by the Morley-Minto reforms, had discredited the Curzonian policy of doing 'what was right for India whether India altogether liked it or not'; and, as a result, according to Meston, Chelmsford was trying to govern, as had his immediate predecessors, by 'bargaining and negotiation', 'a steady yielding to assaults' which always left 'some bitterness behind on both sides'.¹⁸

Chelmsford's Government had not committed themselves to this one approach. They governed still by a choice between repression and conciliation, according to circumstances. In theory they distinguished carefully between constitutional politics and 'anarchism', and, in practice, very moderate or very extreme agitation posed no problems: on the one hand, positive concessions to Indian demands were being discussed at the highest levels, and, on the other hand, to the problem of what was called 'sedition', the Government were considering a most Curzonian reply. In dealing with the control of agitation, Chelmsford's practice was to allow local governments the same independence and give

¹⁶ D.A. Low, 'The Government of India and the First Non-cooperation Movement - 1920-1922', Journal of Asian Studies XXIV (1965-1966), 241 & 247.

¹⁷ See, in addition to notes 13 & 14 above, Sri Prakasa, Annie Besant, 2nd ed., Bombay 1954, 144; A. Besant, India a Nation, London / 1915 / ix-x & 19; & H.C. Mookerjee, 'Indian Leadership and the Awakening of the Masses', Calcutta Review 77, 1 (Oct. 1940) & 'Economic Distress and the Alienation of the Masses', ibid. 83, 1 (April 1942).

¹⁸ Minute, 26 Oct. 1917, H.Poll. 572, Oct. 1917.

them the same support as he had been guaranteed by Chamberlain.¹⁹ But in May 1916 he pointed out to Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay that they had nothing to fear from constitutional agitation reasonably carried on. He meant, as he explained in July, that they should be on their guard 'against excess of zeal in the repression of public opinion'.²⁰ In April 1918, Edwin Montagu merely laid down the same principle when he wrote to Chelmsford that dangerous or unconstitutional agitation should be firmly put down, but 'properly conducted political warfare however objectionable' should be left alone.²¹ There was at no time any questioning of this as a principle. Government policy was clear, at least to the Government. The problem was one of definition.

The Home Rule Leagues created a new category of argument, protest and agitation which were neither pure politics, in the old Congress sense, nor revolution. The Leagues' campaign, before the advent of Gandhi, required a rethinking of policy. The principle was not to be changed; but in the new situation it was necessary to decide how it should be applied in practice. How was the demand for Home Rule to be categorised? Should the Leagues be suppressed, as sedition-mongers, or conciliated, as organs of constitutional politics? Out of this debate, which we shall now examine in detail, there came an important shift in the balance between repressive and conciliatory methods.

Early in 1917, while Mrs. Besant was prohibited from entering Bombay and the Central Provinces, she sat with Meston - 'cheek by jowl' with him according to Willingdon - at the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress, just as earlier she had been received by Lord Carmichael, the Governor of Bengal, while she was out of favour in Madras. Willingdon, with Sir Benjamin Robertson of the Central Provinces and Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, requested in January 1917 what Willingdon called a 'concerted policy' on Home Rule. Chelmsford replied that the apparently contradictory actions all had

¹⁹ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 12 July 1916, CP2; & see H.Poll. 299, July 1917.

²⁰ Chelmsford to Willingdon, 25 May & 15 July 1916, CP17.

²¹ Montagu to Chelmsford, 17 April 1919, CP4.

his approval: provinces were allowed to deal with agitators as they saw fit. In the United Provinces Meston and he had agreed that with the Congress in session there was every reason to avoid a ban on Mrs. Besant.²² Some of Meston's officers had been nervous at the presence of 'extremists'; and Chelmsford had warned the Lieutenant-Governor that he should be careful about seeing Mrs. Besant, particularly in view of the Secretary of State's unfavourable comments on her visit to Lord Carmichael. But Chelmsford had supported Meston in the view that repression would give a 'magnificent grievance' to the extremists; the Lieutenant-Governor for his part had promised to make no overtures to Mrs. Besant.²³

The other local governments were not satisfied. They requested a clarification of policy.²⁴ The Government of India, realising this was the only answer,²⁵ issued in March 1917 a circular letter to explain their position. They wanted, they wrote, 'firm discouragement' of the Home Rule campaign. The methods of this discouragement, within certain limits, were to be chosen locally. The governments were to try to persuade individuals to eschew the movement, and were to provide special protection for the young. If necessary they were to use the executive powers provided by Lord Hardinge's wartime Defence of India Act, even to the extent of the precensorship of political writings. But they were to check extravagant assertions, not the 'constitutional advocacy of reform'. The Bombay Government responded by suggesting a conference of local governments, presumably in the hope that the combined arguments of the majority would force a change of policy. They wanted the Government of India, they explained, to 'define with some exactitude the limits within which public orators may discuss schemes of constitutional and administrative reforms', and they wondered if it would be possible under the Defence of India Act to forbid the inclusion of Home Rule among the agenda of public meetings.²⁶ A court order in

²² Willingdon, 14 Jan., & Robertson, 25 March 1917, to Chelmsford, CP18; Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 12 July 1916, & Chelmsford to Willingdon, 21 March 1917, CP2.

²³ Meston to Chelmsford, 7 & 22 Sept., & Chelmsford to Meston, 16 Sept. 1916, Meston Papers 1.

²⁴ H.Poll. 300, July 1916; Secretary, F&PD, to Chelmsford, 20 July 1917, CP19.

²⁵ V(HD) to S/S, 12 Aug. 1917, CP8; H.Poll. 635, Nov. 1917.

²⁶ HD circular, 20 March 1917, H.Poll. 299, July 1917, & Bombay letters, 5 April & 2 May 1917, ibid. 291-294.

November 1916, in a case involving Tilak, had held that the call for Home Rule was not of itself seditious.²⁷ Willingdon was trying to annul this decision. He had been calling, in company with most other local governors, for a general announcement of policy - he expected it to deny that Home Rule could be a near prospect, and thus outlaw the Home Rule agitation. The central government refused to hold a conference, and in a letter of 22 May set out their position again. It would not be legitimate, they wrote, to have a general ban on Home Rule. It was possible to ban only those meetings which were arranged 'with the intention of promoting disorder and disaffection'. Similarly precensorship was not for 'general or habitual adoption'. Willingdon countered by asking to be allowed to make his own local policy announcement; this too was forbidden. In June the letter of 22 May was repeated to all local governments, forcing the Panjab Government to modify their policy, which had had the effect of banning all Home Rule meetings.²⁸

The difference of opinion was important. On the one side were most of the local governments. They had come to consider that the main danger lay in mass agitation, regardless of whether or not it was conducted illegally. They wished to redefine legitimate political activity so as to exclude what the Congress and Muslim League called 'educative propaganda'.²⁹ They wished to cope with a new type of agitation by reverting to an old type of control - by widening the area in which outright repression held sway. The Government of India, on the other hand, supported by Meston, were determined to avoid any action which 'might even suggest' that they were trying to 'stifle fair criticism or legitimate movements', and were recognising that there could be honest differences of opinion about the proper rate of political advance.³⁰ They held firmly to the traditional method of controlling agitation mainly by the suppression of objectionable speeches and writings - agitation as such was not punished, only those specific utterances which contravened the law. By the same token, Chelmsford was opposed to a mere 'non possumus' announcement of policy.³¹

²⁷ See Palande, op. cit., 243-244.

²⁸ Willingdon to Chelmsford, 27 June & 8 & 18 July 1916, CP17; & Pentland, & Meston, 7 July, & Robertson, 15 July 1917, to Chelmsford, CP19; & H.Poll. 291-298 & 309-310, July 1917.

²⁹ Resolution, 28-29 July 1917, H.Poll. 638, Nov. 1917.

³⁰ V(HD) to S/S, 18 May & 12 Oct. 1917, CP8.

³¹ Chelmsford to Willingdon, 15 & 24 July 1916, CP17, & 21 Jan. 1917, CP18.

The Government of India held to their policy in defiance of pressure, partly as a result of confusion and uncertainty. Until they had emerged with an answer to this new agitation, it was inevitable that their policy should contain contradictions and a general preference for tried methods. It was also inevitable that they should be reluctant to interfere in practice with local decisions. They did not object to 'concerted' policies where they thought them appropriate. They investigated suggestions in 1916 that there should be a more uniform approach to habitual criminals and criminal tribes; and in 1919 advocated such a policy in a conference presided over by the Home Member, Sir William Vincent.³² But in 1916, and in many ways throughout the viceroyalty, they did not believe that the approach to political questions need be uniform - they stressed the need for sensitivity to local conditions. Their attitude was to change, as gradually they evolved their own answer to the new situation. But for some time it was uncertain how the contradictions would be resolved, and what direction local discretion would take.

In June 1916, the Bombay Government had proposed to prohibit Mrs. Besant from entering the Presidency, where it was thought her influence and speeches would inflame the situation. Chelmsford, sharing this apprehension, had readily agreed. His Council, including the Indian member, Sir Sankaran Nair, supported his decision - Nair told Mrs. Besant, according to Chelmsford, that he had no intention of advising the Viceroy to overrule a local government which included an Indian member, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola. Chelmsford explained to Chamberlain: 'I hate all this suppression but India is in too inflammable a state to admit of lighted sparks about. If she misbehaves further, the Madras Government will be asked to place her ... out of communication with her paper and politics ...'.³³

The Madras Government needed no prompting. They had wanted to deport Mrs. Besant in October 1915 - her Home Rule League having been formed in September - but Lord Hardinge's Government had preferred to wait. In February 1916, after Mrs. Besant had failed in her attempt to capture the Congress, Hardinge's Government had told Madras that they need wait no longer; and they had taken action under the Press Act of 1910.³⁴ In June 1917, they decided to intern Mrs. Besant and

³² H. Police 103-128, May 1920.

³³ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 16 June & 24 July 1917, CP3.

³⁴ H. Poll. 86-106, Aug, & 133, Jan. 1917.

two of her associates, G.S. Arundale and B.P. Wadia, on their own authority following the general instructions of the central government's Home Rule circular of March. Chelmsford's Government subsequently gave their approval. They had not inspired the internments, they told the Secretary of State, but they had been on the point of suggesting that some action be taken.³⁵ The Madras Government justified their action by citing Mrs. Besant's newspaper, New India, and the 'persistent campaign' of Mrs. Besant and Arundale to 'foment discontent' among students. They brought their policy within the limits imposed by the Government of India, by claiming that they were reacting to 'hints of violence' and not trying to repress constitutional agitation. The Home Rule campaign, they alleged, had 'endeavoured in every way to excite racial feeling and to promote animosity against the "alien government"'.³⁶

There were some grounds for thinking that the campaign had had this result; and Mrs. Besant had certainly made a number of virulent attacks, including one which described Chelmsford as reactionary, tyrannical and 'dangerous to the stability of the British Empire in India'.³⁶ The paper held, in the midst of war, that the Indian government was worse than those of the Central Powers - ruining the country, causing famine, deliberately impeding education. What the government called 'criminal unrest and sedition', New India referred to as 'youthful haste' and 'enthusiasm'. Following violent revolution in Russia, the paper called for 'push and go' in the face of repression, for Indian sacrifice on Russian and Japanese models. To Chelmsford such views proved that Mrs. Besant was following 'a policy of vilification of the Government' - she hoped to raise an agitation, and this, in Chelmsford's view, might result in a disturbance 'culminating in bloodshed'. The Madras Government did not make this careful distinction: they went further and claimed that Mrs. Besant was actually advocating bloodshed. But they had acted against her mainly because they feared her campaign and her growing influence. Their justification, written for the central government, included confused references to Mrs. Besant's attempts to control the Congress,

³⁵ V(HD) to S/S, 12 Aug. 1917, CP8. Compare Hardinge to Chamberlain, 12 Nov. 1915, Hardinge Papers 121: 'I shall ... quietly deal with her by internment under the Defence of India Act' (quoted by Danzig, op. cit., 33).

³⁶ Signed article, 'The Law on Samitis', New India, 15 June 1917.

her use of the Theosophical Society for political purposes, and her effect in silencing the 'moderates'. None of these 'offences' justified her internment under the instructions of the Government of India. The local motive was transparent in the action against Wadia. The government had virtually no case - in the very letter that was supposed to prove his perfidy, Wadia stressed the value of the British connection and hoped for Home Rule without violence. He was interned merely to prevent his continuing New India in Mrs. Besant's absence.³⁷

In accepting the internments and in viewing Mrs. Besant with such disfavour, the Government of India showed how near they were to condoning a complete ban on Mrs. Besant. There were admittedly some limits to what they would approve in practice. They refused to entertain suggestions that Arundale and Mrs. Besant should be deported to England or another province in India. Chelmsford explained privately to Pentland that care must be taken of Mrs. Besant's health, and that women were not permitted sea passages because of the submarine peril; moreover the Secretary of State was unlikely to concur in further measures.³⁸ But the internments had been effected without consultation or specific sanction; there had been a public outcry in India, and questions on the subject had 'overwhelmed' Chamberlain in Britain:³⁹ yet the Government of India had continued to support the Madras decision. When Chelmsford justified the policy, as he did as late as July, it was in his own terms: he thought people were beginning to realise that the internment had been due to Mrs. Besant's methods, and that the government could not tolerate a 'campaign of calumny and misrepresentation';⁴⁰ but as Meston pointed out, while evincing 'very great satisfaction' at the internments, the danger was that they would be interpreted as an attack on Home Rule agitation as such, and used by the 'advanced party' to show that the government was 'hostile to any real constitutional advance'.⁴¹ And while Meston saw no justification for repressing this

³⁷ H.Poll. 90-106, Aug., & 6 & 51, Nov. 1917; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 22 June 1917, CP3, & to Pentland, 1 Aug., & Pentland to Chelmsford, 23 July 1917, CP19: & Annie Besant, ed., Under Sentence of Death, Madras 1916.

³⁸ Chelmsford to Pentland, 1 Aug. 1917, CP19.

³⁹ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 5 July 1917, CP3.

⁴⁰ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 28 June, & to Montagu, 19 July 1919, CP3.

⁴¹ Meston to Chelmsford, 20 June, Meston Papers 1, & 20 Aug. 1917, CP19.

party - its questions were reasonable even if sometimes its manner was not - other local governors did not agree. Sir Michael O'Dwyer in the Panjab promptly made a speech against Home Rulers, echoing Pentland's controversial declaration on the same subject.⁴²

In theory the Government of India still declined to act against lawful movements, and required local governments to profess to be showing similar restraint. But they were totally dependent on the local governments for the information which indicated whether or not local practice conformed to the limits laid down. In August 1917 the Home Department assured the Secretary of State that the Madras and Panjab Governments were acting properly in respect of constitutional agitation. The Department had had to take the Local Governments' word for this - the judgment was based on the evidence they provided.⁴³ Moreover, both Pentland and O'Dwyer in their speeches had maintained the appearance of keeping their attacks on the Home Rulers within the framework of the circular on policy. Chelmsford had privately admitted he approved.⁴⁴ Thus, while the principle of a complete ban on Home Rule would never have been accepted, the practice was more seductive, in that the extension of repressive powers would still have seemed limited, while its exponents appeared to agree with the fundamentals of Chelmsford's idea of British rule - even Pentland sympathised with indianisation of the public services, and in 1914 had opposed further press restrictions on the grounds that they would be a 'first-class political blunder'.⁴⁵ An effective ban on Home Rulers could have come into being progressively at the provincial level, merely by the continuance at **the** centre of the policy of allowing local discretion.

There were also signs that the Government of India were losing confidence in conciliatory methods. Meston, recognising the great suspicion and mistrust of government among Indians, stressed that nothing short of 'a general campaign of repression' would have any effect; but he also suggested that such a policy would not be

⁴² See also Willingdon to Chelmsford, 21 June 1918, CP20, for Willingdon's equally uncompromising attitude.

⁴³ V(HD) to S/S, 12 Aug., & V to S/S, 18 June 1917, CP19.

⁴⁴ V to S/S, 11 & 18 June 1917, CP8.

⁴⁵ See Lady Pentland, The Right Honourable John Sinclair, Lord Pentland, G.C.S.I., A Memoir, London 1928, 242 & 245.

practical or fair. As an alternative, he preferred to try to isolate and restrain the Home Rulers, and to reason with their leaders. He proposed to counter the pro-Besant feeling by a personal appeal to the provincial leaders - he suggested asking the nationalists to have patience, and assuring them that the Government were not hostile to reforms but were at that moment working out the form they should take. Chelmsford was doubtful. He thought the nationalists would not co-operate and wondered if the effort would be worthwhile. He had advocated just this policy in 1916 to steady the Muslim community after the revolt of the Sherif of Mecca, and he was to suggest it again to prepare for the announcement of harsh peace terms with Turkey after the war.⁴⁶ But he was not convinced that personal appeals would still the Home Rule uproar; and, faced with the Viceroy's doubts, even Meston became uncertain. The Lieutenant-Governor decided not to risk a rebuff and handed over his proposed statement to be delivered by the Commissioners of Lucknow and Allahabad. The result was encouraging. The Commissioners discerned among politicians a 'genuine suspicion' that the Government were contemplating a reactionary policy, but also a disposition to be reasonable and accept the view that they were about to pronounce on Home Rule.⁴⁷ Yet Chelmsford had been sceptical and Meston uneasy; the alternative policy, the repression of the Home Rule movement for its aspirations and not its methods, was being openly canvassed by some local governments and was expected by the nationalists: the Government of India appeared to be wavering.

On 20 August 1917, Edwin Montagu read the House of Commons the declaration of policy for which the Government of India had long been asking. He had hoped to be able to announce at the same time an amnesty for political prisoners; but the Government of India insisted that they must first consult the local governments. In their own view an amnesty was 'obviously desirable at the present juncture if it was compatible with the public safety'; but they thought the local governments should have discretion on this point. The provinces agreed to consider the cases of purely political offenders.⁴⁸ But in Madras they

⁴⁶ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 July 1916, CP2; H.Poll. 363, May 1919; Willingdon to Montagu, 13 May 1919. NP19.

⁴⁷ Meston to Chelmsford, 20 June, & 7 & 25 July 1917, & V to LG/United Provinces, 22 June 1917, Meston Papers 1.

⁴⁸ See below, p.119-120.

decided that it would not be safe to release Mrs. Besant. Montagu sent a telegram strongly urging a reversal of this decision, as he wished to avoid an impending debate on the subject in Parliament.⁴⁹ The Government of India executed a volte face. Chelmsford, despite his promise of local discretion, insisted that the Madras Government reconsider. They remained adamant. In the meantime, Sir William Vincent met M.A. Jinnah, who believing Mrs. Besant would not lend herself to agitation undertook to encourage moderation in her if she were released and to disavow her if she again preached violence. In consultation with Jinnah, who was then a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, a question and answer were drafted for the next Council session. The answer, given on 5 September, stated that Mrs. Besant would be released if she gave satisfactory assurances of good conduct. On the 4th the Madras Government had claimed the release would be 'indefensible' on local grounds; on the 15th Pentland, his hand forced, agreed to release the internees but not to accept responsibility. Chelmsford accepted the condition, and on 17 September Mrs. Besant was released. The Government of Madras made their reluctance plain in the wording of their order, and despatched a strong letter drawing the Home Department's attention to the inconsistency of their policy.⁵⁰

The central government gave several explanations of their conduct. Some may be traced directly to the Secretary of State. Montagu argued that sooner or later they would have to release Mrs. Besant; Chelmsford repeated this, talking of a 'colourable excuse', to both Willingdon and Pentland early in September before the Legislative Council announcement.⁵¹ Vincent claimed that the most important consideration for him was not the strength of Montagu's case but his weakness as a defender of Pentland's.⁵² Either way the inference

⁴⁹ H.Poll. 316, Sept., & 133, Jan. 1918; & S/S to V, 31 Aug. 1917, CP8.

⁵⁰ See G/Madras to V, 4 Sept., V to S/S, 5 Sept., Pentland to Chelmsford, 15 & 17 Sept., & Chelmsford to Pentland, 16 Sept., 1917, CP8; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 8 Sept. 1917, CP15; Chelmsford to Pentland, 14 Sept. 1917, CP18; H.Poll. 14, Sept. 131 & 133, Jan. 1918.

⁵¹ S/S to V, 31 Aug. 1917, CP8, to G/Madras, 2 Sept., & to G/Bombay, 2 Sept. 1917, CP19; & see also, for other motives, Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 23 Sept. 1917, CP19, & H.Poll. 134, Jan. 1918.

⁵² Vincent to Maffey (PSV), 26 Oct. 1917, CP19.

has been drawn that Montagu alone 'had Mrs. Besant released'.⁵³ But Montagu, although he had always been uneasy about the internments, expressly told the Government of India that he 'would not press' the release of Mrs. Besant if they did not approve of it. His House of Commons statement, that the Indian Government had acted on their own responsibility, was more than a polite fiction.⁵⁴ It is true that, as late as 12 August, the Home Department had telegraphed the Secretary of State to urge that the release of Mrs. Besant would be a triumph for the party of violence and would cripple the administration. Chelmsford, too, continued to believe that the original internments had been justified. But in September the Viceroy had insisted to Pentland that he was convinced by Montagu's arguments: he was ready, he wrote, to resist the Secretary of State when he thought he was wrong but not when he thought he was right. Chelmsford claimed he had independently decided on the release, and he wanted his concurrence known - he telegraphed to London: 'I acted on my own responsibility and my decision was loyally accepted by the Government of Madras: you can make this clear'. Vincent called this a 'chivalrous' gesture and pointed out that all members of the Executive Council were responsible. They had reached their decision, Chelmsford admitted, 'after long and anxious thought'. A majority of the members had changed their minds since August. There had been a shift in policy in India.⁵⁵

Chelmsford would not have insisted on an end to Mrs. Besant's exclusion from Bombay - although, when it was found that the Bombay Government had lifted their restriction, the Home Department asked the Central Provinces to follow suit.⁵⁶ Chelmsford's

⁵³ See H.F. Owen, op. cit., 177 (my emphasis).

⁵⁴ Montagu to Willingdon, 3 Aug. & 9 Sept. 1920, MP16, & S/S to V, 5 Oct. 1917, CP8. See also Montagu's denial of having ordered the release, to the editor of the Statesman, Dec. 1917, in E.S. Montagu, An Indian Diary (ed. Venetia Montagu), London 1930, 96.

⁵⁵ V to S/S, 9 & 17 Sept., & 9 & 24 Oct., & V(HD) to S/S, 12 Aug., & Chelmsford to Pentland, 14 Sept. 1917, CP8; Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 Sept. 1917, CP3.

⁵⁶ Chelmsford to Willingdon, 8 Nov. 1917, CP19; &, for orders to the Central Provinces, see H.Poll. 61-62, Feb. 1918.

objection was particularly to internments. In March 1917 he wrote to Lord Carmichael of his hope that 'a very general measure of amnesty might be possible after the war'.⁵⁷ It was an enthusiasm not shared by the Government of Bengal. Nevertheless the shift in policy was not a moratorium on all internments. The Government of India continued to use and advocate this method against 'revolutionaries'. The shift in policy had been the decision to exclude Mrs. Besant from this category.

The change had been helped by the appointment of a new Home Member. The repressive policy had had an ally in Sir Reginald Craddock. He, inherited from Hardinge, was greatly respected by Chelmsford for his 'unrivalled knowledge', 'transparent' sincerity and openness to conviction; but his influence, as Chelmsford admitted, was strongly conservative. In April 1917 the influence was lost, when Craddock was replaced by Sir William Vincent - whom Chelmsford had chosen as a 'strong man' who would speak his mind and who was 'persona grata' with Indians.⁵⁸ But personality was not a cause of the policy shift. Vincent took office some months before Mrs. Besant's release, while the internments were still endorsed by the Home Department; and was absent on special duty over the constitutional reforms between October 1917 and February 1918, when the new policy persisted.

The intervention of Jinnah had some influence. When Chelmsford explained his policy to Montagu, he pointed out that the Government had taken precautions - they had had Jinnah's assurances, and Mrs. Besant had sent a message that 'she was ready to cooperate in securing a calm atmosphere' for the Secretary of State's visit. Chelmsford also justified his action to O'Dwyer and Pentland with the argument that it was hardly appropriate to continue to intern Mrs. Besant after she had given, and the Government had accepted, assurances of good conduct.⁵⁹ The Government had chosen to ask for this undertaking, and had ordered the release before Mrs. Besant made her offer of cooperation; but the bargain with Jinnah did illustrate a new shrewdness in policy. Mrs. Besant interned was a focus of discontent; released and cooperative she might prove an irrelevancy. Jinnah's

⁵⁷ Chelmsford to Carmichael, 24 March 1917, CP18.

⁵⁸ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 6 June & 6 Oct. 1916, CP2.

⁵⁹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 Sept. 1917, CP3, & to O'Dwyer, 23 Sept. 1917, CP19. See also HD to G/Madras, 10 Dec. 1917, H.Poll. 134, Jan. 1918.

offer convinced Chelmsford that many of the politicians disliked Mrs. Besant and 'would be glad to see her disappear'.⁶⁰ The release was an attempt to help her do so.

Policy shifted, however, mainly in response to the impending visit of Montagu to discuss constitutional reforms. These reforms were, apart from the war effort, Chelmsford's first priority.⁶¹ He hoped that Mrs. Besant's release would be an 'olive branch' to content the moderates and take the sting from extremists. He told Pentland that it was an 'almost inevitable concomitant' of the Secretary of State's visit.⁶² In June the Government had ignored Meston's warning that widespread agitation would follow the internment of Mrs. Besant. Meston had been proved right.⁶³ There had been extraordinary demonstrations of public sympathy throughout India, adding to Mrs. Besant's prestige. In July the Bengal Government, sharing a local editor's view that 'a Besant agitation would fall flat in Bengal', predicted that there would be only a 'surface ripple' in the province; in August, until Sir S.P. Sinha persuaded them to take a less alarmist view, they were so anxious about the situation that they banned a protest meeting for fear of widespread violence.⁶⁴ Meston pointed out officially in September, underlining the moral of such experiences, that Indians made a distinction between violent revolutionaries and agitators such as Mrs. Besant who abhorred violence. It was open to the government to make the same distinction. An amnesty, Meston urged, would show that they could make concessions.⁶⁵ By such reckoning, Chelmsford and Vincent were encouraged to weigh the disadvantages if Mrs. Besant were released, against the public outcry if she were not. Chelmsford wrote to Montagu:

I must confess that I personally wavered for some time, and so did the Home Member, Sir W. Vincent. It was obvious that we should be accused of weakness, of overruling the Madras Government, of giving encouragement to extremists.

⁶⁰ Chelmsford to Montagu, 8 Aug. 1917, CP3.

⁶¹ See Speeches I, 389-393; Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 July & 28 Aug. 1917, CP3.

⁶² V to S/S, 5 & 17 Sept., & Chelmsford to Pentland, 14 Sept. 1917, CP8.

⁶³ Meston to Chelmsford, 20 June 1917, CP18.

⁶⁴ See the views of Ronaldshay, Sinha and the editor of the Nayak newspaper, in H.Poll. 634, Nov. 1917; Ronaldshay to Montagu, 24 July 1919, MP29; & V to S/S, 18 Aug. 1917, CP8.

⁶⁵ H.Poll. 331, Sept. 1917 (1 Sept.).

Per contra, if we refused to release her, we ran grave risk of jeopardising the success of your visit and the possibility of setting the lines of political advance.⁶⁶ We should, in fact, have stultified our whole policy.

The release of Mrs. Besant represented more than a decision to treat the Home Rule movement as a political and constitutional rather than a revolutionary agitation. It marked the beginning of a new tactical approach. Montagu had urged that it was safe to release Mrs. Besant. Chelmsford, repeating this to Willingdon, claimed that it would be less harmful to release her than to continue her detention. He used almost identical words to O'Dwyer nearly three weeks later.⁶⁷ The Government were calculating priorities. After September 1917 they were to place more emphasis on questions of the expediency and possible repercussions of their policy. Chelmsford did not repudiate the original interment, but learnt a lesson from its failure.

There was an accompanying change marked by a circular letter of 14 September. In this letter the Home Department called for lists of restricted persons with the evident intention of ensuring that their cases were reconsidered. They directed that the effect on other provinces of any retention or relaxation should be taken into account - hitherto this had been at local discretion. They warned that they would press 'very strongly' for the submission of cases to an independent tribunal wherever restrictions were not removed.⁶⁸ The provinces remained closest to the problem, but there was a new determination at the centre to intervene and supervise. A more active role necessarily followed the concern with public reactions and the more tactical method fostered by it. Conciliation meant central needs had to prevail over local.

The appeasement of politicians became a central tenet of Chelmsford's policy. At the opening of the Simla session of his Legislative Council in 1917 the Viceroy made a special plea for calm.

⁶⁶ Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 Sept. 1917, CP3.

⁶⁷ V to G/Madras, 2 Sept., & Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 23 Sept. 1917, CP19. Note also the care taken in reporting press reactions to the release; see V(HD) to S/S, 15 Sept. 1917, CP8.

⁶⁸ H.Poll. 14, Sept. 1917.

When this was threatened by a 'most unfortunate speech' by Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Chelmsford acted sternly to maintain his policy. O'Dwyer had made, while Chelmsford was absent from the Council, certain 'invidious comparisons' between provinces, and serious charges against some politicians. He had contrasted the attitude of the Panjabi soldier 'shedding his blood in three continents' with that of the politicians who were 'callously discussing and even preaching the doctrine of passive resistance'; he suggested that the Panjab would be glad if the politicians would show their loyalty 'in some practical form' instead of 'actually dissuading their fellow citizens from joining the Indian Defence Force'. In the Panjab, he stressed, there was 'no sitting on the fence, no mawkish sympathy with red-handed crime', and no understanding of Home Rule propounded as 'a legitimate and constitutional ideal' rather than as a revolutionary goal. Indian members of the Council had interjected - Madan Mohan Malaviya had suggested that O'Dwyer's remarks were not consonant with 'the dignity' of the legislature - but the Lieutenant-Governor had been allowed to finish his speech.⁶⁹

'Dear Sir Michael,' wrote Chelmsford when the news reached him, 'I think you perhaps scarcely realise ... the position of embarrassment in which you have ... placed the Government of India'. The August Declaration, he claimed,

was made deliberately at my request for the purpose of allaying the political agitation existing in the country, and the answer given by Sir W. Vincent on September 5th with regard to Mrs. Besant and my speech on the same date had the same end in view. I think I may say our object was substantially achieved. Throughout India a political truce was in effect proclaimed

O'Dwyer's speech had come as a 'bomb-shell'. Three Executive Councillors had immediately expressed their dismay, and Chelmsford himself agreed that 'anger and resentment' were bound to be aroused. He went on:

any attempt to recreate the peaceful atmosphere which you have destroyed, can only be made under peculiarly difficult conditions, and I must remind you that it is not your "apple-cart" which has been upset but mine. If you had made such a speech in you Council, at least it would have been made in your domain. In this case your speech has been made in my Council, and its whole tone and temper runs counter to the spirit of what I said on September 5th.

⁶⁹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 Sept. 1917 (& O'Dwyer's speech, 13 Sept.) CP3.

He concluded: 'Will you come round and see me and discuss how we are to compose matters'. In the face of this reproof, O'Dwyer proved 'genuinely distressed', and, at Chelmsford's insistence, made a full apology to the Council.⁷⁰ Chelmsford explained to Montagu that he could not ignore what appeared to be a 'deliberate flouting' of his declared policy, particularly when there was abroad the inevitable rumour that O'Dwyer had merely voiced the Viceroy's private views.⁷¹ To Chamberlain, Chelmsford wrote: 'I must make it clear that a Viceroy's policy could not be disregarded by the head of a Local Government'.⁷² O'Dwyer had claimed that his speech was in accordance with government policy. He abstained from Council meetings on 20 and 21 September in the hope that Chelmsford would make a statement on Councillors' right to freedom of speech and on O'Dwyer's own contention that Indian critics should be prepared to take criticism. The Viceroy merely reiterated his view that O'Dwyer's remarks had put him and his Government in a very false position. Nevertheless, in his closing speech to the legislature, Chelmsford congratulated the Lieutenant-Governor on his 'generous action' and unsuccessfully tried to extract the apology which O'Dwyer had wanted from Malaviya for remarks made outside the Legislative Council.⁷³

The incident convinced the European community that Chelmsford was a dangerous radical. Chamberlain became something of a repository for their complaints. From the India Office, Sir T.W. Holderness reported to him the view that there was now among the Europeans a situation 'quite as bad as the Ilbert Bill created'; and Ronaldshay, making the same point from Bengal, declared that the European community was 'nearly frantic'. Another of Chamberlain's correspondents, Sir Roger Sethbridge, M.P., argued that Chelmsford had shown 'amazing personal cowardice'. Chamberlain himself had doubted the wisdom of

⁷⁰ O'Dwyer's statement, 19 Sept. 1917, ibid.; Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 14 Sept. 1917, CP19.

⁷¹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 5 Oct. 1917, CP3; & see Chelmsford to Dawson (editor, The Times), 17 Nov. 1918, CP15.

⁷² Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 14 Dec. 1917, CP15.

⁷³ See O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 20-21 Sept. & 23 Sept., & Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 23 Sept. 1917 (unsent but shown), CP19; speech, 26 Sept., in Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 Sept. 1917, CP3; & also Malaviya to Chelmsford, 26 Sept. 1917, CP19.

Mrs. Besant's release, as he did not think she would restrain herself, and was 'a good deal alarmed' at Chelmsford's rebuke of O'Dwyer. Together, in his view, these policies had 'dangerously stirred ... racial feelings'. Chelmsford replied that he was glad the Europeans in India were taking an interest in politics.⁷⁴

O'Dwyer had not been conciliatory in private. The Government's policy had changed, he complained to Chelmsford. 'There is a growing desire to conciliate the extremists by direct negotiations with their leaders, rather than to back Local Governments in their efforts ... to rally the moderates.'⁷⁵ Chelmsford, in reply, denied that there had been any change in the policy of giving discretion and support to local governments. But obviously, he wrote, they must now try to bring the people into a reasonable frame of mind. The Government, he went on, with a touch of malice, had already given a clear line on that.⁷⁶ The Viceroy still recognised, as he admitted to Willingdon in November, that they could not create an atmosphere of tranquillity merely by abstaining from any attempt to control agitation.⁷⁷ But, whereas reprisals had formerly been limited only by the confused application of a principle that constitutional agitation should not be muzzled, they were now limited by considerations of expediency. To this extent the policy was, as O'Dwyer claimed, one of conciliating extremists. If moderate opinion were worth anything, Chelmsford had told Willingdon, it would have been rallied already by the August Declaration. The implication was that to achieve tranquillity the Government must seek more general support, and that among the educated classes and politicians. Conservative influences - Craddock; O'Dwyer; Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bihar and Orissa - sought to minimise the importance of this 'infinitesimal section', this unrepresentative and isolated 'upper crust' united in an 'orgy of nationalism'; but the central Government had decided to come to terms

⁷⁴ Holderness to Chamberlain, 3 Nov., ACP12/109, Ronaldshay to Chamberlain, (?) Sept., ACP12/206, Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 14 Oct., ACP18/3/19, & 28 Nov., ACP18/3/4, & Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 14 Dec. 1917, ACP18/3/5; & Sethbridge to Chamberlain, 22 June 1918, ACP21/5/16.

⁷⁵ O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 20-21 Sept. 1917, CP19.

⁷⁶ Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 23 Sept. 1917, CP19.

⁷⁷ Chelmsford to Willingdon, 8 Nov. 1917, CP19.

with as many politicians as possible.⁷⁸ In May 1918, Chelmsford, writing privately to Chamberlain, explained: 'the educated classes ... are almost to a man against the Government..... It may be that at present they stand apart from the bulk of the population, but every day is bringing them into closer touch ...'. His conclusion was that his 'only policy' was 'to endeavour to enlist their cooperation'.⁷⁹

Accordingly, the Government of India had approached Mrs. Besant in a new spirit. After her release she tried to persuade the government to release Muhammad Ali, one of two brothers interned as pan-Islamic conspirators. The Government had no intention of making such a bargain, but were ready to discuss the matter with Mrs. Besant. Vincent and the Secretary of the Home Department, Sir J.H. Du Boulay, met her at Simla while the Viceroy was away on tour. She was not satisfied with their answers, and asked to see Chelmsford. The Viceroy's Private Secretary made several attempts to arrange a meeting, but Mrs. Besant was unable to coordinate her movements with the Viceroy's tour. Chelmsford, while not yielding on the Ali brothers, hoped he could use the interview to encourage Mrs. Besant to 'take a more temperate view' of what was possible 'as an immediate step in the direction of political advance'. His policy met with the strongest objections. Sir Charles Cleveland of the Central Intelligence Department, armed from his files with a formidable indictment of Mrs Besant and the Theosophical Society, pronounced the lady a thoroughly unsuitable person to be received by members of the government. She was, he concluded, 'a charlatan in religion' and an enemy of British dominion. Chelmsford replied that the meeting was 'not a question of doing honour to Mrs. Besant'; rather it was a 'question of expediency'. Similarly, when Willingdon expressed his disquiet, calling Mrs. Besant a dangerous intriguer who should not be recognised as a political leader, Chelmsford replied at first that the protest puzzled him, and later added that, while he agreed with much that Willingdon said about Mrs. Besant, he did not see that an unsuccessful

⁷⁸ See minute (on reforms) by O'Dwyer (10 Jan. 1918), Craddock (17 Jan. 1918) & Gait (11 Dec. 1917), H.Public 592, 594 & 595, Oct. 1918. For a classic example of such conservatism, see S.J. Thomson, The Silent India, Edinburgh & London 1913.

⁷⁹ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 17 May 1918, CP15.

mission would enhance her reputation.⁸⁰

In the following months, the new policy was consolidated by apparent success. In Madras they bewailed the loss of prestige; in Bengal they made dire predictions of future disaster; but the Government of India professed themselves well pleased with the present calm.⁸¹ Chelmsford thought that events had proved the policy 'wise' and 'absolutely justified'. Mrs. Besant was touring India. Chelmsford believed it 'would be asking too much of human nature, especially her nature, to expect her to refrain' - limelight was 'necessary to her existence'. But she was counselling moderation.⁸²

The results committed Chelmsford more explicitly to the new approach. In June 1918, Montagu drew his attention to a provocative letter written to President Wilson by Sir Subramania Aiyar, a former High Court judge who had espoused Home Rule. The letter, which was widely distributed and publicised in the United States, had complained of Mrs. Besant's internment and had informed the President:

you and the other leaders have been kept in ignorance of the full measure of misrule and oppression in India. Officials of an alien nation, speaking a foreign tongue, force their will upon us; they grant themselves exorbitant salaries and large allowances; they refuse us education; they sap us of our wealth; they impose crushing taxation without our consent; they cast thousands of our people into prisons for uttering patriotic sentiments - prisons so filthy that often the inmates die from loathsome diseases.

The Secretary of State had become alarmed at pressure that was being exerted in Britain to have Subramania Aiyar deprived of his K.C.S.I. The Government of India had already sent a private reprimand drawing attention to the rules concerning government pensioners, and they did not propose to act publicly, even though Subramania Aiyar (before receiving the reprimand) had announced to the press that he could meet 'no more glorious fate ... than to be the object of official tyranny'.

⁸⁰ See Besant to PSV, 27 & 27 Sept., Maffey to Besant, 2, 9, 10 & 21 Oct., Vincent to Chelmsford, 17 Oct., Cleveland to Maffey, 18 Oct., Maffey to Vincent, 18 Oct., & to Cleveland, 21 Oct., Willingdon to Chelmsford, 28 Oct., & Chelmsford to Willingdon, 18 Oct. & 8 Nov. 1917, CP19. See also Chelmsford to Montagu, 18 Oct. 1917, CP3, on the Ali brothers: 'Many of us came to ... the case ... with an open mind; but when the causes of their internment were shown, we felt that from every point of view it was undesirable to release them.' For C.I.D. reports see H.Poll. 247, March 1918 - similar in substance to Arthur H. Nethercot, The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant, London 1963. See also Willingdon to Chelmsford, 9 May 1918, CP20.

⁸¹ H.Poll. 328, Sept. 1917, & 133-134, Jan. 1918.

⁸² Chelmsford to Montagu, 5 Oct. 1917, CP3.

This was not what was expected of a retired judge. Some of Chelmsford's Council had favoured reprisals, but Chelmsford did not, and the dissenters did not press their view. Montagu also accepted the point, and, rather mixing his metaphors, urged Pentland not to waste his heavy artillery on second fiddles. 'We want to walk warily,' Chelmsford explained; 'no-one who had experience of the results of interning Mrs. Besant last year wants to repeat the mistake'. He did not intend to make a martyr out of this 'silly old man'. For the first time Chelmsford had admitted that the internment of Mrs. Besant, however justified in law, had been wrongheaded.⁸³

Non-interference and repression were now seen as twin weapons in a battle which aimed at maintaining both political advantage and public order. As before, 'moderate' politicians were left alone, and 'revolutionary conspirators' were suppressed. But it had been decided that 'extremist' politicians were to be given rein for as long as possible even if technically they broke the law, until at strategic moments action could be taken against them. In such cases the government would prefer to use the ordinary law, in order to minimise the claim to martyrdom. Executive action was still 'considered'⁸⁴ - and, although the government did not explicitly state this, had to be both politic and necessary before approval would be given. Thus in April 1918 the Madras Government wanted to intern Tilak and B.C. Pal; the Government of India refused permission because such action might have jeopardised the War Conference which they were holding in Delhi.⁸⁵ In August the same local government suggested that executive restrictions should be placed on the political activities of government pensioners; the Government of India did not favour this, or a Bombay scheme for increasing magistrates' powers over public meetings: such measures were

⁸³ S/S to V, 22 May, & V to S/S, 5, 7 & 22 June 1918, CP9; Chelmsford to Montagu, 13 June 1918, CF4; Montagu to Pentland, 13 Aug. 1918, MF15; A Besant, An Abominable Plot: a Memorandum containing Sir Subramaniam's letter to Dr. Wilson (of 24 June 1917), Adyar, Madras [1918]/.

⁸⁴ See Chelmsford to Willingdon, 8 Nov. 1917, CP19, & V to S/S, 2 May 1919, CP10, 8 Aug. 1918, CP9, & 6 May 1920, CF12.

⁸⁵ H.Poll. 29-33, May 1918.

not worth the ill-feeling they would create.⁸⁶ But, also in August, the Bombay Government were permitted to place Tilak under an order forbidding him to speak in public - they had convinced the central government that the need for army recruitment, which Tilak's speeches were supposed to be discouraging, outweighed the risk of agitation if Tilak defied the ban and had to be arrested; and they minimised that risk by allowing Tilak, who was about to leave the country, to speak before the Congress session.⁸⁷

Such executive measures, in a general context of non-interference, took on the appearance of surgical operations. In April 1919, when the Bombay authorities were permitted to deport the journalist, B.G. Horniman, the move was planned carefully in advance and carried out swiftly and secretly. Willingdon had earlier urged deportation; and Chelmsford had then advised the local government to choose their moment well, to have a ship ready, and to allow no time for farewell speeches. When Sir George Lloyd replaced Willingdon in Bombay, before the deportation, he announced to Meston that 'he was not disposed to begin his career by conferring unnecessary martyrdom';⁸⁸ later, however, he visited Chelmsford to urge wholesale deportations, including Jinnah, Gandhi, Mrs. Naidu, and Jammadas Dwarkadas. The Home Department asked Bombay to consider the possibility that such deportations would cause more trouble, and, though they would have agreed in part if necessary, they refused to act against Jinnah, and ruled that Gandhi should not be deported unless something further happened to make this unavoidable. Lloyd had to be satisfied with deporting Horniman. The Home Department

⁸⁶ See H.Poll. 26, Nov. 1917, & 23-28 & 43, Sept. 1918, & 695, June 1919; & H. Police 74-75, Oct. 1917. The Panjab Government were permitted to instruct magistrates to curb rumours using the Defence of India rules; see H.Poll. 303, April 1919. See also the formal warning given to Sadasiva Aiyar of the Madras High Court for his involvement in politics while practising as a judge; H.Poll. 160, Feb. 1919.

⁸⁷ See H.Poll. 3, Sept. 1918; & G/Bombay to HD, 8 Aug. 1918, CP9. Later, in April and May 1919, the G/I twice agreed to executive measures in Sind, but so insisted on discretion as to give their consent almost the force of a refusal; see H.Poll. 307, 308, 314-317, April, & 235, May 1919; & Lloyd to Montagu, 6 April 1917, MF24.

⁸⁸ See Willingdon to Chelmsford, 5 Oct. 1917, CF19; Chelmsford to Willingdon, 24 June 1918, CP20; Meston to Chelmsford, 19 Dec. 1918, CP21; Lloyd to Montagu, 26 Dec. 1918, MF24. Willingdon was anxious because of profiteering, near-famine conditions and the influenza epidemic; Meston thought his nerves 'rather in rags'. Lloyd would have been prepared to prosecute, but dared not risk failure; he did not want to use the Defence of India Act after the armistice. The rules had been amended in July 1917 to give a clear right of deportation; see H.Poll. 64, Sept. 1918.

busied themselves with having a ship in readiness; Lloyd chose a moment 'when popular excitement was temporarily allayed'; and, in accordance with Chelmsford's original instructions, Horniman was sent off quietly on a waiting steamer. There were no demonstrations. The atmosphere of the Presidency was reported to have 'improved out of all knowledge'.⁸⁹ A similar approach was adopted even in cases to which non-interference was not applied. When the Ali brothers announced that they considered themselves no longer bound by their internment orders (which they were already defying), the central Government ordered that they be imprisoned, and issued detailed instructions regarding the suddenness and discretion with which this was to be done. They used executive powers, but expressly to avoid publicity.⁹⁰

The Government of India had formulated a consistent policy. But they were continually under pressure to revert to an earlier approach. In November 1918, the India Office wondered if they should prosecute the Home Rulers for the design of mock postage stamps issued for publicity and fund raising. The Home Department declined on the grounds that prohibition would only advertise the stamps, which had not been very successful.⁹¹ Some of the local governors, notably Meston and, on the whole, Lloyd, approved of the tactic of non-interference. Others did not. Willingdon, as Governor of Bombay and later of Madras, repeatedly showed his lack of sympathy with 'softness' - he wanted the Government of India to 'stiffen up' and stand no nonsense. He believed in the efficacy of a 'straight talk' such as he had given to the Home Rulers at the Bombay War Conference; he recognised that this was 'exactly the opposite' of what Chelmsford seemed to want. He did not share the Viceroy's hope that extremists, if left alone, would discredit themselves; and, although he sometimes admitted that there were risks in

⁸⁹ See G/Bombay to V, 16 April 1919, CP22; Lloyd to Montagu, 6 April, & 2 & 15 May, & 12 June 1919, MP24; Willingdon to Montagu, 5 Oct. 1918, MP18; & H.Poll. 20-22, June 1918, & 619-634, & 638, May 1919. Lloyd's proposal for deportations seems to have grown out of a HD suggestion in May that a warning might be given to the Bombay Chronicle, Horniman's paper; after the Bombay War Conference the G/Bombay had suggested 'strong measures', including internments, precensorship and outlawing of speeches on certain subjects, against the Chronicle, The Mahratta, Kosari, Horniman, Tilak, Annie Besant and others. Lloyd had found Willingdon's predictions borne out.

⁹⁰ H.Poll. 2-32, Aug., & sec 406-423, Sept. 1919.

⁹¹ Chelmsford to Lloyd, 1 May 1920, CP24; & IOR J&P 1530 (4597/18).

acting against prominent politicians, he felt sure that these should be braved. When Tilak announced that it would not matter to him if Turks or Germans took over from the British, the only answer, according to Willingdon, was to 'put a stopper' on to him. In 1919, similarly, Willingdon vowed he would either 'shoot or deport' Muhammad and Shaukat Ali. His opposition was to increase as time went on.⁹²

In 1919, however, the strongest objection came from a more unexpected quarter. In November, Sir Edward Maclagan, Lieutenant Governor of the Panjab, launched a fierce attack on the central policy. The Home Department had decided that all restrictions on Tilak should be removed. Maclagan, his patience at an end, argued that the Panjab had problems enough without Tilak. He saw the Home Department decision as another in a series of 'extraordinary difficulties' in which (he implied) the Government of India had placed him. He had wanted the continuance of the Seditious Meetings Act, the exclusion of Gandhi until after the forthcoming Congress session at Amritsar, the postponement of Lajpat Rai's departure from the United States - and all these had been refused. Now, in Tilak's case, he was being asked 'to let loose in the Province the most dangerous agitator of all', one who 'specialised ... in the reduction to the level of everyday life ... of [the] high sounding phrases used by other politicians'. Only after personal consultations did Maclagan agree to fall into line. He had displayed the civilian's orthodox nervousness and desire to keep his own preserve free from the contamination of outside forces. The Government of India had refused to accept this isolationism. They were committed to a quite different approach; they demonstrated this again by releasing the Ali brothers on the eve of the Amritsar Congress.⁹³

But, in another sense as well, the battles had to be continually refought. It was probable that the policy evolved in response to Mrs Besant would be applied also to Gandhi: his credit started higher than hers, and his methods were not dissimilar. In 1919,

⁹² See Willingdon to Montagu, 18 July 1917, MP16, & 30 April, 13 & 25 May, 16 & 29 June, 11 & 30 July, 11 Aug., & 5 Sept. 1918, MP18. Compare with Lloyd to his wife (1916), in Colin Forbes Adam, Life of Lord Lloyd, London 1948, 106 - 'maintaining that obvious persecution merely helped agitators 'to enlist ... sympathies ... which they claimed before but never had'.

⁹³ H.Poll. 295-319, Feb. 1920, & also 446, June 1919. Chelmsford called the Government's letter 'unfortunate and ungracious', and Maclagan apologised; see Chelmsford to Maclagan, 15 Nov., & Maclagan to Chelmsford, 17 Nov. 1919, CP23.

however, during the agitation against the Rowlatt bill, the Government of India agreed in principle to Gandhi's arrest, and allowed the Panjab Government to exclude him from the Province. There ensued in several parts of the country serious rioting which amounted in the Panjab to a near rebellion. The Government had thought they were applying their usual policy. Two factors seem to have convinced them that action could not be avoided. Firstly, by publishing his satyagraha leaflets without a licence, Gandhi purported to be defying the law. It was not inconsistent of the government to believe that there must come a point when it was more expedient to risk an arrest than to have the law brought into contempt. Secondly, there took place on 30 March in Delhi a hartal which led to violence. On 8 April, the Government of India agreed with the Bombay Government that, when the law was being openly defied for political advantage, it was better to prosecute - at a conference in Delhi, Lloyd had argued that they could not 'abandon all the functions of Government'; and Chelmsford had agreed that they must be wary but 'perfectly firm'.⁹⁴ On 8 April he had personally instructed the Home Department to formulate a definite plan of action to deal with possible developments in passive resistance, so that local actions might be co-ordinated, and to instruct local governments to issue if necessary simply-worded manifestos explaining the Rowlatt Bill, sympathising with rational opposition, pointing out the moral of the Delhi incident, calling for cooperation, and warning that the government would deal rigorously with movements which endangered the peace - Gandhi's leaflets might be met, Chelmsford thought, by confiscating his printing press. A copy of these instructions was sent to Bombay.⁹⁵ It was found that Gandhi was not breaking the law on this occasion; nevertheless, when the Panjab Government asked to be allowed to exclude him, there was already an agreement in principle to his arrest. The central Government were also ready to admit that the Panjab was a special case. Chelmsford had been uneasy at the fervour of the recruiting campaign under O'Dwyer;⁹⁶ the aftermath of this campaign, added to

⁹⁴ See G/Bombay to V, 7 & 9 April, & HD to PSV, 8 April, & Chelmsford to Lloyd, 8 April 1919, & see also the earlier cordial attitude to Gandhi in Maffey to Gandhi, 13 March 1919, CP22. See also below, note 97.

⁹⁵ V to HD, 8 April 1919, CP22.

⁹⁶ He expressed his fears to O'Dwyer on 24 Feb. 1918; see Chelmsford to Montagu, 4 Sept. 1919, CP5.

the problems of the return of disbanded soldiers and the Muslim grievances over the Turkish peace terms, were seen to have contributed to a serious situation, and the Viceroy thought it 'of the first importance' to avoid the spread of unrest and allow the local governments full discretion in measures to restore order. In these circumstances the Government authorised Gandhi's exclusion.

In accordance with their usual policy, they issued meticulous instructions on the manner in which the exclusion was to be carried out. Gandhi was to be treated with 'every possible consideration', and force was not to be used unless he disobeyed the order. He was to be informed that 'the Government would be willing to consider the position later should he give [an] explicit undertaking to refrain from inaugurating a campaign to break the law'. In the instructions issued to the Governor-General's Agent in Rajputana, in case Gandhi was turned back there, the Government added that if Gandhi disobeyed the authorities 'should not arrest him, but merely use such means as may be necessary ..., treating him with all consideration'. It is almost certain that the Government intended this in the Panjab. They seem to have thought that this was what happened - even in confidential reports they do not refer to the action as an arrest, although it is difficult to see what else it could have been. Gandhi was 'sent' or 'escorted' back to Bombay. He himself had given reason for hope that an arrest would not be necessary: he had written instructions to satyagrahis that 'All police orders are to be implicitly obeyed'. The Government intended to arrest Gandhi, but only under the ordinary law, after his return to Bombay.

The exclusion proved a vast miscalculation. But the decision had not been different in principle from those other decisions on Tilak and Horniman which were to be effected without disaster. Chelmsford later defended the decision, explaining to Montagu: 'the temper of the Delhi mob was very sullen; Gandhi's avowed object was to induce men to break the law, and it had been made clear that he could not control the excitement he aroused; therefore his arrest in Delhi would have been inevitable and would have led to even worse riots'. This may have been subsequent rationalisation. Taken with the reasons given at the time, however, it demonstrates that the Government, even in the action against Gandhi, were still considering priorities in the fashion of their tactical non-interference.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ See H.Poll. 45^r-458, 462, 463, 465, 467, 469 & 471, May, & 452, Aug. 1919; HD to PSV, 9 April 1919, CP22; Lloyd to Montagu, 6 April, & 2 & 15 May 1919, MP24; Chelmsford to Montagu, 9 & 16 April & 23

Subsequent handling of Gandhi was more circumspect. The immediate response to the outcry at Gandhi's exclusion was to abandon all thought of arresting him. He was being helpful in limiting the violence in Ahmedabad, and Chelmsford and Lloyd were agreed that 'Interned he would be a rallying cry to the disaffected; out he may prove of great assistance...'.⁹⁸ In May 1919, Lloyd wrote to Montagu his view that Gandhi was 'really pretty wicked' and would eventually have to be arrested and deported; but when he saw Gandhi he told him that the government would take no action. At this, Lloyd reported, Gandhi

smiled and said, 'I wish to goodness Sir you would arrest me'. I said, 'No Mr. Gandhi, this is a luxury I reserve entirely for those who surround you and who /sic/ you mislead. If they break the law they will be dealt with and you will be left until it suits me'. He pointed out frankly how unpopular that would make him with his friends and I could only add how much I regretted inconveniencing him in this way, but suggested that he should try some foreign missionary work for a bit.⁹⁹

In early June Lloyd thought Gandhi was losing ground daily; but when Gandhi announced his intention to resume his campaign on 1 July, Lloyd expected serious trouble - he had tried quiet methods, he told Montagu, and he would now have to 'stamp out the evil once and for all'. He had lost faith in talking to Gandhi: 'argument with a lunatic is a pastime that is generally unprofitable -', he noted to Chamberlain,

July 1919, CP5. Chelmsford was on tour and the decision to arrest Gandhi was taken by Vincent, after consulting Lowndes and Meston; O'Dwyer had wanted Gandhi deported to Burma but Vincent feared a 'general conflagration'. Gandhi reported: 'The two days detention was no detention The officials ... were all attention and kindness I was afforded greater comforts than I am used to when free'; Gandhi to Maffey, 15 April 1919, CP22. See also M.k. Gandhi, An Autobiography ... (tr. Mahadev Desai), 2nd ed. Ahmedabad 1940, 342-343; & The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol.XV, Ahmedabad 1965, 86-243 - notably, for instructions to obey police orders and eschew violence (3 & 5 April 1919), pp. 174-178, for his interview with Chelmsford in March & later telegrams, pp. 126, 129-130, for his reaction to the Delhi shooting, pp.173, 179, & 184-187, & for his arrest, pp.208-210.

⁹⁸ See ibid., 218-225, 226-219, 236 & 250; Gandhi to Maffey, 14 & 15 April, & Maffey to Gandhi, 7 May 1919, CP22; Chelmsford to Montagu, 16 April & 18 July 1919, CP5.

⁹⁹ Lloyd to Montagu, 23 May 1919, MP24.

'and insanity of his kind is particularly difficult to deal with.'¹⁰⁰

The Government of India were not so easily discouraged. Gandhi had avowed his intention of breaking the law by leaving Bombay, and the central Government, realising that he would have to be stopped, again accepted that this might mean prosecution. But they suggested that Bombay's Chief Secretary or a senior police officer should interview Gandhi, and point out that, despite his claims, there was no guarantee that civil disobedience would be any less disastrous in July than it had been in April, and moreover that the eve of the conclusion of hostilities with Afghanistan was 'a most unsuitable occasion in which to risk... internal disorder'. This remarkable appeal was duly delivered. It seems to demonstrate a considerable understanding of Gandhi's thinking; and it was successful. Gandhi expressed his willingness to suspend civil disobedience until any date, not too far distant, which the Government might prescribe. He also promised to give notice of its resumption and to limit it to himself and his coadjutors. He declared that he did not propose to enter the Panjab for the present. The bargain had proved even more remarkable than the appeal.¹⁰¹ Montagu had suggested to Lloyd that when Gandhi found he could not force the Government's hand, 'without committing himself to the sort of action that is all against his principles, he should be an easier problem to tackle'. For the moment there seemed some grounds for this optimism. Lloyd agreed that Gandhi had been glad of the excuse to abandon his campaign for a time; he persuaded Chelmsford to allow Gandhi to announce that the suspension had been at government request.¹⁰²

The Government of India then enquired of the local governments whether they wished to retain their ban on Gandhi. They

¹⁰⁰ Lloyd to Chelmsford, 12 June 1919, CP22, & to Chamberlain, 11 July 1919, ACP18/1/6, & to Montagu, 31 May, MP24, & 12 June 1919, MP26. See also Lloyd to Chamberlain, 13 June 1920, ACP18/1/9. For his policy, July to August, see G/Bombay to V, 6 July, & Lloyd to Chelmsford, 27 July 1919, CP23; for Chelmsford's opposition to measures except in the courts, see Chelmsford to Lloyd, 22 June 1919, CP22.

¹⁰¹ See HD to G/Bombay, 28 June 1919, H.Poll. 261, Aug. 1919; see also ibid. 262 & 270, Lloyd to Chelmsford, 27 July, & Chelmsford to Lloyd, 2 Aug. 1919, CP23.

¹⁰² Montagu to Lloyd, 18 July 1919, MP22, & Lloyd to Montagu, 24 July 1919, MP24.

envisaged retaining the restriction only for the province where Gandhi promised not to go, and thus avoid the risk of having to arrest him. Delhi, Bihar and Orissa, the Central and the United Provinces, Bengal and Madras all expressed their preference for having Gandhi confined to Bombay. The Government of India accepted these views and supported them to the Secretary of State. Nevertheless in September, about a month after the replies had been received, the Government decided to remove all restrictions on Gandhi. Madras and Bengal continued to express doubts; Delhi pleaded for delay; and the Panjab wanted to prevent Gandhi's attendance at the Amritsar Congress. The central Government ordered the restrictions to be lifted on 15 October; in Bombay they had already been removed.¹⁰³

Gandhi, with even more cause than Mrs. Besant in 1917, was not to be interfered with unless absolutely necessary. His campaign, like that of the Home Rulers, was dangerous and in a doubtful category somewhere between politics and revolution, because it too attempted to secure mass participation and a permanent opposition. It was very likely that the policy which had been evolved successfully in response to the first such campaign, would be applied to the second. Policy was not static after 1917. It continued to evolve in response to changing circumstances. Sometimes, as with Gandhi in 1919, it did not respond quickly enough at first. But, through the mistakes in application, the direction and purpose remained, as with Mrs. Besant, towards the method of tactical non-interference.

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See H.Poll. 263, 266-269, 271 & 272, Aug., & 426 & 437, Oct. 1919. See also S/S to V, 12 & 15 Aug., & V to S/S, 14 Aug. 1919, quoted in B.R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi, London 1958, 197-198.

Repression, the other aspect of government policy, was not conciliatory; it was the opposite but also the accompaniment of non-interference. In theory it was applied to lawlessness and violence, not politics. But by 1916, when Chelmsford became viceroy, the government in India had armed itself with strong powers to deal with what it called political crime.¹ The principle was well-established that the executive must be able to circumvent the ordinary judicial process in order to deal promptly with sedition. W.S. Marris, officiating Secretary in the Home Department, had written in 1913, after the attempt to assassinate Lord Hardinge, that it was incumbent on the Government of India and the local governments to consider the connection between 'anarchical' crime and the 'political circumstances of the country' and to unearth and suppress existing conspiracies. It was thought clear that the outrages prevalent in Bengal were not 'the last flicker of expiring anarchy in one Province': the conspiracies were 'a living force in India'. The Government's attitude had hardened. The local governments were instructed to take 'continuous and systematic action ... to enforce moderation in speech and writing, and to check the expression of views and criticisms which may conceal, but thinly, incitements to resistance of the authority of Government'. Hardinge's Government argued, through Marris:

Though the inspiration of anarchist outrages may stand outside all direct connection with ordinary political agitation, it is the excesses of the latter which prepare the ground for the inculcation of anarchical doctrines and create an environment in which such doctrines find adherents. It follows as a consequence that any too indulgent toleration of such excesses may be the direct or indirect cause of morbid growths especially among young and impressionable minds which lead in the end to atrocious crimes such as that perpetrated on the occasion of the State Entry into Delhi.²

At the beginning of Chelmsford's viceroyalty there were thus two main axioms accepted by the government with regard to 'revolutionary' crime: first that the problem was special, serious and widespread;

¹ The main enactments of these powers were Regulation III of 1818, the Press Act 1910, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Penal Code as last amended under Hardinge, and the Defence of India Act 1915.

² HD circular, 8 April 1913, IOR J&P 1589(4468/19).

second that it was related to other extreme political activities. The latter axiom was to be whittled away and finally discredited under Chelmsford. The first was to remain unchallenged for most of the period. It had led to the passage of the Defence of India Act in 1915, and was the rationale of the so-called Rowlatt Bills in 1919. The first Rowlatt Bill was the only repressive measure enacted under Lord Chelmsford. In its final form, it was temporary, qualified, and altogether weaker than its wartime predecessor. But the former confusion between revolutionary and political activities, introduced in the Home Department circular of 1913, had led in practice to widespread suspicion among Indians about the purposes for which executive powers would be used. The Rowlatt Bill was thus the occasion of serious disturbances, which were met with official reprisals of exceptional ferocity.

The problem in Bengal was certainly serious. Lord Hardinge described the province as 'seething with sedition'. Armed robberies (or dacoities) and assassinations of police and informers were, by his account, 'almost of daily occurrence', and 'it was practically impossible to secure a conviction by the ordinary process of law'.³ This rather overstated the position; nonetheless there was a bad situation which had deteriorated under Hardinge. Austen Chamberlain believed that both the Viceroy and the local Governor, Lord Carmichael, had neglected the problem;⁴ Chelmsford had to dissuade the Secretary of State from intervening, and himself set about a vigorous investigation. Shortly after taking up office he went to Calcutta, read the files on the subject, and had a long interview with the Governor. He asked Carmichael to give him a comprehensive report on the action his Government had taken, and their proposals for remedial measures and the postwar replacement of the Defence of India Act. Carmichael replied that they would investigate the result of the use of wartime powers to see in what form they should be retained. This response evoked no great enthusiasm in Lord Chelmsford - Carmichael had written, he said, perhaps 'the sort of note

³ Hardinge of Penshurst, My Indian Years 1910-1916, London 1948, 14.

⁴ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 5 May 1916, CP2. In 1910 there were 9 revolutionary crimes in Bengal with one fatality and loot of Rs.78,607, while in 1915, in Calcutta alone, there were 11 incidents, 6 fatalities and loot of Rs.84,850. See Secret Report of the Sedition Committee 1918, 23-58, IOR L/PARL444.

which Lord Carmichael would write'.⁵ Meanwhile the Government of India proceeded with some immediate remedies; in particular they sought an arrangement with the French whose territory, Chandernagore, was alleged to be an 'anarchist centre' and refuge. Agreement was difficult, but eventually, in 1918, the London authorities reported that the French had agreed to a projet d'accord whereby British Indian 'seditionists' would be immediately expelled and French subjects would be placed under surveillance.⁶

Chelmsford had placed some emphasis on positive remedial measures. He reported in September 1916 that his Government were 'not unmindful' of the need to remedy 'the root-cause of the evil'.⁷ He interviewed several of the Bengal officials. His conversations convinced him that educational reform lay at the heart of the remedy.⁸ It was believed that 'anarchical' crime, largely committed by educated bhadralok Hindus, was partly the expression of frustration at the lack of opportunities for those with a liberal education; and Chelmsford hoped, as had his predecessors, for advances in technical education and some channelling of talent away from law and government service and into commerce and industry. Chelmsford was also strongly in favour of a proposal to transfer the Presidency College away from the heady political atmosphere of Calcutta;⁹ and, urging that education was 'at the bottom' of most of the Bengal problems, he favoured and supported the general review of Bengal secondary and university education undertaken by the

⁵ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 14 April, CP2, & Carmichael to Chelmsford, 16 April, & Minute by H.E. the Viceroy on the situation in Bengal, 27 April 1916, CP17. See also Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 11 Jan. 1917, CP3: Chelmsford called the Bengal Government 'invertebrate' and marked by 'floppiness'.

⁶ See V to S/S, 9 July 1916, CP7, & Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 20 June 1917, CP3; Sedition Committee Report, 23-28 & 59-60; H.Poll. 192-199, Jan., 144, Feb., 316-317, April, & 424-425, June 1917, & 308, May, & 480-481, June 1918. Other early initiatives were the consideration of proposals to use the Criminal Tribes Act, by redefining a tribe as any single criminal, and to take powers to detain habitual criminals after the expiry of their sentence; the Government rejected these schemes. See Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 24 May, & Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 July 1916, CP2.

⁷ Speeches I, 60 (5 Sept. 1916).

⁸ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 15 Sept. 1916, CP2.

⁹ Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 24 May 1917, CP18; ED (C) Proceedings, 28-29, Oct. 1917.

Sadler Committee.¹⁰ The situation needed this thorough investigation: the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, had stated in his annual report for 1915-1916:

The present condition of secondary schools is undoubtedly prejudicing the development of the Presidency and is by no means a negligible feature in the existing state of general disturbance ... it is in the high schools, with their under-paid and discontented teachers, their crowded, dark and ill-ventilated rooms, and their soul-destroying process of unceasing cram, that the seeds of discontent and fanaticism are sown.¹¹

In reply to the Government of India's call for suggestions for substantive reforms, the Bengal Government had endorsed the ideas of a commission on Bengal district administration, which had recommended a reduction in the size of administrative charges, and also local self-government, industrial development and educational reform. The local government had decided to advance the first and last of these, in spite of wartime financial stringency, as matters of urgency.¹²

It was obvious that Bengal administration needed overhauling. The Government of India had suggested that organisation would have to be strengthened, and in January 1917 the Secretary of State urged that East Bengal districts and police station areas should be split up, as recommended in the District Administration Committee report. Dacca, Midnapur and Nymensingh districts were divided during 1918;¹³ and several police station areas had also been made smaller.¹⁴ Some police

¹⁰ See Ronaldshay to Montagu, 24 July 1917, MP21; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 14 April, 15 Sept. & 28 Dec. 1916, CP2; Carmichael to Chelmsford, 3 Sept. 1916, CP17; Hornell (Director, Public Instruction, Bengal) to Maffey, 13 Sept. 1916, CP17. See also, on the writing of the Sadler Report (Chelmsford urging the need for unanimity and speed), Sadler to Chelmsford, 22 Aug., & Chelmsford to Sadler, 28 Aug. & 5-6 Nov. 1918, CP21; on the refusal to allow publication of a draft bill, S/S to V, 25 June 1920, CP12; & for a similar refusal of urgent educational proposals, & Chelmsford's protest, Chelmsford to Montagu, 8 Sept. 1917, CF3.

¹¹ See Sedition Committee Report, 75.

¹² See HD to G/Bengal, 6 May, H.Poll. 172, May 1916, & G/Bengal to HD, 21 Sept. 1916, H.Poll. 229, Aug. 1917. In 1920 Ronaldshay was to suggest a separate education board for the Dacca area; see Ronaldshay to Montagu, 2 Dec. 1920, MP31.

¹³ See H.Poll. 140, May, & 298, June 1916, & 118, April 1917; & H.Public 364-378, April, 44-45, July 1918, & 482-502, Dec. 1919.

¹⁴ H.Police 1-5, Feb. 1917. See also discussions of the Public Services Commission and measures for the indianisation of the police, in H.Police 1-29, July 1919, & 247-335, June 1921; and, for a reorganisation in the 24-Parganas district, see H.Police 1-3, Feb. 1919.

were also being armed, and squads were formed to protect Special Branch officers investigating 'conspiracies' and thus in danger of assassination.¹⁵ Several improvements were made in police pay and special allowances. Numbers were also increased, and a new class of 'writer' constables, with a higher pay scale, was introduced to attract better recruits. In 1918, however, average police earnings in Bengal were still below those of local durwans, coolies and mill-operatives, and below those of the police in Madras and Bombay. In 1920 Bengal police were understaffed, by one thousand out of a nominal 19,000; and, in spite of recruiting drives and annual pay rises, wastage was continuing at an increasing rate.¹⁶ But the Bengal Government maintained that the problems of the police were separate from the question of 'revolutionary' crime - this was handled by the Special Branch and not by the force in general. The intelligence staff had been enormously increased by both temporary and permanent appointments, and their deployment had been improved in the districts. In 1916 Bengal intelligence staff comprised 11 inspectors, 15 sub-inspectors and 37 constables. In 1917, after two increases, the permanent establishment was 20 inspectors, 51 sub-inspectors, 43 head constables, 351 constables and 36 confidential clerks - representing a total increase of 488. The Calcutta Special Branch was also strengthened by more than half.¹⁷ About the same time as these changes, the number of outrages in Bengal decreased. There were 64 in 1915-1916, but only ten between January 1917 and February 1918.¹⁸ This period, however, coincided also with the more vigorous application of the Defence of India Act, which course had been urged on the Bengal authorities by Chelmsford's Government. The cause of the improvement was therefore not certain.

In August 1917, the Government of India decided that it was time to prepare for the continuation of the Defence of India powers

¹⁵ H.Poll. 39-40, Aug. 1916; H.Police 80-81, Sept. 1916, & 124-125 March, & 95-98 April 1917.

¹⁶ E.Poll. 44, 45, 47-49, Aug. 1916; H.Police 100-105, March, & 66-68, Aug. 1918, & 30-34 & 317-334, April 1919, & 217-219, Feb., & 126-127 & 174-176, April 1920.

¹⁷ See H.Police(C) 50-53 Aug., 88, Sept., & 91, Oct. 1916; H.Police 93-97, July, & 156-157, Oct. 1919, 96, March, & 257-258, June 1920, & 136-137, April 1921. See also G/Bengal to HD, 28 July 1916, H.Poll. 228, Aug. 1917.

¹⁸ ILC Proceedings, 6 Feb. 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

after the war. There had been some delays before this could be considered - the Bengal Government and then the new Home Member, Sir William Vincent, had needed time to study the question.¹⁹ Chelmsford had stressed in 1916 that no time should be lost and 'the matter thoroughly thrashed out before the occasion arises'.²⁰ But a further problem had arisen. As we have noted, the wartime measures had not been confined to Bengali terrorists, but, by deliberate policy, had been applied to a wide and ill-defined area of political activity; as a result Indians had severely criticised the Defence of India Act, privately and in the press. Accordingly, the Bengal proposals for the future sought to modify the wartime provisions, in the hope of making them more acceptable without sacrificing any essential feature. The local government proposed that the application of the executive powers should be subject to the prior scrutiny of advisory committees, that there should be no provision for rapid trial by Commission, and that the new Act should have a life of only three years.²¹ Even more important, Lord Ronaldshay, the Governor, suggested that the whole question should be referred to a semi-judicial commission of enquiry. He thought it necessary to convince public opinion in India and Britain that extraordinary powers were justified, and, as it was not thought possible to publish the evidence of the conspiracies, either because it was itself objectionable or because it was based on testimony secured by promises of secrecy, a commission sitting mainly in camera was the obvious answer.²² The Government of India endorsed the official Bengal

¹⁹ See G/Bengal to HD, 17 July 1916, H.Poll. 227, Aug. 1917; & Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 July 1917, CP3.

²⁰ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 14 April 1916, CP2.

²¹ G/Bengal to HD, 17 & 28 July 1916, H.Poll. 227-228, Aug. 1917. The Bengal proposal was in response to the Government of India's request which in turn was a reaction to the urging of the Secretary of State; see HD to G/Bengal, 6 May, H.Poll. 172, May 1916, & 20 July 1916, H.Poll. 226, Aug. 1917, & S/S despatch, 21 April 1916, followed up by S/S to V(HD), 17 July 1916, H.Poll. 225, Aug. 1917.

²² The Secretary of State had again pressed for an early decision, in his despatch of 13 October 1916, suggesting that the Defence of India Act should be substantially maintained; see H.Poll. 230, Aug. 1917. The Bengal Government suggested an enquiry officially on 21 June 1917 (see ibid. 231) and the Government of India endorsed the idea on 16 August (ibid. 232). Ronaldshay had noted the proposal in his diary as early as 26 May 1917 (he quotes an extract in his memoirs, Zetland, "Essayex" London 1956, 77), and had suggested it to Chamberlain in a letter of 27 June (ACP21/5/66) - this letter was lost at sea, and a copy was not sent until 26 April 1918 (see ACP26/4/18). The Government of India were evidently not thinking of an enquiry in December 1916, when they appointed an official to summarise information on record in their

suggestion, and proposed a committee headed by an eminent English judge, with one English and one Indian judge from the Indian High Courts, an Indian non-official, and one British official with executive experience.

The Government had already decided what was needed. They envisaged special courts, modifications in the laws of procedure and possibly evidence, and something like the Defence of India rules. The committee was thus not intended to help a decision; it was purely a public relations gesture. Therefore its personnel and procedure had to command public confidence. Its decision, favourable to the Government, was ensured by having it base its deliberations largely on 'documentary evidence already available' (that is, on official sources).²³ Ronaldshay had no doubts that he could convince the committee 'of the existence of a widespread and dangerous conspiracy'.²⁴ A committee, under the Scottish judge, S.A.T. Rowlatt, was appointed at the end of 1917. Montagu had found it difficult to recruit a chairman in Britain, and the Government of India had hoped for a more famous name. They had no other reason to be dissatisfied with the procedure. The committee members studied statements placed before them by the governments of Bengal, Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Orissa, the Central and the United Provinces, the Panjab, and Burma, and by the Government of India. They also heard verbal statements from officials, except in the case of Madras, and in the Panjab and Bengal they 'invited and secured the attendance' of individuals and deputations representing 'various non-official points of view'. The result was the Rowlatt Report, which vindicated government policy and favoured the continuance of wartime powers, as the government wished. Official and judicial evidence had carried most weight; and the procedure was by no means above suspicion.

own Criminal Intelligence Department (see Director, CID, to HD, 15 Dec. 1916, H.Police, 126-131, March 1917). In 1917 they refused a non-official resolution calling for a committee on 'Indian anarchism'; see ILC Proceedings, 8 Feb. 1917, H.Poll. 463 & 463A, May 1917. Thus it is clear that the Rowlatt Committee was Ronaldshay's invention. (It is interesting to note that the understanding of 'revolutionaries' and the need for reform, to be shown, in his Heart of Aryāvarta, London 1925, 82-87, seems to have had little practical effect on Ronaldshay's policies.)

²³ See Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 22 Feb., CP3, & V(HD) to S/S, 16 Aug. 1917, CP8 (or H.Poll. 232, Aug. 1917).

²⁴ See G/Bengal to HD, 21 June 1917, ibid. 231.

But the Report is a destrous and convincing document all the same. In the India Office Holderness hoped that it might 'open the eyes of many Indians to the mischief wh. political movements of the kind incited by Tilak bring about'. There, as elsewhere, the Report was held to carry 'a great authority by reason of the eminent men who have drawn it up'. The Government of India were well satisfied.²⁵

The Rowlatt Report had examined those crimes, mainly dacoities and murders, which the committee characterised as 'revolutionary' - crimes known to be a result of conspiracy, involving groups and advance planning; crimes carried out for political motives and by bhadralok youths; crimes shown to be interconnected, as revealed in confessions, the movement of loot and the sharing of weapons and information (notably on bomb manufacture); and finally crimes arising out of these other types, in particular the murder of police, prosecutors and witnesses in conspiracy trials, and the theft of arms to be used in dacoities and murders. The Report traced the crimes to revolutionary societies which had grown out of Barinda Kumar Ghosh's Anusilan Samiti, especially the Dacon branch which had been directly implicated in the Barisal conspiracy case of 1913. These societies were claimed to be working 'very largely in concert', attempting to subvert students, and espousing 'revolutionary' aims.²⁶

The Report's own evidence was perhaps not totally convincing in these regards. The impression given was of deliberate campaigns of terrorism - one letter, discovered in 1916, boasted in the name of the 'Finance Secretary of the Bengal Branch of the Independent Kingdom of India' that 'adequate punishment' was being inflicted on police

²⁵ See HD resolution, 10 Dec. 1917, & note by Holderness, 6 July 1918, IOR J&P1517(2404/18); Rowlatt to HD, 15 April 1918, & Secret Report of the Sedition Committee 1918, IOR L/PARL444. The Committee members were Sir Basil Scott, C.J.(Bombay), Rai Bahadur C.V. Kumaraswami Sastri, J.(Madras), Sir Verney Lovett, member of the United Provinces' Board of Revenue, & Provash Chandra Mitter, vakil, Calcutta High Court. Their Report was unanimous.

²⁶ See Sedition Committee Report, passim, especially 11-60, & for the classification of evidence, 19-21, on education, 76, on rules & ceremonies, 61, 63 & Appendices, lxxiii-lxvi, on conspiracy & inter-connection between societies, 68-74, on the Panjab, 99-113, & on other provinces, 1-10, 87-97 & 115-122. The British in India were perhaps rather over-ready to suspect conspiracies. In July 1918, for example, the Home Department reported a bomb outrage in which the bomb appeared to have been made from the same materials as in an earlier explosion; four weeks later they had to report, sheepishly, that there had been no political motive in the second explosion - indeed there had been no bomb. See V(HD) to S/S, 2, 4 & 30 July 1918, CP9.

officers; this 'Independent Kingdom' also professed to regard robbery as something in the nature of tax-collection.²⁷ Such reasoning was reflected in other documents. But the 'revolutionary' societies (as the Report admitted) were not altogether of one mind - there was even one instance of a pamphlet disapproving of violence and dacoities.²⁸ The Report also made no attempt to gain an historical perspective on the long-standing incidence of violent crime as a characteristic of Bengali unrest. Nor did it make a general survey of the alleged subversion of students, and, although it cited one or two schools as notorious, it was content to show intention rather than prove success in this policy. Moreover the rules and ceremonies of the Dacca samiti displayed religious as much as political fanaticism; the Report did not differentiate between the two. And, while documents were found exhorting members to secrecy, the societies often seemed amateurish, the adherents proving remarkably indiscreet, keeping incriminating documents and even lists of members. On the other hand, judgments in the various conspiracy trials did bear out the Report's picture,²⁹ and the authorities had uncovered and destroyed three main conspiracies whose instigators had planned uprisings and arms shipments and made contact

²⁷ Sedition Committee Report, 53-56.

²⁸ See ibid., 63-67 & Appendices, lxxxv & lxxxix-xc.

²⁹ See in particular the judgment, pp. 1-104, & the evidence (829pp.), in the Supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case (trying members of the Ghadr conspiracy in the Panjab), H.Poll. 221, May 1916. See also other trial proceedings, H.Poll. 264 & 403-410, Sept. 1916, 55-57, 63, 69 & 183, Sept. 1918; of these the first (264, Sept. 1916) & the last (183, Sept. 1918) are especially interesting, the last including prosecution evidence from one Bibhuti Bhusan Haldar on organisation & revolutionary intentions in Benares, & the first, an appeal case, upholding the existence of a conspiracy in Barisal. The Rowlatt Report's picture of revolutionaries & their societies has also been supported by an account of the activities of Narendranath Bhattacharya (or M.N. Roy), a follower of Jatin Mukherjee, the leader of the Jugantar party; see Leonard A. Gordon, 'Portrait of a Bengal Revolutionary', Journal of Asian Studies XXVII, 2 (Feb. 1968), 197-216. This account also supports the contention that the crimes were committed mostly by young bhadralok Bengalis, usually students - lists of suspects detained under executive orders also bear out at least that the majority of detenus were Brahmin or Kayastha; see H.Poll. 345 & 405, Jan., 167, 172, 240, 251, 258, 428, 538, Feb., 479, 488, 596, 607, March, 129-134, April 26-30, 35-39, 40-44, 153-160, May, 128-131, June, 1-5, 6-10, 59-63, 479 & 492, July, 120-126, 201-207, 250-253, Aug., 28-31, Sept., 12-20, 639, 644 & 651, Nov., 318-327, 336-340, 343-359, Dec. 1917, & 339, Jan. 1918.

with the Germans. One conspiracy centred on Bengal had ended with a gun battle and the death of the leader of the Jugantar party of Calcutta, a group already responsible for a resurgence of crime in that area.³⁰

Having identified the problem and established how serious it was, the Report went on to advocate the remedy already decided upon by the government. A token interest was shown in positive and administrative remedies, but perhaps surprisingly in a semi-judicial enquiry there was no assessment of possible ways of avoiding executive powers. The courts were pronounced inadequate, partly because of the danger of intimidation of witnesses, the reliance on confessions and other evidence not admissible in law, and the difficulty of attributing blame to individual members of a gang, but also because of shortcomings in the judicial system. It was claimed that there had been 210 outrages since 1906, and evidence of the complicity of 1088 persons, but only 84 convictions in 39 attempts at prosecution. (No attempt was made to correlate this with figures for crime in general.) Thus the Rowlett Committee argued that the 'forces of law and order working through the ordinary channels were beaten'.³¹ They had admitted that there was only a very small number of 'conspirators' - but they concentrated on the nature not the extent of the problem. 'Revolutionaries' were seen as a special case, not amenable to ordinary control, demanding special

³⁰ See Sedition Committee Report, 81-85, 99-115 & 123-127. Japan was also suspected of having been involved in arms shipments to India, & of having ambitions in the area; see India Office & War Committee memoranda, 16 & 19 May 1916, ACP21/6/20 & 20A.

³¹ See Sedition Committee Report, 43-45, 131-132 & 139 (criticisms of the courts), & 142. For the increase in 'revolutionary' crime, 1906-1921, see ibid., 23-58; but for a perspective also compare the state of the Dacca area in this period - there were 28 'revolutionary' outrages in Bengal in 1915, but 18,841 'serious crimes' in the Dacca police range alone; all crime was increasing; & there was also civil unrest, with the Dacca battalion called out 65 times between April 1912 & July 1918. See H. Police 100, Oct. 1918. The courts were not completely helpless either: there were ten prosecutions of groups in the period, involving 192 persons & resulting in 63 convictions & 82 persons being bound over to be of good behaviour. B.N. Sarma was to tell the Imperial Legislative Council that these figures compared favourably with those for other serious crime in Bengal - success in 33% of cases compared with 9% (1912) or 11% (1915) for murder. See ICL Proceedings, 7 Feb. 1919, IOR J&F1571(2539/19). The Rowlett Report itself claimed, moreover, that the number of confessions had increased during the war as measures 'broke the morale' of the revolutionaries (Report, 19-21): it was arguable that the worst was over.

measures.³²

Thus the Rowlatt Committee recommended some changes in the law of evidence, but concentrated on a method of continuing the extra-judicial wartime powers. Following the lead of the Bengal Government, they sought to hedge the powers about with safeguards. They proposed that the measures should be introduced in any area only by express notification of the Governor-General in Council and then in three stages according to the seriousness of the situation - the first stage would allow expeditious trials; the second would permit the demand for security or the application of certain orders and restrictions, all such actions being subject to prior investigation by an independent authority; and the third would permit arrests and searches without warrants and detentions for up to one month pending an order, again subject to investigation (though not necessarily beforehand) and also to scrutiny of the conditions of detention by independent committees. These powers were to be available throughout the country - it would have been impolitic and unwise to confine the provisions to Bengal. They were to be applied only when needed. The Committee had recommended special emergency powers, applicable if necessary to a tiny minority, who, because their activities were believed to be dangerous and uncontrollable, were not to be given the ordinary benefits of the law.³³

The Government of India duly received the Rowlatt Report and published a censored version. They had decided to introduce legislation as soon as possible, and in the exact form of the Committee's proposals. They were concerned not to waste the good effect they anticipated from the publication of the Report.³⁴ As time went on, moreover, their desire for haste became greater. V.J. Patel, sharing the general puzzlement at this, was later to claim that they were making one of the 'blunders

³² This rationalisation showed, for example, when the Report quoted (pp.105-106 - apparently with approval) the Panjab Government as arguing, 'it is most undesirable at the present time to allow trials of any of these revolutionaries ... to be protracted by the ingenuity of Counsel and drawn out to inordinate length by the committal and appeal procedure...'. This was an odd stance for a quasi-judicial committee. Lovett later explained that the main point for him had been the question of whether or not the government was going to protect its servants and subjects (other, presumably, than the 'revolutionaries'); see ILC Proceedings, 7 Feb. 1919, IOR J&J1571(2539/19).

³³ See Sedition Committee Report, 141-152. For the striking similarity of these proposals to those of the Secretary of State (April, July & Oct. 1916), the Government of Bengal (July 1916), & the Government of India (Aug. 1917), see H.Poll. 225, 227, & 230, Aug. 1917, & V(HD) to S/S, 17 Aug. 1917, CP8.

³⁴ V(HD) to S/S, 23 Nov. 1919, CP9.

which a Government not responsible to the people is likely to commit in moments of excitement'.³⁵ But haste was deliberate. By 1919 the Government were worried at the imminence of the signing of the peace treaty, which they expected to occur at any moment. They did not wish to be accused of using wartime measures unfairly. It is also probable that there was some truth in Sastri's suggestion in the imperial legislature that the Government were trying to reassure English opinion and so facilitate the acceptance of the Reforms scheme. Certainly the Government believed that the 'revolutionary movement' would be 'far more likely to impair the chances of political progress ... than anything else'.³⁶ Austen Chamberlain also stressed the link between reforms and continued executive powers - he believed 'The more democratic the Government becomes the more fatal disorder is likely to be'.³⁷

The Government were also over-sanguine about the reaction to their proposals. In September, G.S.Kharparde had tried to postpone consideration of the Rowlatt Report by passing a hostile resolution in the imperial legislature. The Government argued that a unanimous report by such distinguished men could not be ignored, and all but two of the non-official members agreed with them. Sastri, Banerjea, Shafi and Sapru declared Kharparde's resolution inopportune; Sapru added that he had read the Report asking if it read like fact or fiction, and had decided it read like fact. Even Jinnah opposed the resolution, although, unlike the others, he made it clear that he would also oppose the Report's proposals when the proper time came.³⁸ The Government regarded the outcome of this debate, as noted by officials in the India Office, 'as indicating that legislation on the lines proposed would not be unfavourably received'.³⁹ This optimism was encouraged in February 1919 by the defeat in the Bengal Legislative Council of another hostile resolution.⁴⁰ Chelmsford's assessment of his own Council was that opposition had 'slackened off'. He called his opponents the 'Malaviya faction', and thought that, although the Government were having a strenuous time, they

³⁵ ILC Proceedings, 6 Feb. 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

³⁶ See Vincent's speech, ibid., 12 March 1919.

³⁷ See Chamberlain to Ronaldshay, 7 June 1918, ACP21/5/70.

³⁸ ILC Proceedings, 23 Sept. 1918, IOR J&P1571(2539/19); H.Poll. 159, Jan. 1919.

³⁹ See note by Seton, 8 April 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁴⁰ Bengal Legislative Proceedings, Calcutta Gazette, 5 Feb. 1919, IOR J&P1571(3132/19).

were 'on solid ground'. In March he considered the position 'healthy'.⁴¹ His Government were thus hurrying to pass the Rowlatt Bill while the good humour lasted.

The same arguments applied of course to agitation outside the Legislative Council. Gandhi and the Congress had declared their opposition to the continuance of repressive executive powers. Gandhi had pleaded and cajoled, and threatened to invoke his weapon of passive resistance. The Government underestimated this threat. Chelmsford was pleased to find that Sastri and Banerjea had spoken out against Gandhi's campaign; he interviewed Gandhi himself, found him a little shaken by the Government's sympathy with his objections to the Bill and by a smaller degree of support than he had expected among legislators, but decided that he had 'passive resistance on the brain' and was now committed to his campaign. Chelmsford concluded that the Government would have to call Gandhi's bluff; he expressed himself 'quite happy' defending his position, and judged that Gandhi had not chosen his ground well for a 'thorough-going passive resistance movement'. Montagu was wrong to presume that they were in for 'a period of great agitation'.⁴²

But, if opposition in and outside the legislature was underestimated, it was nonetheless recognised that delay would increase and not diminish the difficulties. Vincent told the legislators, 'the more the Government yields in this matter, the greater force would the agitation obtain'. He was probably right. Most of the Council members who were attempting to delay the Bill admitted that they believed, as

⁴¹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Feb., 12 & 28 March, CP5, & V to S/S, 28 March 1919, CP10. The assessment was wrong, mainly because of the pressures on the legislators from outside, notably from Gandhi, and a suspicion that the Government were giving with one hand and taking away with the other - the Rowlatt Bills were interpreted as proof that the Government had no real intention (in the reforms) of relinquishing power. Perhaps too the Council could have been handled better. Montagu thought Chelmsford should have made a major policy speech; Chelmsford wished Vincent could have been more of a conciliator - he had remarked in 1918, on Vincent's performance at the Delhi War Conference, that 'if only he would keep calm, his usefulness would be increased a hundred-fold'; he must have had similar feelings over Vincent's heated exchanges with Malaviya and Banerjea at the end of the committal debate on the Rowlatt Bill. See Chelmsford to Montagu, 28 April 1918, CP4, & ILC Proceedings, 7 Feb. 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁴² Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Feb. 1919, CP5. This error was general. Cumming, in charge of the investigation of political crime in Bengal, told Chelmsford that Bengalis were 'heartily tired of the present unrest' and would welcome restrictions; see Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 15 Sept. 1916, CP2. In their letter of 17 July 1916, the G/Bengal echoed this assessment (H.Poll. 227, Aug. 1917).

V.J. Patel put it, that 'the only way to improve this Bill is to entirely drop it'. A delay would only have raised hopes. Patel said that, with postponement, 'the Government might see the unwisdom of passing this measure at any time'; and Rai Bahadur B. D. Shukul went so far as to admit that it was expected, with the agitation, 'that the Government would ... drop the Bill altogether'.⁴³ This hope was perhaps well-founded. The minor permanent proposals of the Rowlatt Report were embodied in a second bill, which was eventually abandoned after the Government had given in to a demand for re-publication.⁴⁴ Moreover, as was never very far from anyone's mind, a delay on the main Rowlatt Bill might well have meant that it would have had to be introduced before the new reformed Legislative Assembly, where it would have had the double disadvantage, as far as the Government were concerned, of souring the atmosphere and of being in danger of defeat. Before the war such difficulty had been experienced in trying to pass a similar bill through the Bengal Legislative Council that the attempt had been abandoned, and the measure left to the Government of India.⁴⁵

The Government therefore had good reasons for haste. It is less easy to see why they were so determined to go ahead in the face of Indian objections. They were beginning to enunciate the principle, later to grow in importance, of giving effect to the wishes of the legislature. In 1920, over the Dacca University Bill, they explained to the Secretary of State that 'it would be impolitic in a case of this kind to use our official majority on the eve of the introduction of reforms to override non-official opinion freely and strongly expressed'.⁴⁶ Moreover, the introduction of the Rowlatt Bill - a decision to 'override non-official opinion' - followed a new concern to limit the application of executive powers. In March 1918 a general order was issued instructing local governments to work the Defence of India Act with discretion - it was not to be used indiscriminately, nor 'merely because the accused person happens to be

⁴³ ILC Proceedings, 12 March 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁴⁴ The Bill contained provisions punishing possession of a seditious document, giving magistrates some power to order preliminary inquiries, allowing promises of protection to witnesses, admitting evidence of previous convictions, and providing for restrictions after release; see IOR J&P1567(2278/19), & also below, pp.303-304.

⁴⁵ See H.Public, 602, May 1918. The bill which was abandoned was the Calcutta & Suburban Police (Amendment) Bill of 1910.

⁴⁶ V(LD) to S/S, 22 May 1920, CP12.

a suspected revolutionary or because the crime is believed to be in pursuance of a revolutionary conspiracy'. The ordinary law was to be used where possible and the special powers evoked 'only when clear necessity ... can be established'. Hitherto the Government had 'invariably accepted' any local request to apply the Act; they now served notice that they would do so no longer. The change was to reverse the tendency to 'supersede the ordinary criminal courts in respect of the ordinary crime of the country' - a tendency which was unattributed but which dated, as we have seen, from 1913. Now repression was to be limited to those crimes which were both dangerous and not amenable to judicial control.⁴⁷ This strict attitude was in accord with the principle of non-interference with lawful agitation and national political leaders.

Moreover, if the Rowlatt Bill seemed to run counter to the tendencies of Chelmsford's administration, it certainly did not conform with Edwin Montagu's ideas for Indian government. He made every conceivable protest, except the only effective one of refusing his sanction. He found much that was 'repugnant' in the Rowlatt proposals - they 'made a radical think hard'. He asked, without success, for the Bills to be accompanied by a concession, the abandonment of Regulation III of 1818. He wrote that he loathed the retention of wartime measures and dreaded the perpetuation of that sort of police government which, he claimed, had given Sir Michael O'Dwyer a 'cheap' success in the Panjab. He predicted that the Government would not be able to use the Rowlatt powers in the conditions of the future.⁴⁸ In the face of this pressure, in defiance of Indian opposition, in apparent contradiction of their own predilections, the Government of India pressed on with the main Rowlatt Bill.

There were several reasons for their persistence. The first was a belief that the measures were unavoidable. Vincent told the legislature that the Rowlatt Bill was an infringement of normal rights,

⁴⁷ HD circular, 16 March 1918, H.Poll. 275 (& see also 272-274), April 1918. See also H.Poll. 440-445, Aug. 1916: the Act was applied to Patna District in 1916 for the flimsiest of reasons - for the speedy trial of a clerk charged with distributing seditious literature, and because 'it was not impossible that other sedition cases' might arise.

⁴⁸ See Montagu to Chelmsford, 10 Oct. & 23-24 Dec. 1918, CP4, & 8 & 26 March & 1 May 1919, CP5; S/S to V, 19 March & 2 May 1919, CP10; & Montagu to Ronaldshay, 25 Sept. & 24 Oct. 1918, MP27.

but one that could not be avoided. Lowndes professed a great dislike of such legislation, and claimed he would have opposed it, had it not been necessary. Chelmsford wrote that no-one regretted the step more than he; but, he argued, it could not be postponed.⁴⁹ He told the Legislative Council that the Government could not contemplate 'the sudden release from restraint and control of the forces of anarchy'; they could not shut their eyes to the 'existence in India of definitely revolutionary organisations'.⁵⁰ He agreed with the Rowlatt Report that the forces of law were beaten; he did not believe India would be untouched by the 'reaction against all authority' that was abroad; he did believe that the Government had to defend their 'friends in India from the criminal few'.⁵¹ One idea occurred again and again. Chelmsford thought the Government would be failing in their duty if they did not act. Vincent claimed, 'we are responsible for the public peace in this country, and it is our duty to take such measures as may be necessary to secure that'. At the end of the Rowlatt debates, he declared, 'The conscience of the Government ... is clear. We are acting from a deep-rooted conviction that we are right'.⁵²

Moreover, if there were any danger of this conviction faltering, the Bengal Government were ready to give encouragement. They argued:

We have unfortunately the best reasons for going on with whatever checks have been imposed by the measures taken under the Defence Act. Men are still abroad who were known to be leaders in the revolutionary movement; they are still ... endeavouring to foment trouble, and simply because sedition has been checked for the moment, we should not be justified in assuming that it does not exist.

... this revolutionary movement in Bengal was not the product of the war. It was accentuated by the war, but there is no a priori reason why, because ... the war is over, we should discard measures which we have found so useful.⁵³

⁴⁹ Speeches II, 208 (21 March 1919); Chelmsford to Montagu, 21 Feb. 1919, CP5; ILC Proceedings, 7 Feb. 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁵⁰ Speeches II, 174-175 (6 Feb. 1919).

⁵¹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Nov. 1918, CP4.

⁵² ILC Proceedings, 6 Feb. & 18 March 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁵³ Bengal Legislative Proceedings, Calcutta Gazette, 5 Feb. 1919, IOR J&P1577(3132/19) - Statement by Sir Henry Wheeler.

The Government of India thought the new Bill was the least objectionable way of meeting the need. Regulation III of 1818 was more repressive, and to use the Defence of India Act in peacetime was to break a pledge. It was undesirable, too, to proceed by ordinance. The Government thought it their duty to face the legislature - it enabled them to consult public opinion (which they proceeded to ignore), and was altogether 'more open and honest'.⁵⁴

The government thinking was thus a strange mixture of high-mindedness and muddle. The Bengal authorities were perhaps more single-minded, with their steadfast reluctance to consider the basic question of whether or not wartime measures could be justified merely by their being useful. But the Government of India, although they claimed to have seen this dilemma, did not carry through their reasoning. They could not break a pledge not to use the Defence of India Act in peacetime; but they could re-introduce the Act in a slightly different form. They could not proceed by ordinance, but they could ignore the advice of the non-official legislators and carry the Bill by official majority. The difference, the effect of their 'openness', was little more than to publicise their measures and antagonise the legislators.

They argued, of course, that the will of the legislature could not prevail in an essential measure. Lowndes told the Council, in the Rowlatt debate, that 'no reasonable Government' could give way before a threat of agitation; they were responsible for policy and could not surrender their own judgment.⁵⁵ Montagu, too, accepted this argument, and the thinking which had led up to it. He had agreed that the Rowlatt Report had 'focussed attention' on the urgency of the terrorist problem; he was 'firmly convinced' that extra powers were needed to fill a gap in the Government's armour. Thus he accepted publication of the bills; he defended the main measure in Parliament with the claim that it was 'the most liberal Act of its kind ever produced'. Indeed, when the Government in their haste introduced the Bills without sanction, causing something of a flurry in the India Office, it was admitted that the Secretary of State was unlikely to have disallowed them, and Montagu, after sending a mild telegram asking for information, later gave his approval, over the objections of Basu and Sinha. He acquiesced in measures he disliked because he was

⁵⁴ ILC Proceedings, 7 Feb. 1919, IOR J&P1571 (2539/19) - Vincent.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

reluctant to interfere, but also because he had been convinced that the measures were necessary - the Indian legal system was so bad that these dangerous expedients could not be avoided. He too accepted the view of the Rowlatt Committee that the ordinary forces of law had been beaten.⁵⁶

In a sense the British had been trapped by the Rowlatt Report. Chelmsford claimed it gave him 'no choice but to act'; his Government told the Secretary of State that it left 'no option as to the introduction of legislation'.⁵⁷ Certainly such recommendations, from a unanimous committee, left little room for manoeuvre. Some members of Parliament had shown an interest - a question in the Commons as early as October 1918 raised the matter of the action to be taken; some 'severe criticism' had already been heard over the delay in making copies of the Rowlatt Report available in England, a 'blunder' which had exercised the India Office where it was thought to call for a 'very sharp censure'.⁵⁸ Even more important, the Report had reinforced, in a quite spurious way, the Government's conviction that it was necessary to perpetuate the repressive powers. The Home Department explained in August 1918 that the recommendations involved 'legislation which it would have been difficult to justify to the public and to the Legislative Council unless it had been supported by the real authority' of the Committee. But the Committee had based their recommendations on the evidence supplied by the government, and their remedy merely endorsed earlier government thinking. As far as the Government of India were concerned, neither the evidence nor the proposals should have gained authority from this process.⁵⁹ Both evidence and proposals did so. The effect of the Rowlatt Report was to forestall any official questioning of the need for special powers.

In October 1918 Ronaldshay had reported that his Government had had gratifying success in their endeavours to prosecute the 'revolutionaries' in the courts - from January to August there had been 34

⁵⁶ See above, note 48; & notes by Holderness, 14 Feb., Basu, 4 March, & Sinha, 6 March 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁵⁷ V(HD) to S/S, 23 Nov., CP19, & Chelmsford to Lloyd, 8 April 1919, CF22.

⁵⁸ Question, Sir J.D. Rees, 23 Oct., & other questions (Commons), 17, 22, 24 & 28 Oct., & (Lords), 15 Oct. 1918; S/S to V(HD), 17 Oct. 1918; note by Seton, 10 Oct. 1918: IOR J&P1529(4189/19).

⁵⁹ HD circular, 28 Aug. 1918, H.Poll. 45, Jan. 1919. The spurious nature of this argument was emphasized when Vincent pointed out that it had been the Government's awareness of the 'revolutionary' threat which had made them appoint the Committee; see ILC Proceedings, 23 Sept. 1918, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

prosecutions, 28 of them successful.⁶⁰ This highly significant development, like the contributions of the improvements in and the strengthening of the Bengal police, did not enter into the Government's calculations. The Rowlatt Report had already given its verdict.

The failure to question the basic assumptions of the repressive policy was not new. In their letter of 6 May 1916, the Home Department had asked the Government of Bengal what (if any) special powers would be needed after the war;⁶¹ but this fundamental question, whether any special powers would be needed, was never at issue. It was thought axiomatic both that the Bengal situation was serious and that it could not be contained by ordinary measures. The Bengal Government had been making requests for special powers before the war, and, as far as they were concerned, the Defence of India Act had merely delayed a permanent enactment.⁶² In May 1916, after the murder of a police officer, the eighteenth in eight years, they had tried to persuade the Home Department to allow them even wider powers, especially the use of Regulation III of 1818 at local discretion to imprison 'suspects'; in August they had also asked to be allowed to prosecute for the possession of (not only for intention to circulate) seditious literature. The Government of India had refused the former request, and, in agreeing to the latter, had urged 'the greatest discretion' in sanctioning prosecutions, and provided that the new rule would apply only to those documents whose dissemination would be dangerous 'under existing war conditions'. But the special measures were not generally seen as limited by the war, the end of which would not, in the Bengal view, 'materially

⁶⁰ See Ronaldshay to Montagu, 13 Oct. 1918, MP29. Equally significant and also ignored were other facts - the Bengal Government had argued in May 1916 that the Defence of India Act had not been effective; & on the other hand Vincent had quoted a letter from a conspirator claiming that 'Some of our best men were lost we had to drop the idea of an immediate rising' (though 'local organisations' were allegedly intact). See H.Poll. 493, Aug. 1916, & ILC Proceedings, 6 Feb. 1919, IGR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁶¹ HD to G/Bengal, 6 May 1916, H.Poll. 172, May 1916.

⁶² See H.Poll. 227, Aug. 1917. At this time there was perhaps the only questioning of the policy. In 1916 there was a dispute in the Bengal Government about priorities; P.C. Lyon and Sir Syed Shamsul Huda suggested that substantive reforms should precede the taking of repressive powers - Lyon outlined a plan which included an announcement on self-government, indianisation of the higher public services, & the devolution of power upon democratic Indian institutions (enlarged provincial legislatures with 'more interest in the control of the finances', and the inclusion of two Indians in local Executive Councils) as a preparation for self-government. See H.Poll. 229, Aug. 1917. (In the event, the Government of India more or less abided by this timetable.)

alter the circumstances'. The Home Department, even in 1916, had claimed to be considering the whole problem of 'revolutionary' crime, including the possibility of introducing measures of 'a more stringent and far reaching character'.⁶³ The idea of responding to sedition by increasing government powers had been around so long that it had become habitual. The war had merely reinforced this tendency. It was believed that the powers had been used successfully; this strengthened the case for making them permanent. Chelmsford had warned his legislature in September 1916 that it was impossible to 'tolerate the indefinite continuance of dangerous activities', and in Calcutta in December he concluded that the government had been able 'seriously to check' the progress of the 'revolutionary' movements by depriving conspirators of their liberty.⁶⁴ The containment of the problem was presented as being due to imprisonment without trial when trial was thought impossible; the Government were not going to abandon this weapon. Chamberlain had actively advocated its use;⁶⁵ the Government of Bengal argued that at the least it would have to be continued in some form to avoid the dangerous situation of the sudden release of the detenus on the expiry of the Defence of India Act, six months after the end of the war.⁶⁶ The whole tradition of government thinking was thus against any assessment of the need for repression. And yet thinking was changing. Repression had been ruled out for a whole category of political activists; the Government of India had ordered that it should be applied more selectively even to 'revolutionaries'. The effect of the Rowlatt Report, reflecting as it did the unquestioning acceptance of special powers, was to continue the traditional response for a few more years, long enough to pass the Rowlatt Bill and to discredit the Government in the eyes of Indian politicians.

⁶³ See H.Poll. 302, 304-308, Nov., & 493-494, Aug. 1916. The Government did approve the Bengal requests for the use of Regulation III against specific prisoners; see H.Poll. 198-201 & 234-240, Oct. 1916. The offence of possessing sedition literature was limited to wartime, but only because of the abandonment of the second Rowlatt Bill; see above note 44.

⁶⁴ See Speeches I, 60 & 200 (5 Sept. & 23 Dec. 1916).

⁶⁵ See above, note 37; Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 18 Dec. 1916, CP2; & H.Poll. 225 & 230, Aug. 1917.

⁶⁶ H.Poll. 227, Aug. 1917.

This habitual response, this failure to consider whether sedition could not have been answered by improvements in the police and the courts, was one of the main reasons for the Government of India's persistence with the Rowlatt Bill. The other main reason was the argument, also favoured by the Rowlatt Committee, that 'revolutionaries' were a special case. In the Rowlatt debates, Sastri had argued that the Government seemed to be saying 'these are wicked people, it does not matter how they are dealt with'.⁶⁷ This was perilously near the truth. The Rowlatt Committee favoured extraordinary means partly because they would be applied only to a minority; the Government of India would never have considered such powers for general application, but argued that they could not avoid special powers for special circumstances.

They had made concessions on the Rowlatt Bill in the hope of reconciling opinion. It was made temporary, to remain in force for only three years, because discussion with the moderates had shown that this might be useful. The Rowlatt Report had softened its proposals by calling them 'preventive'; Chelmsford followed this line by announcing that he had every hope that 'when the three years ... have passed away, it will be found that the crime ... has passed away also'.⁶⁸ The Government planned minor concessions in committee because this too would 'facilitate matters';⁶⁹ and by the end of the debate of 14 March 1919, quite apart from changes in committee, they had accepted a large number of amendments designed to protect the accused. There were several provisions to ensure the proper cross-examination of witnesses by the defence, and some to limit the discretion of the local governments. Death sentences were not to be passed unless the judges were unanimous; there was to be a lessening in the effect of the continuance of restrictions originally imposed under the Defence of India Act.⁷⁰ When these concessions did not reconcile opinion the Government were puzzled - as Vincent complained to the legislature, they had not been unreasonable.⁷¹ But, although Ronaldshay considered that the amendments were a dangerous and unnecessary weakening of the proposals,⁷² the

⁶⁷ ILC Proceedings, 12 March 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁶⁸ Speeches II, 207-208 (21 March 1919).

⁶⁹ V to S/S, 11 Feb. 1919, CP10.

⁷⁰ ILC Proceedings, 12 & 14 March 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁷¹ Ibid., 18 March 1919.

⁷² Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 21 Feb. 1919, CP22.

Government had been concerned, as the Select Committee put it, not to destroy the efficacy of the procedure.⁷³ They opposed any arrogation of executive functions to the judiciary; they refused to concede anything not compatible with the needs as they saw them. What the concessions did, in most cases, was to define the Government's intentions more clearly.

The short title of the main Bill was changed from the 'Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill' to the 'Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Bill'. The long title and some clauses were amended similarly, and to the preamble were added the words, 'for the purpose of dealing with anarchical and revolutionary movements'. In one clause the words 'prejudicial to public safety' (defining an offence) were replaced by 'connected with any anarchical or revolutionary movement'.⁷⁴ The abortive second Bill, the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, also gave a definition of sedition, which, though fairly wide, specified what the Government had in mind; they were concerned with the instigation of the use of criminal force against the Government or public servants.⁷⁵ The particular case of the Bengali terrorist was obviously intended here. All these changes were intended to allay fears that the special powers would be used to suppress legitimate political activities.⁷⁶ Clearly they were also an important part of the attempt to reconcile opinion; but their main effect was to restrict the application of the powers to those crimes alone which the Government thought had to be dealt with in this way.

Sastri and Jinnah in debate had claimed that the main Bill was repugnant to Western justice; and Vincent, in reply, had admitted that this had 'moved all of us and prompted a careful reconsideration of the facts' - he had made it clear that only the 'practical point of view' had sustained the Government in their resolve. But he had countered the idea that the measures were repugnant to justice by the

⁷³ Report of Select Committee, 27 Feb. 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁷⁴ Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act (as amended), ibid. There is a copy of the Act (No. XI of 1919) in the Moral and Material Progress Report, 1919.

⁷⁵ Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁷⁶ V(HD) to S/S, 2 March 1919, CP10.

contention that the powers would become available only under very special circumstances, and that even then they would apply only to certain people.⁷⁷ This in no way contradicted the members' argument, but evidently it had made the Government happier about it. The concessions, clarifying the purposes of the Bill, thus had the effect of reconciling the Government to a procedure which they found distasteful.

The need for special powers had long been canvassed, had scarcely been questioned among officials and had been eloquently supported by an 'impartial' enquiry; therefore there had been no question of going back on the Bill in response to Indian objections. The 'special case' rationalisation, favoured by the Rowlatt Committee, and the concessions based upon it, had contributed to the decision to take up the Bill in the first place. The 'special case' idea was indeed the guiding principle of the Bill, the only point to much of its machinery. More than anything else, it reconciles the apparent contradiction in government attitudes which the Rowlatt Bills represent. It reveals the central point about the policy towards repression. Lowndes told the legislature that the Government's policy was one of 'wait and see', but that they intended to arm themselves in case of need.⁷⁸ The powers were what the Government said they were - for emergencies, held in reserve, to be applied only to political activity which had crossed the dividing line and become political crime, and indeed only to that in special circumstances and in its most serious forms. The repressive powers were not, in theory, any part of the general policy towards political agitation. They were the ultimate deterrent. Ironically they were never to be used; so great was the outcry that the government had to rely on earlier powers of repression, and the Rowlatt Bills proved not to be worth the trouble they caused. In theory they were consistent with general government policy, although it was moving in the opposite direction: in effect they helped to nullify the advantage which otherwise might have been gained.

Repression and conciliation were seen as separate policies, but the distinction was not absolute; also repression had to be made palatable to the politicians. In the first place the government tried

⁷⁷ ILC Proceedings, 18 March 1919, IOR J&P1571(2539/19).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 7 Feb. 1919.

to use minimum powers and to treat prisoners as leniently as possible. In the second place they used committees of enquiry, as with the Rowlatt Committee. Thus several committees were set up to vindicate the application of repressive powers or to reassure the public on the lot of prisoners. (Later, in a similar way, the Hunter Committee investigated the use of executive powers during the 1919 disturbances, and a legislative committee was allowed to review the use of repressive powers over the press.)

As part of the first element in this conciliation within repression, the Government of India received monthly reports on State prisoners from district magistrates. There was only one complaint of maltreatment in 1917 - a prisoner at Dacca was threatened by a warder, and, although the magistrate suggested that the prisoner was known to be difficult, the warder was transferred.⁷⁹ In May 1918 the central Government issued instructions, following a question in the legislature, that local governments were 'to ensure that in every case of serious illness, special attention, medical and other, is given to the detenu concerned and that should death in any case supervene, full enquiries are made as quickly as possible' - the Government's investigation had revealed that no deaths or breakdowns in health could be attributed to internments, but that some deaths had not been made the subject of an enquiry.⁸⁰ Some prisoners tried to use hunger strikes as a means of protesting against their confinement - such strikes (at Alipur and Midnapur) were dealt with by transferring prisoners to other jails or by forcible feeding. The Government instructed that forcible feeding was to be resorted to before the hunger striker was too weak - it was 'the duty of the Medical Officer-in-charge by every possible means to preserve life', the means including feeding tubes and necessary force.⁸¹ Prison deaths were too much of a political embarrassment; the treatment of prisoners had to be above suspicion.

At Midnapur a hunger strike also resulted in measures to reduce the number of prisoners, to give them better cells, more exercise, time, writing materials and more books. Later in 1918 these changes were extended in revised prison rules which divided all 'political' prisoners - those detained by executive powers - into two classes, dangerous and not, and allowed privileges to the latter while retaining

⁷⁹ H.Poll. 339, Jan. 1918.

⁸⁰ H.Poll. 91-103, May 1918.

⁸¹ H.Poll. 639-644, Nov. 1917, 7-19, 21-22 & 30A & 339, Jan. 1918.

strict control for the former.⁸² It was also decided that the non-dangerous prisoners should not be kept in gaol. The Bengal Government proposed and the Government of India agreed that these prisoners should be detained in isolated but healthy places where attempts could be made at their education and reformation. In late 1919 it was agreed that a camp should be established in Upper Burma, complete with school rooms, playing fields and a guard of Gurkha and Sikh military police. The recurring cost was to be more than a quarter of a million rupees a year. Later, finding they had fewer prisoners than expected, the Bengal Government decided on a smaller camp in Bengal.⁸³

Checks on and improvements in the conditions of prisoners were one way of representing the government as lenient. Amnesties were another. In March 1917, as we have seen, the Viceroy wrote to Lord Carmichael of his hope that, if there were no recrudescence of crime, they would be able to announce 'a very general measure of amnesty' after the war. In August 1917 Montagu suggested that it would be politic to announce an amnesty as a prelude to the reforms discussions. The Government of India thought an amnesty 'obviously desirable ... if ... compatible with the public safety'. The local governments opposed any general amnesty and generally favoured the distinction, suggested by the United Provinces, between those restricted for 'extravagance of speech' and those penalised for 'conspiracy to murder or to incite to rebellion or for trafficking with [the] King's enemies'. There were not many detenus within the first category - and most local governments were prepared to lift such restrictions. In Madras, when they had lost out over Annie Besant, the Government agreed to release one other political agitator. In the Panjab, however, any relaxation continued to be opposed.⁸⁴ In November 1918, after the armistice, the Government of India suggested to the local governments

⁸² H.Poll. 649, Nov. 1917, & 478, June, & 226, July 1918.

⁸³ H.Poll. 1, Sept., 125, Oct. 1918, 379-380, Feb. 1920; Sir Henry Wheeler (of Bengal Government), 20 Oct., & Ronaldshay, 21 Oct. 1919 to Chelmsford, CP23.

⁸⁴ See S/S to V, 16 Aug. 1917, CP8; H.Poll. 310-313, 316, 318-323, 327-331, Sept. 1917, & 57, 60-69, 72 & 80, Feb. 1918. See also Chelmsford to Carmichael, 24 March 1917, CP18; & above, p.78 & HD circular, 14 Sept. 1917, H.Poll. 14, Sept. 1917 - Vincent had given an undertaking that wartime restrictions would be lifted from persons who guaranteed to abstain from violence for the duration (reply to Jinnah, ILC, 5 Sept. 1917).

that they reconsider the cases of Muslims detained for pro-Turkish activities: they should consider only whether the release would be prejudicial to safety, and should not maintain restrictions for mere political convenience. There was some opposition to this proposal in Bengal, Coorg and the United Provinces, but by January 1919 most governments had agreed to release Muslim prisoners, even including those involved in the 'silk letters' conspiracy. The Secretary of State objected to the release of Maulana Mahmud Hasan and his followers, interned on Malta for their part in this conspiracy; Montagu held that the release would be 'gratuitous encouragement' to the agitation over the Turkish peace terms, but withdrew his objection when the Government of India replied that in their opinion 'any pro-Turkish agitation is more likely to draw strength from the Maulana's detention than from his release'.⁸⁵

In 1919, when the reforms proposals were finalised, Montagu suggested a wider amnesty. The Government of India agreed that the amnesty 'should be as wide as consistent with public safety'. It was announced in a proclamation of 23 December 1919. The Government of India urged the local governments to release (and, according to their interpretation of the proclamation, to pardon) all 'political' prisoners except those convicted of murder or other serious crimes of violence. The Government of Bengal had argued earlier that this proviso should be made explicit in the terms of the proclamation lest popular expectations should be raised too high. The Government of India had supported this view, but Montagu refused, arguing that such a proviso might have allowed the release of conspirators while detaining their 'dupes'. Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal, found this reasoning 'unexpectedly stupid'. Montagu's main reasons, later to be better expressed, were firstly that arrests without trial were 'tolerable only if releases are sought whenever they can possibly be justified' and secondly that, under the terms of the proclamation, the local governments could already refuse any release on the grounds of public safety. Montagu's idea was that the government should interpret the amnesty widely and then act promptly against anyone who subsequently 'misbehaved': he later criticised Chelmsford for not proceeding in this way with Shaukat Ali. The Bengal authorities, on the other hand, believed that, if certain categories were not specifically excluded, each continued detention would have to be defended and would create disappointment undermining the good effect of the amnesty. They were already

⁸⁵ See H.Poll. 662-664, May 1918, & 440-491 & 518-523, June 1919.

following Montagu's ideal of 'releases ... whenever ... justified' - nine hundred detenus had been released before the amnesty - and they did not see how they could release a sufficient number so as to appear to respond to the spirit of a general proclamation. Ronaldshay attended a meeting of the Viceroy's Council to discuss this dilemma; it was decided that it was necessary to offer to release, subject to assurances of good conduct, even the sixty detenus whose continued detention had been recommended by the local government.⁸⁶ By mid-1920 only eighteen remained under detention in Bengal. In the Panjab 1,682 out of 1,779 had been released. In January 1920, in the whole of India, only nine (out of 310) remained subject to restrictions under the Defence of India Act and one (out of 132) under the Ingress Ordinance, although fifty-five were still confined under Regulation III of 1818.⁸⁷ In most provinces the 1919 amnesty had represented a sudden upsurge in a policy of progressive release. The Government of India's policy remained to release detenus as far as was thought safe - the intention was to mollify their use of executive powers. The amnesty, in the form insisted on by Montagu, had forced them to step up the releases and reconsider the question of safety in order still to achieve this aim.

Alongside these deliberate shows of moderation, came the same impulse in its second form, the committees for public reassurance. In March 1918, in reply to a question by Surendranath Banerjea in the Imperial legislature, the Government of India outlined a three part plan. They announced their intention of setting up two types of advisory committee, one to consider the cases of existing detenus and the other to make recommendations on any future detentions; they also proposed to institute a system of non-official prison visitors to supplement the present arrangement with district magistrates. The main

⁸⁶ See H.Poll. 423, 440, 445-446, 450-452, 455, 458, 464-465, 468, 470-472, 474-476, & also 60-70, May 1920; V(HD) to S/S, 4 & 11 Jan. & 4 Feb., & V to S/S, 11 & 20 Jan. 1920, CP12; Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 8 & 27 Jan. 1920, CP24; Montagu to Ronaldshay, 8 April, MP27, & Ronaldshay to Montagu, 5 Feb. 1920, MP31. For Montagu's views on the reinternment of Shaukat Ali and a general resumption of a strong line, see Montagu to Ronaldshay, MP27, & to Willingdon, MP16, 9 Sept. 1920; see also below, pp. 200 & 203.

⁸⁷ See H.Poll. 156-160, March, & 265-266, April 1920; Ronaldshay to Montagu, 8 April, 12 May, 9 June & 6 July 1920, MP31, & 6 Jan. 1921, MP32, & to Chamberlain, 26 April 1918, ACP21/5/71 - even in 1918 Ronaldshay was enunciating a principle of maximum possible releases.

object of these changes was to ensure that the public were not dependent entirely on official sources for information about detenus. The Government had first suggested advisory committees in 1917;⁸⁸ now the Bengal authorities had some objections, but, although the central Government accepted more limited terms of reference for the Bengal Committee, they insisted on their policy. Other local governments also were reluctant to reopen cases; the Government of India asked them to reconsider. Their scheme was eventually adopted in all provinces to which it applied.⁸⁹ The Beachcroft-Chandavarkar committee in Bengal and the S. Abdur Rauf - B. Lindsay committee in the Panjab later published findings which overwhelmingly approved the government's use of its executive powers.⁹⁰ After these committees had started their work, a 'Civil Rights Committee' began campaigning about the conditions of detention in Bengal. In connection with this campaign Annie Besant approached the Government of India and accused the Bengal police of ill-treating and torturing political prisoners. The central Government asked officially for an investigation - the Government of Bengal thought they should have referred Mrs. Besant to them, but the Government of India insisted that where the liberty of the subject was restricted by executive action it was necessary 'to meet and refute complaints... not prima facie malicious'. The Bengal Government set up a committee, comprising C.J. Stevenson-Moore and Sir Benode Chandra Mitter, who reported that, of eleven specific allegations, two were admitted by the prisoners to be false, one was minor and unreliable, four were withdrawn, and four were found to be quite unfounded. A version of their report was published.⁹¹

Thus the government tried to mitigate against the worst repercussions of repression. But the government could be only as good as its officials. So much had to be left to local discretion. The

⁸⁸ See ILC Proceedings, 21 Feb. 1917, H.Poll. 799, April 1917.

⁸⁹ See H.Poll. 1-8, May, & 14-17, 319-320 & 324-326, June, 79-81, Aug., 202-214, Sept., 108-118, Oct., & 105-106, Nov. 1918, & 3-5 & 206, Jan. 1919; Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 July 1919, CP3. The Bengal objections were not in principle - the local government had suggested a limited sort of advisory council as early as July 1916; see H.Poll. 227, Aug. 1917.

⁹⁰ H.Poll. 18, Oct. 1918 (Beachcroft-Chandavarkar memorandum, 31 Aug. 1918), & 206, Jan. 1919 (Rauf-Lindsay report, 16 Dec. 1918).

⁹¹ H.Poll. 149 & 151, Sept. 1918; Ronaldshay to Montagu, 10 June & 24 July 1918 (with copy of Stevenson-Moore - Mitter report, 6 June 1918), MP29, & to Chamberlain, 26 April 1918, ACP21/5/71. For the judges, see Appendix, below.

central authority laid down general principles, but even when a crisis arose supervision was usually little more than a nominal check that general principles were being observed. In extreme cases a subsequent investigation could be mounted. In most cases the Government of India were powerless to intervene. This was true of the application of repressive powers, in cases of local interest. It was also true of the control of disturbances. In 1917, for example, there were serious communal riots in Shahabad division, Bihar. Before the outbreak a local magistrate in one village had arranged a modus vivendi whereby the Muslims were to sacrifice a goat provided by the Hindus instead of a cow as usual in the Bakr Id. No higher official was aware of this agreement until after it had been violated and the village had become the starting-point of widespread disorders. During the riots, moreover, policy was decided almost entirely by the local commissioner, and, although the situation was not badly handled, the approach was influenced by the quite unproven assumption that there had been a Hindu conspiracy. The Government of India were scarcely informed of the course of events, let alone given the means to judge the suitability of the measures taken locally. They were not able to act until after the event, when they sent an officer to investigate the outbreak.⁹²

This pattern of immediate local initiative and subsequent inquiry was both typical (as we shall see with the 1919 disturbances) and deliberate. Even when they had been informed, the Government consistently refused to interfere in local arrangements. Towards the end of 1917, having received complaints over decisions in Delhi regarding the route to be taken by a Hindu procession which conflicted with a Muslim observance, the Home Department explained the general principle behind their thinking. They wrote: 'the Governor-General in Council ... has no doubt that the views and sentiments of the Hindu community on the subject will be taken into the fullest consideration before a decision is reached. But he will not be prepared to overrule the local Administration on the question whether a particular arrangement ... is or is not likely to involve a breach of the peace. That

⁹² See H.Pell, 154-155, 161-162 & 165, July 1919; H.Police, 133-158, Dec. 1917, & also 217-239, Aug. 1918. (The Government of India were fully informed after the event: These very extensive proceedings include official reports from all levels and trial transcripts.) See also Bihar & Orissa District Gazetteers - Shahabad (revised ed., 1924); Gait to Chelmsford, 14 Oct. 1917, CP19; & Montagu to Chelmsford, 3 July 1918, CP4.

is a matter which the local Administration alone can decide',⁹³ Presumably the Council would have interfered if they had considered that Hindu views had not received the 'fullest consideration'; but they would not become involved in what was basically a question of judgment in a matter on which local officials could claim expertise. The same principle could be applied to the whole range of political policy; and it was political policy which was peculiarly lacking in this supervision, for of all the departments of local government this alone was not subject to financial control by involving capital expenditure and budgetary allowances. Policies towards communal relations, riots, 'seditious' speeches, the press, Indian leaders - all political questions - were matters of judgment. The Chelmsford Government asserted themselves in several areas, including the use of repressive powers, by insisting on national interests which had to override local considerations. But the effect of this was necessarily limited; there remained large areas in which they were powerless to intervene. The result was that not infrequently there were discrepancies between policy at the centre and practice in the districts. It was chiefly this disability, rather than the Government of India's own failure to heed Indian opinion over the Rowlatt Bill, which was to discredit the repressive powers and undermine the central efforts at appeasement.

⁹³ H. Police, 83-84, Feb., & 99-101, May 1918.

In dealing with riots and disturbances, which had to be repressed, there were three approaches open to the central government for the minimising of subsequent political agitation. They could lay down general standards of conduct and try to ensure that local authorities abode by them; they could take steps to convince opinion that no unjustifiable measures had been taken; and they could re-compensate and punish where mistakes or abuses had occurred. In April 1919, with the serious disturbances in the Panjab, all three of these lines of defence broke down.

There were several factors underlying these disturbances. The end of the war had not brought the expected relief from a number of difficulties and disabilities. The demands of political movements, such as the Home Rule and the Khilafat campaigns, had not been met in full. The Rowlatt Bill, and more particularly the rumours surrounding it, had increased apprehension. A serious food shortage continued and prices in most commodities remained high. Between five and six million people were dead as a result of the influenza epidemic; between 50 and 80 per cent of the population had been affected.¹ The disturbances began in Delhi on 30 March and spread elsewhere after the news of Gandhi's arrest. They were severe in Bombay city and Ahmedabad, but most widespread and serious in the Panjab. The general unrest and insecurity in India was thus not a complete explanation of the troubles: there is no strong case for suggesting that these problems existed exclusively or particularly severely in the Panjab alone. One million had died there of influenza, and epidemics of plague, cholera or malaria had struck annually since 1915. But the incidence of influenza in the Panjab, though high (42.2 deaths per 1000), was lower than in the Central Provinces (56.8), where there were no disorders, or than in Delhi (55.6) and Bombay (45.9) where disorders were more easily

¹ See Ronaldshay to Montagu, 13 Oct. 1918, MP29, & 19 May 1919, MP30; & G/Bombay to V, 23 April, & Ronaldshay, 22 May, & Craddock, 24 May 1919, to Chelmsford, CP22. See also Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee 1920, pp. 64-71, CP47 (also Cmd. 681). Deaths from influenza had been most frequent in northwest and central India, least in south and east. Thus to some extent the disturbances followed the incidence of influenza; but there were exceptions - the Central Provinces had no disturbances but the highest death rate in British India (the central Indian states and those of Rajputana had even higher death rates - 90 per 1000 in Bikaner); Bengal with a comparatively tiny death rate (4.7 per 1000) nevertheless suffered minor outbreaks of disorder. See V(ED) to S/S, 21 Feb. 1919, CP10.

controlled. There was an additional cause for discontent among householders in Amritsar and Lahore, where house-to-house surveys in 1916-1917 had uncovered tax-defaulters and increased the yield by 30 per cent (in Lahore) and 55 per cent (in Amritsar). But rioters were not usually drawn from among tax-payers. And the political excitement of the war years had probably been felt less in the Panjab than in any other major province; in September 1917 Chelmsford had advised the Secretary of State that the Panjab was 'the really quiet Province in India'.²

The reason for the severity of the Panjab disturbances was sought at the time, by the local administration, in talk of a conspiracy. Lord Sinha advanced this suggestion in the House of Lords.³ But even at the time the Government of India saw 'no signs of central organisation', and, although there had clearly been ad hoc collusion in the cutting of telegraph wires and attacks on trains, subsequent enquiry bore out the Simla view.⁴ A later explanation was found, by Lord Willingdon, Sir George Lloyd and Edwin Montagu, among others, in the nature of the Panjab administration under Sir Michael O'Dwyer. It was claimed that the Lieutenant-Governor's zeal in army recruitment had created anxieties and hardship. Chelmsford too ascribed the disturbances partly to nervous excitement after the war, and he had earlier made anxious enquiries of O'Dwyer about the effects and the methods of his recruitment. In general it was felt also that O'Dwyer had practised 'strong government' - Chelmsford considered his policies 'repressive' - and that the explosion of feeling had occurred because the local government had kept, in Willingdon's phrase, the 'screw on too tight'.⁵ There was some justification for this description, and O'Dwyer himself admitted that he had not been in close relations with

² Chelmsford to Montagu, 8 Sept. 1917, CP3.

³ Parliamentary Debates (Lords) 36, No.76, 498 (6 Aug. 1919); & see O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 21 Aug. 1919, CP5, for the claim that the Afghans had 'counted on the internal troubles ... favouring their plans'.

⁴ V to S/S, 13 April 1919, CP10; & see Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee 1920, pp. 71 & 109-114, CP47.

⁵ Willingdon to Montagu, 15 April & 4 May, MP19, & Montagu to Lloyd, 1 May & 11 June 1919, MP22; Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 & 28 May & 8 Aug., & Chelmsford to Montagu, 16 April & 4 Sept. 1919 (reference to Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 24 Feb. 1918), CP5; O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 4 March 1918, CP20.

the political classes.⁶ But it should be noted that the Muslim rural population, including some who had used force against army recruiters in 1918, were, in O'Dwyer's words, 'everywhere actively loyal' in April 1919; that there was no evidence of disbanded soldiers among the rioters; that the number of persons in the Panjab dealt with under executive powers before 31 January 1919 was less than one-eighth of the number so dealt with in Bengal and less than one-tenth of the all-India total; and that on 1 April 1919 only 24 out of 145 were still restricted in the Panjab under the Defence of India Act, and seven out of 400 under the Ingress Ordinance. O'Dwyer was also accused of a policy of isolating the province from outside influences. This was certainly his intention; and yet only four persons were excluded in April.⁷

For a more complete explanation of the disaster in the Panjab it is necessary to look closely at the measures taken to control the disturbances in different parts of India. The least difficulty, of all areas where disturbances occurred as a result of the anti-Rowlatt protests, was experienced in the Northwest Frontier Province. There, as excitement rose, the Chief Commissioner, Sir George Roos-Keppel, confined all troops to the cantonment and told the police to keep as little in evidence as possible. He met a deputation from the Peshawar Union Committee, organising the protest, and after discussion persuaded them to cancel further demonstrations. They later sent him a memorial appreciating his sympathetic handling of their protests.⁸ The success of these methods was repeated elsewhere, among agitators less amenable and more politically experienced. In Bengal, Lord Ronaldshay remained

⁶ O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 27 Aug. 1916, CP17 (while declining appointment as Home Member).

⁷ See O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 4 May, & to Maffey, 17 April 1919, CP22; Parliamentary Debates (Commons) 116, No.68, 328-329 (Montagu, 22 May 1919); draft answers to parliamentary questions, 13 May, & note by Seton. 22 July 1919, IOR J&P3132/19; Karl Reinhold Haellquist, 'The Socio-Political Development in the Punjab 1907-1919', unpublished paper read at the Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, St. John's College, Cambridge, 5-9 July 1968. For the earlier outbreak over recruiting - and a far more cautious local policy - see G/Panjab to HD, 23 Feb. 1918, H.Police 100, April 1918.

⁸ V(HD) to S/S, 17 April 1919, CP10; Roos-Keppel to Maffey, 21 & 27 April, & to Chelmsford, 28 April, & Chelmsford to Roos-Keppel, 3 May 1919, CP22.

in close contact with C.R. Das, B. Chakravarti and Surendranath Banerjea, met a number of Indian leaders at Government House and enlisted their cooperation in condemning violence, issued a proclamation in vernacular languages, addressed a deputation of Marwaris, and, except in one instance of shooting, later made the subject of a magistrate's enquiry, avoided 'provocative' action by the police or military.⁹ In Bombay the Police Commissioner delayed the use of fire-arms in spite of violent attacks and interference with trams and shops, and then called on Gandhi himself to help quieten his supporters. Gandhi was permitted to hold an enormous meeting, and the city returned to normal without a shot having been fired.¹⁰

Moderation was also shown elsewhere, in more serious situations. In Virangam, where local authority broke down and the city was given over to rioting, looting and arson, the situation was controlled by the arrival of a small force of sepoys, the imposition of a curfew and orders to open shops, but also by meetings with local leaders. In Ahmedabad there were even more serious riots - 51 government and a number of other buildings were burned, with damage estimated at Rs.14,24,000; 28 persons were killed. The District Magistrate imposed a night curfew, and in several incidents troops were ordered to fire; but leading satyagrahis, including finally Gandhi himself, were asked to assist the authorities, and on at least one occasion the magistrate ordered that arrested persons should be released in order to appease the crowd.¹¹ Even in Delhi the authorities had tried to take 'unobtrusive precautions' before the hartal of 30 March - extra police and troops were kept in readiness but out of sight. When rioting broke out, the authorities waited two hours before giving the order to fire on the crowd; and next day the Deputy Commissioner refrained from taking action against 'the turbulent' because, in his view, to do so would have 'brought on serious

⁹ Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 11 & 14 April 1919, CP22; G/Bengal to G/I, 29 April 1919, IOR J&P1566(2200/19); Ronaldshay to Montagu, 14 & 22 April, 14 May & 20 Aug., MP30, & see Montagu to Ronaldshay, 22 April & 20 May 1919, MP27.

¹⁰ Report of Acting Commissioner of Police, Bombay, 19 April 1919, H.Poll. 54, July 1919, & IOR J&P1566(2200/19); & see H.Poll. 354, Sept. 1919. On Gandhi's arrest and Bombay policy, see above pp.89-94.

¹¹ Report of Assistant Collector, Virangam, 5 May, IOR J&P1566(2200/19) & Report of District Magistrate, Ahmedabad, 12 April 1919, ibid. & H.Poll. 451-452, Sept. 1919; V(HD) to S/S, 11 April 1919; CP10.

disturbances'. On 2 April all troops were withdrawn as they were thought to be adding to the excitement. Meetings were later allowed so that 'the crowds might be given something to do'. Then, when there were renewed troubles on the news of Gandhi's arrest, attempts were made to work through local leaders - the District Magistrate, the Deputy Commissioner and the Commissioner held a series of meetings asking for cooperation. Some of the leading Home Rulers were enrolled as special constables. There remained military patrols and there was some further shooting, but order was finally restored more by tact and persuasion than force.¹²

In all these local measures there were certain common features, which accorded with the general approach favoured by the Government of India. Local authorities tended to allow peaceful demonstrations, to avoid provocation by the police and military, and to use as little force as necessary, holding off firing on crowds, shooting for as brief a period as possible, removing pickets and withdrawing troops immediately order was restored. Finally, and perhaps most important, they remained in contact with Indian leaders and called meetings to enlist their support. The picture in the Panjab, however, was very different. Demonstrations were banned, provocative orders and punishments instituted, and the Lieutenant-Governor prided himself on the fact that his Government 'had no parley with extremists'. Indeed they arrested them. And the military were not kept out of sight and quickly withdrawn; they were put in charge.

Meetings in Lahore had led to riots. In Amritsar local leaders, Drs Kitchlew and Satyapal, were arrested under the Defence of India Act, and, in the expectation of repercussions, British infantry picketed railway crossings. A crowd was intercepted at the railway bridge by armed police; but members of the local bar were allowed to persuade them to return to the city. Later a larger crowd returned, stoned the picket and were fired upon. The crowd whose members had been aroused by the arrest of their leaders were enraged by the casualties among their number. They returned to the city, set fire to the Post Office and attacked the banks, killing in all five Europeans. The local Commissioner handed over to the military. The Panjab authorities

¹² Report of Deputy Commissioner, Delhi, 20 May 1919, H.Poll. 452, Aug. 1919; Reports of Chief Commissioner, Delhi, 31 March & 17 April 1919, IOR J&P1566(2200/19); Inquest Proceedings, 28 & 29 / April 1919 /, H.Poll. 452, Aug. 1919.

reported 'a state of open rebellion' in the countryside between Amritsar and Lahore, and requested the imposition of martial law. Their request was granted, and military and civil authorities combined to enforce a harsh and in some cases vicious discipline upon the province.

Measures in Lahore, for example, were increasingly severe, out of proportion to the problem, and unfortunately not unique. Colonel Frank Johnson, the military commander, first introduced a curfew and forbade gatherings of more than ten people. He ordered langars (cooked food shops) to be closed, threatened to shut off water and electricity supplies, and warned owners of property that they would be likely to suffer severe reprisals if shots were fired at the police or bombs thrown in the vicinity of their holdings. Next day, on 16 April, Johnson ordered students at the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College to report four times a day for a roll-call, demanded the immediate ending of the hartal on penalty of suffering any loss resulting from the forcible opening of businesses, forbade lathis, forbade walking more than two abreast, and threatened property owners with 'severe punishment' if damage occurred to proclamations and notices displayed on their property. On the 17th he threatened shop-owners with arrest and summary trial if they continued their hartal; he introduced more parades of students; he ordered the arrest of all male students and staff of Sanatan Dharm College in reprisal for the removal of a martial law notice from the College. On the 21st he requisitioned from Indians pedal-drawn cycles and lights and electric fans for the use of the troops. Johnson was evidently prepared, although he had announced that loyal and law-abiding citizens had nothing to fear, to punish before he had established guilt and to hold the whole community to ransom for the good conduct of a minority. Under such control Lahore remained quiet; but the hartal dragged on. Johnson's methods were more likely to create bitterness and defiance than cooperation.

Order had also been restored in Amritsar. But the city had then come under the control of General Dyer, who published a proclamation forbidding public meetings and on 13 April (before the imposition of martial law) fired without warning on a gathering in the Jallianwala Bagh, inflicting very heavy casualties. He also introduced an order requiring all Indians who wished to pass to crawl the length of a street where a European woman missionary had been assaulted. On the same spot some young offenders against prison discipline were publicly whipped. Dyer's actions were later supposed by some to have 'saved the Panjab'; in fact, while they cowed the people of Amritsar, already under control before the firing in the Bagh, they had a serious

effect elsewhere in the province. News of the firing, of martial law orders in Lahore and Amritsar, and of other excesses, helped to inflame the situation. The measures were offensive in themselves; the offence was compounded by the fact that they applied only to Indians. Disturbances continued to spread in the province. Telegraph wires were cut, public buildings attacked, railway lines torn up. Damage to property in Gujranwala (where the authorities had lost control and been forced to use aeroplanes against the rioters) was estimated at 24 lakhs of rupees; at Amritsar it was thought to have been more than 60 lakhs. The Seditious Meetings Act and then martial law were applied to the districts of Gujranwala, Gujrat and Lyallpur; and repressive measures remained consistently in excess of what was necessary - for example, Lyallpur came under martial law on 21 April, by which time there had been no disturbances in the whole province for three days, except for the cutting of telegraph wires.¹³

Considering all the disturbances there had been least trouble where consultations with the Indian leaders started before any outbreak of violence and where soldiers were least in evidence. Most trouble occurred after measures against Indian leaders and after police or soldiers had fired on crowds. This is not necessarily a comment on the validity of the government's actions; it is a comment on the order of events. Obviously in some cases police and troops had to intervene, even to fire on crowds. In Delhi, for example, it was necessary for the police to protect shopkeepers and railway officials on 30 March when violent attempts were made to enforce the hartal at the railway station. But such intervention was a two-edged sword, to be handled with care. It is possible that in Delhi the police were unwise to try to make arrests at the station, and, at the cost of more shooting, to drive the crowd further and further away from the scene of the original outbreak. Patience, such as was shown in Bombay and later in Delhi as well, would have been less expensive in lives, and might also have been more effective. Each official reprisal, while controlling an immediate

¹³ V(HD) to S/S, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 20, & 23 April & 7 May, & V to S/S, 14, 16, 17 & 21 April 1919, CP10; O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 21 April 1919, CP22; Press communique on Amritsar riots, 30 May 1919, & 'Punjab Disturbances' (reprints from Civil and Military Gazette & list of Lahore Martial Law Notices), IOR J&P1566(2200/19); & H.Poll. 74-85, May 1919. For a chronology of events in the Panjab, a list of offences on railways and a statement of damage to property, see Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee 1920, Appendices I-III pp.167-191, CP47. See ibid., pp. 37-43 & 104-105 on Lahore, 19-36 & 104 on Amritsar, 44-47 on Kasur, & 48-56 on Gujranwala.

danger, inflamed the general situation and led to further violence. Thus the Government of India were responsible for the main impulse of the disturbances when they agreed to the arrest of Gandhi.¹⁴ The Government of the Panjab precipitated trouble in Amritsar when they arrested Kitchlew and Satyapal.

In Amritsar was also perhaps the best documented case in which firing unleashed worse violence. The Civil and Military Gazette, which supported the government, printed two reports on 13 April, both of which established the sequence of events. In the first, a Mr Jarman, the Amritsar Municipal Engineer, described how he was cycling into the city, with three European companions, when he met a crowd coming towards him. The crowd took no notice of the Europeans. Fifteen minutes later, however, Jarman heard a crowd rushing back shouting, 'They have killed two of us. Bring lathis.' - this crowd set fire to the Post Office, smashed the windows of Jarman's Office, and went away (as was discovered later) to murder two Europeans at the National Bank. In the second report, in the same edition of the Gazette, one A. Ross of the Chartered Bank told how he too had encountered crowds passing through the city, without understanding what was happening, then had seen wounded being brought back, and then had heard the crowds returning shouting, 'Burn and loot the banks'.¹⁵ The interpretation suggested by these accounts was in fact adopted by a judicial committee set up to consider the operation of the martial law trials. B.K. Mullick gave as his view (on the Amritsar Leaders' Case) that 'the evidence seems ... to show that the acts committed for the purpose of obtaining the repeal of the Rowlatt Act were all peaceful On the 10th April the arrest of Satyapal and Kitchlew was followed by firing at the overbridge. This appears to have so infuriated the mob that they proceeded to attack Europeans and European Institutions'. The other judge on the committee disputed with Mullick on a point of law, whether the defendants had been 'waging war'; he held that the actions of the mob had to be considered 'as a determined attempt not only to take revenge for the firing but also to force the hands of the Government'. But even this

¹⁴ See V(HD) to S/S, 13 April 1919, CP10 - there were no outbreaks in any province during the hartal of 6 April. See also Robertson to Chelmsford, 19 April 1919, CP22, for an account of the hartal in the Central Provinces. For a discussion of the arrest of Gandhi, see above, pp.89-91.

¹⁵ Civil and Military Gazette, 13 April 1919, reprinted in 'Punjab Disturbances' (see above, note 13).

judge, B. Chevis, did not contradict Mullick's view on the cause of the violence; he was prepared to concede that 'the immediate causes of the outbreak may have been the deportation of Satyapal and Kitchlew and the firing on the mob'.¹⁶ In this instance at least the causal relationship between reprisals and violence is surely beyond question.

Obviously underlying grievances provided the climate for disturbances, and obviously some local differences in severity may be explained in local conditions - one might point to the political backwardness of Peshawar, the slowness of Bengal to accept Gandhi's leadership, the particularly deep feelings in Ahmedabad over Gandhi's arrest, a certain irritation among the more educated in Amritsar and Lahore over O'Dwyer's methods. But it is difficult, in view of the clear difference in methods employed in the Panjab and in face of unmistakable evidence of the crowd's reaction to firing in Amritsar, not to conclude that the extent of the violence in the Panjab was partly due to government action. Chelmsford, at the time, went so far as to admit that, while he was not criticising O'Dwyer, he had noted that the problem had been dealt with equally effectively in other provinces and with less violence. Chelmsford went on: 'If only people would realise that the day has passed when you can keep India down by the sword'.¹⁷

The control of riots was largely in local hands; local differences in treatment partly accounted for the varying severity of the outbreaks of violence. The Government of India's role was limited. They tried to help by issuing a reassuring communique on the Rowlatt Act; the document produced was unfortunately pompous and not altogether reassuring in tone.¹⁸ On 12 April censorship was imposed on inland telegrams to prevent the transmission of news of the disturbances or of troop movements.¹⁹ But for the most part the central authorities did little beyond approving action taken at local discretion and promising full support. Chelmsford explained that his policy was to support each government 'as far as possible in measures it considered suitable'.²⁰

¹⁶ H.Poll. 326, March 1920.

¹⁷ Chelmsford to Montagu, 30 April 1919, CP5.

¹⁸ G/I communique, note by Hose, & Gazette of India, Extraordinary, 14 April 1919, IOR J&P 1566(2200/19).

¹⁹ H.Poll. 146, April 1919.

²⁰ Gazette of India, Extraordinary, 14 April 1919, IOR J&P1566(2200/19); V to S/S, 5 May, CP10, & 14 July 1919, CP11.

He promptly acceded to local requests for extra powers.²¹ All decisions were, as usual, a collective responsibility: 'I have rightly or wrongly developed the system of Council or in other words constitutional Government out here,' he later explained to Montagu; during the Panjab disturbances, he claimed, he had had 'with the solitary exception of Sir Sankaran Nair's protest against the continuance of Martial Law ... the whole-hearted support' of his Council.²² Willingdon concluded from Madras that the Viceroy had 'stiffened up well' and was 'determined to put down the insurrection at all costs with a strong hand'.²³

But the collective decisions of the Government of India did not involve restoring order 'at all costs'. Chelmsford set down for O'Dwyer two 'cardinal principles' as conditions for his promised support for local actions. No greater force or more severe methods were to be used than were necessary to maintain law and order; and actions were to be such as would leave behind as little bitterness as possible. In order to achieve these ends, Chelmsford added, the civil authorities were not to allow the military an absolutely free hand.²⁴ Martial law was proclaimed only for a specified range of offences (those named in section two of the Bengal State Offences Regulation 1804), and the ordinary law and courts were to be retained for ordinary offences. In all matters the army was ordered to cooperate with the civil authorities. On 18 April the Commander-in-Chief directed the local army commander in the Panjab, General Benyon, to 'act in close communication with and on the advice of [the] Lieutenant-Governor'. The military authorities had argued that it was impossible to place an army officer with executive powers under the local government, and the Government of

21 H.Foll. 74-85, 91-101 & 114-118, May 1919; IOR J&P1566(2200/19). The Seditious Meetings Act was applied to Lahore and Amritsar on 13 April, to Multan and Jullandar on the 16th, to Delhi on the 17th and to Lyallpur on the 20th; also to Sind after the 29th. Defence of India rules were applied, mainly to expedite trials, to Bombay province in April, Delhi in May, and two Panjab districts in June. Martial law was approved for the Panjab progressively after 13 April with retrospective effect in respect of trials for offences relating to the disturbances; the authorities were also able to arrest without warrant persons assisting or promoting the 'rebellion'.

22 Chelmsford to Montagu, 25 Sept. 1919, CP5. Nair had later made his opposition seem more general; see Willingdon to Montagu, 21 July 1919, MF19 (Willingdon largely agreed with him).

23 Willingdon to Montagu, 28 April 1919, MF19.

24 Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 26 April 1919, CP22.

India agreed with the general principle that the supremacy of the military authority (where it applied) must be maintained.²⁵

There were later to be attempts to blame the whole catastrophe on this insistence by the Government of India upon the legal supremacy of the army. But there was no suggestion that the civil authority should be abrogated. On 16 April the Panjab Government had reported that they had issued orders making punishable acts not punishable by ordinary law, and granting punitive powers to selected military and civil officers. The powers were to be used with tact and commonsense and without 'irresponsible violence' - 'Force ... should never exceed the immediate necessities of the case'. The Government of India had replied that under the martial law regulations only the General Officer Commanding had the power to issue such orders but they noted that he had been asked to cooperate with the local government, and suggested that he should be requested to ratify the instructions. The Panjab Government acted on this advice. O'Dwyer had written to Chelmsford on the 16th: 'We were terribly in the dark as to the non-statutory side of martial law and aren't yet quite clear'. In 1920 he wrote to the Times and the Morning Post claiming that the Government of India had denied the martial law administration the benefit of civil advice; in fact civil and military authorities, following the Government of India's instructions, had conferred daily in Lahore and were in close contact elsewhere, while several of the officers later censured for their conduct were not military but civil. Dyer's measures in Amritsar were instituted before the establishment of martial law.²⁶

Chelmsford had given clear instructions ordering moderation; these instructions were endorsed by the local government. Yet they were not observed. The imposition of martial law was no excuse for this neglect; but confusion was one of the reasons that the excesses were allowed to continue. The Panjab Government, for example, requested that the punitive powers for certain officers (ratified by the army command on 19 April) should be made retrospective to 30 March. Some officers, they reported, had already exercised such extended powers in spite of efforts to make the position clear. The Home Department professed to be puzzled, and informed the Panjab Government

²⁵ V(HD) to S/S, 14 June 1920, CP12 & H.Poll. 228, June 1920.

²⁶ H.Poll. 86-87, May 1919; O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 16 April 1919, CF22; Chelmsford to Maffey, 16 June, CP16, & V(HD) to S/S, 15 June 1920, CP12 & H.Poll. 229, June 1920.

that they had understood that ordinary courts were being used for ordinary offences, that special tribunals were trying offences specified in the martial law ordinances or added later, and that courts established by the military were trying only those offences created under martial law. Any other procedure was an irregularity. They asked for an officer to be sent from the Panjab to discuss the matter with them. At this point, on 4 May, the Government of India began to realise, as had the Panjab Government, that it would be necessary to pass an act of validation and indemnity to regularize these local actions. Chelmsford was most concerned, for the moment, therefore, not with legal correctness, but with ensuring that the personnel of any summary tribunal was 'above reproach'. He was not sure that some of the young officers would not 'see red'; but he was also aware that summary procedure would be 'a most effective weapon'. His Government accordingly agreed to allow selected civil officers to be appointed to summary courts for all minor offences, provided that there were no sentences imposed other than those permitted by the ordinary law.²⁷

Thus alarm at the situation (as reported to them) and awareness of the needs of hard-pressed administrators also limited the effectiveness of central supervision. There was one case in which the Government of India respected local advice to the extent of refusing to reverse a policy they believed to be wrong. For the special tribunals, the military authorities had passed a general order excluding counsel from outside the Panjab. There had been some 'agitators' among the applicants and it was feared they would delay or inflame the trials; a general order was passed to avoid invidious distinctions. Complaints were received by the Government of India - including some from Surendranath Banerjea, Motilal Nehru, and a meeting of the Calcutta Bar. The Commander-in-Chief telegraphed General Benyon: 'Unless good reasons exist to the contrary the Commander-in-Chief considers refusal impolitic; but responsibility for decision rests with you'. The Panjab Government agreed with the local military - they argued that sufficient local counsel were available (and being supplied by the government if necessary), and that outside counsel were not normally admitted before the Panjab High Court. The Government of India replied that they still thought the decision 'unwise'; but they were not prepared to interfere during the continuance of martial law. The Secretary of State showed

²⁷ H.Poll. 103-105 & 108, May 1919; Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 15 April 1919, CP22.

more courage, and later ordered that trials should be postponed if necessary to allow outside counsel to appear; by this time martial law had ended and counsel were being allowed to attend.²⁸

In most cases, however, the Government of India did try to intervene when they found Chelmsford's 'cardinal principles' were not being observed. In response to protests from Gandhi and C.F. Andrews about public whippings, for example, Chelmsford telegraphed to O'Dwyer on 23 April: 'I wish to point out ... the very grave effect that these whippings are having on public opinion throughout India. I am ready to give you my support in every way, but I think it right that you should know that I consider this particular form of punishment should be avoided as far as possible and the least publicity given'.²⁹ Chelmsford refused a request for a public whipping at Kasur; he insisted that the flogging and the 'crawling' order at Amritsar offended 'against all the canons of wise punishment'.³⁰ On 22 April the Commander-in-Chief had instructed General Benyon that 'public opinion in India was markedly opposed to corporal punishment' and that he would be glad if the authorities 'would dispense with punishments of this nature'.³¹ On 30 April, nevertheless, the Panjab Government asked for clarification on the interpretation of one of the Government's martial law ordinances relating to the special commissions set up to try offenders against martial law. The local government asked if the authority given to pass 'any sentence authorised by law' allowed the commissions to pass any sentence authorised for the particular offence under trial, or to pass, for that offence, any sentence authorised for any offence. They were really asking if the Commissions could be allowed to pass lesser or additional sentences for the main offence of 'waging war against the King-Emperor', and they were particularly anxious to extend the power to order whipping to cover any offence, notably for arson, rioting or receiving stolen property. The Government of India interpreted their ordinance strictly, and refused to allow any general application of whipping.³²

²⁸ O'Dwyer, 13 & 21 May, & MacLagan, 21 May, to Chelmsford, CP22, & V to S/S, 8 June 1919, CP10; H.Poll. 436-446, Aug. 1919; Nehru to Vincent, 20 May & 3 June, V(HD) to S/S, 8 June, & S/S to V(HD), 9 June 1919, H.Poll. 291, 294, 300 & 302, June 1919.

²⁹ Gandhi to PSV, & Andrews to Maffey, 21 April, V to LG/Panjab, & Maffey to Andrews, 23 April, CP22, & see S/S to V, 28 April 1919, CP10.

³⁰ Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 30 April, CP22, & to Montagu, 7 May 1919, CP5.

³¹ See V(HD) to S/S, 30 Aug. 1919, CP5 & H.Poll. 405, Sept. 1919.

³² H.Poll. 106-107, May 1919; V to S/S, 27 Jan. 1920, CP12.

Chelmsford had taken the opportunity, while objecting to the whipping and the 'crawling' order in Amritsar, to repeat one of his 'cardinal principles'. This form of punishment, he explained to O'Dwyer:

is not deterrent and is calculated to leave behind the maximum amount of bitterness. It will be regarded as intended to aim at racial degradation. It is not imposed on the guilty, but on Indians as a race. A punishment of this sort will be remembered with rancour long after the stern lessons of justice will have been forgotten. I hate to write and cavil at what is being done at a time when we all owe you so much for your prompt handling of the situation and I know how high feelings are running among your European population. But we have to live with Indians after all this is over, and we should do nothing which leaves unnecessary bitterness behind. No province is self-contained and the Punjab, important as it is, is only a portion of a much greater India, and I feel confident that throughout India the racial animosity which exists at present will be intensified a hundredfold when this story is told, and cui bono?³³

O'Dwyer, who pointed out that he was not responsible for actions by the military (in this case General Dyer), had also been shocked and asked that the order should be withdrawn.³⁴ In such cases, of course, the damage had already been done.

Thus the excesses occurred. 'The Government of India were prevented from intervening both by declared policy and by circumstances.' The practical difficulties of supervision were enormous. O'Dwyer, as he admitted to Chelmsford on 27 May, had been unable to give the Government of India a clear picture of the situation.³⁵ At times, because of interference with railways and telegraph, only wireless communication could be maintained between the governments and with different parts of the province. Chelmsford could presumably have left Simla and visited the disturbed areas in the Panjab - but this would have weakened or superseded the local government, and put the Viceroy out of touch with headquarters and thus with other parts of India.³⁶ And, even without special difficulties, it was, as Chelmsford recognised, 'always difficult to control the man on the spot'. O'Dwyer had recommended the Viceroy's 'cardinal principles' to the military authorities, but

³³ Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 30 April 1919, CP22.

³⁴ O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 1 May 1919, CP22.

³⁵ O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 27 May 1919, CP22. Contrast Maclagan to Chelmsford, 2 June 1919, CP22: 'As I have now been a week in charge here you may like to hear ... how things seem to me to be going on.'

³⁶ Chelmsford to Montagu, 25 Sept. 1919, CP5; & see draft answer to parliamentary question, 30 June 1920, IOR J&P3132/19.

niceties were not always observed when everyone was 'working at high pressure'.³⁷ There was no control over the type of local official through which the superior authorities had to work. O'Dwyer himself believed that the government could not operate martial law 'without taking the kid gloves off'; he in turn had to rely on subordinates and military personnel, of whom some faced the Panjab crisis with a lack of either humanity or political sense. O'Dwyer was able to prevent General Dyer from imposing an enormous fine on Amritsar on the basis of claims for damages; but he had not been able to prevent the General's 'crawling' order.³⁸ The Government of India, in turn, had been able to deny O'Dwyer his wish to have martial law proclaimed in Delhi - but only because the Delhi authorities were not sympathetic to the idea, as the city was quiet and they could find no evidence to support O'Dwyer's claim that it was Delhi-based emissaries who were disturbing the Panjab.³⁹ Excesses of repression occurred contrary to Chelmsford's stated policy: there had been a failure of supervision and an almost total unpreparedness for the administration of martial law on the part of both the local government and the Government of India. The responsibility belonged to both authorities, but the blame on the superior administrators must be qualified by an understanding of the difficulties.

Moreover the central Government had made strenuous, though unavailing, efforts to see that their policy was followed in the province. The extent of these efforts has been underestimated, and indeed was deliberately concealed. In November, following the dispute with Maclagan over the Government's refusal to exclude Tilak from the Panjab, Chelmsford wrote in indignation at the tone of Maclagan's protest:

When I remember my support of the Punjab Government during the past six months; when I see myself pilloried in every Indian paper because of my unwavering support; when I reflect that this support was given, as you know, often with reluctance, but that no word has ever been spoken by me either to the Secretary of State or publicly even suggesting reluctance, I feel that I have full right to complain⁴⁰

³⁷ Chelmsford to Montagu, 30 April, CP5, & O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 23 April 1919, CP22.

³⁸ O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 13 May 1919, CP22.

³⁹ H.Poll. 146-152, June 1919.

⁴⁰ Chelmsford to Maclagan, 15 Nov. 1919, CP23; & see above p.89.

The Government had failed in their supervisory role. Now they could only try to minimise the after effects of the repressive local actions, and to vindicate as much as possible of the administration during the emergency. There were still some difficulties in their path.

One of the first needs was the removal of the conditions under which excesses had been possible. Chelmsford urged the withdrawal of martial law on 12 May, on the grounds that it was no longer needed and that the longer it remained the more difficult it would make the future situation. O'Dwyer opposed this, at least for Lahore, Amritsar and Gujranwala. (He had no objection for Gujrat and possibly Lyallpur.) After consultation with General Benyon, Colonel Johnson, Sir Edward Maclagan (about to take over as Lieutenant-Governor), J.P. Thomson (Panjab's Chief Secretary), and others, including the Officiating Agent for the Northwest Railway, O'Dwyer suggested that it was necessary to finish the trials under martial law, that the civil administration would become more difficult if it were withdrawn, and that the railway interest needed to be protected. It would be undesirable to have to restore martial law once it had been withdrawn; it was necessary to exclude some persons from the province; and martial laws had been reviewed and in a number of cases relaxed. Chelmsford disliked this stand, and claimed that he would have insisted on withdrawal if it had not been for the Afghan war. For the time being, therefore, his Government accepted the local view, except for Sankaran Nair who resigned in protest over the delay. The Government recommended the abrogation of martial law in Gujrat and Lyallpur, and on 28 May it was announced that it had ended in Gujrat and would be withdrawn in Lyallpur as soon as the military force there had been increased (to satisfy Panjab objections). Martial law was abrogated everywhere on 9 June, except for railway lands. A further ordinance (No. VI of 1919) allowed trials to continue. The delays in the return to normal had not helped to restore confidence.⁴¹

The act of validation and indemnity also aroused alarm. The Government's draft bill validated and prevented legal proceedings in respect of all sentences, punishments and other actions done in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they were necessary to maintain

⁴¹ Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 12 May, O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, & Thompson to Maffey, 15 May, CP22, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 21 & 28 May 1919, CP5; H.Poll. 23-31, June, & 295, March 1919.

or restore order. Compensation was to be paid for property used under martial law. The Secretary of State suggested that it would be wiser to indemnify officials for actions and not to validate all sentences; but the Government pointed out that without validation they would presumably have to release all those convicted summarily, and the Secretary of State concurred. In the bill presented to the Imperial Legislative Council, however, the Government circumvented their own objection by introducing a new clause validating all confinements under martial law, but no other actions - officers were merely indemnified against legal proceedings, unless they had acted unreasonably or not in good faith. The effect of this change was to make it clearer to the legislature that there was no question of prejudging the validity of actions or preventing proceedings against officers. The Home Department also asked for the preamble to be changed so that there was no suggestion that the legislators agreed that martial law had been necessary. To help the debate Sir William Vincent announced that all summary cases would be referred to two High Court judges for review, and two extra non-officials (one Indian and one European) would be added to the committee of enquiry which was about to consider the disturbances. Two-thirds of the non-official members of the Council supported the Indemnity Bill (six out of eighteen voted against it). Chelmsford attributed the result to the good work of the new Education Member, M.M. Shafi, and to the moderation of Vincent and the persuasiveness of Lowndes. But the passing of the Act, however necessary it may have been in legalistic terms, did not help to reconcile the public to the martial law administration, and added credibility to the argument that the government was trying to conceal grave abuses.⁴²

It was the more important, therefore, to convince Indians that the prisoners held in gaol or already punished had been properly tried, and, where appropriate, were being treated leniently. The first martial law ordinance had provided for trial under Regulation III of 1804, whereby sentences only of death and forfeiture of property could be passed. The Government removed this anomaly by their fourth ordinance

⁴² V(HD) to S/S, 28 Aug. & 5 Sept., V to S/S, 20 Sept., & S/S to V, 7 Aug., CP11, & Montagu to Chelmsford, 2 Oct., & Chelmsford to Montagu, 1 Oct. 1919, CP5; H.Poll. 14, Aug., 289-295, Nov., & 58, Dec. 1919.

allowing a minimum sentence of transportation for life.⁴³ Severe penalties were needed, in Chelmsford's view, to prevent a recurrence of the disturbances; but reductions in sentences were readily considered as soon as the situation returned to normal.⁴⁴ The following table shows the numbers tried in different ways during the period of martial law.⁴⁵

Chart I. No. of persons 1. tried; 2. convicted; 3. acquitted or discharged

A. Martial Law Commissions	852	581	271
B. Summary courts	1437	1179	258
(including area officers	564	495	69)
C. Ordinary Municipal Courts	13	11	2
D. Special D. of I. Tribunal	56	21	35

The martial law commissions early began to recommend reductions in sentences below the minimum permitted them, and the local government agreed with this procedure. The judicial review, announced by Vincent during the Indemnity Bill debate, was to apply to all cases, whether or not the offender had applied for it, except where the sentence had already been served. The Government of India had already decided to remit all sentences other than those for offences which were serious under ordinary law. Maclagan wanted to consider reducing sentences for such serious offences, and had already begun his own review; he suggested that he refer to the judicial enquiry any cases on which he felt doubt.⁴⁶ These charts illustrate the action taken.⁴⁷

⁴³ See H.Poll. 128-135, May 1919; S/S to V, 2 May 1919, CP10.

⁴⁴ V to S/S, 4 May 1919, CP10; H.Poll. 109, Sept. 1919.

⁴⁵ H.Poll. 492, Jan. 1920; ILC Proceedings, 10 Sept. 1919.

⁴⁶ H.Poll. 425, April 1920; HD to G/Panjab, 23 Sept., & G/Panjab to HD, 27 Sept. 1919, H.Poll. 59-60, Dec. 1919. Maclagan's changes were designed to adjust sentences so that none was lighter than that which a Panjab magistrate would have given for a comparable offence in normal circumstances; in August he considered that existing sentences represented the 'irreducible minimum' in terms of this principle; see Maclagan to Chelmsford, 7 Aug. 1919, CP23.

⁴⁷ H.Poll. 122-125, Aug. 1920.

Chart II. Sentences under martial law

	by summary courts;	by martial law commissions;	by D.of I. trib- unals	Totals
For 'waging war'	-	355	8	363
Other offences	1179	226	13	1418
Total	1179	581	21	1781
of whom:				
served sentences	630	83	1	714
released	189	16	-	205
pardoned (1/1/20)	36	-	-	36
released through proclamation (28/12/20)	232	288	9	529
(some conditionally released through reviewing judges	92	9	-	101
still in gaol (31/7/20)	-	80	6	86

Chart III. Convictions for murder or waging war

	by martial law commissions;	by D. of I. tribunals
A. Sentence by court		
- death	104	
- transportation for life	248	8
B. Sentence under government review		
- death	20	
- transportation for life	25	
- over 2 years' imprisonment	263	8
- under 2 years' imprisonment	40	
C. Releases		
- by government review	8	
- by proclamation (23/12/20)	248	6
- by reviewing judges	3	
D. Still in gaol (31/7/20)	76	2

Chart IV. Comparative figures for

	Bombay;	Delhi.
Convictions during disturbances		
- total	123	21
- for 'waging war'	36	-
- for other offences	87	21
Subsequently pardoned	-	-
Sentences reduced	18	2
Released (31/7/20 Bombay; 2/8/20 Delhi)	72	9

The extent of these remissions of sentence was one reason put forward against the amnesty of December 1919.⁴⁸ Most releases were in 1920.

⁴⁸ Meston to Chelmsford, 12 Aug. 1919, CP15.

The purpose of the judicial enquiry in the Panjab was not, however, merely to provide machinery whereby leniency could be shown to political prisoners. It was to demonstrate that the special courts had functioned justly. The findings of the reviewing judges, B. Chevis and B.K. Mullick, were not entirely suitable for this purpose. Of the twelve officials responsible for trying summary cases, the judges praised or were generally satisfied with the procedure and record of five, but they also criticised the methods of three, representing 84 out of the 550 cases reviewed. The officials criticised were Major Shirley, the Provost Marshall, Captain Doveton at Kasur, and B.N. Bosworth Smith. In the case of the last, it was particularly unsatisfactory that he, who had investigated the crimes, should also have conducted the trials - it was perhaps not surprising that he recorded an unusually large number of defendants who pleaded guilty. Moreover, one or both of the reviewing judges considered that there was unsatisfactory evidence or wrongful convictions for almost one hundred defendants in summary cases - and these were found under all the officers, including those whose procedure was thought satisfactory. (Indeed examination reveals, in spite of the judges' findings, that all the records of the summary trials, with the exception of one officer who dealt only with petty cases, were fairly scanty especially in particulars relating to defence evidence.) In addition, when they came to consider cases before martial law commissions, both judges recommended five pardons, fourteen releases and two reductions in sentence. Mullick suggested a further five pardons and one release. These figures represented the failures of the administration in a certain number of the trials - the judges did not deal with all cases; for commissions they dealt with 51 out of 114. Nevertheless in February 1920 the Panjab Government suggested a press communique to convince people that the trials had generally been fair. They proposed to stress that the judges had approved the general procedure and endorsed the findings in all the most serious cases. Where they recommended releases, the government had complied - by this time all those convicted summarily had also been released.⁴⁹

The Government of India recognised that in non-judicial aspects the administration and supervision of martial law had been defective. They were determined that they would not be unprepared in future. Early in 1920 they put an officer on special duty to devise a set of martial

law instructions. These were ready in April. The military were to be instructed to interfere as little as possible and to cooperate with the civil authorities, and to transfer charge as soon as order was restored. Martial law officers were to remember that Indians were British subjects; they were to conduct trials carefully and without awarding excessive sentences. Whipping was not to be ordered except where it was permitted under the ordinary law or for crimes of violence. Martial law orders were not to offend classes, individuals or religious feelings, and were not to involve racial discrimination. If military force were to be employed it was not to exceed the minimum necessary. The Government of India proposed to print these instructions - which were no more than a formal statement of their former policy and Chelmsford's 'cardinal principles' - and to distribute copies in confidence to all Divisional and Brigade Commanders and to district officers, for further distribution to subordinates should martial law be declared. Copies of the first chapter of the manual, containing general principles, were also to be issued to all police officers and magistrates; the contents were to be made known to all commissioned military officers. These matters were confidential in detail, but the Government were able to announce their existence publicly.⁵⁰

The Government of India would have been inclined to leave matters there as far as published reassurances went, and hope that in time both disturbances and repression would be forgotten. In this regard Chelmsford regarded the Afghan war as a 'godsend' - it diverted public attention from internal matters.⁵¹ The Government made sure that all news, except for military details, was made public. Montagu, however, was not satisfied with silence about the Panjab disturbances. He first asked for an enquiry early in May 1919. He endorsed Bhupendranath Basu's plan for restoring confidence; this included the pardon of all those convicted except in cases of crimes of violence, and a public commission of enquiry. Montagu announced to the House of Commons: 'You cannot have disturbances of this kind and of this magnitude without an enquiry into the causes ... and the measures taken'.⁵² The Govern-

⁵⁰ V to S/S, 27 Jan., & (HD), 10 April 1920, CP12; H.Poll. 49-53, 185 & 190, June 1920.

⁵¹ Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 17 May 1919, CP22.

⁵² S/S to V, 2 May, & (HD), 11 & 18 June, CP10, & to V, 23 July, CP11, & Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 & 28 May 1919, CP5; Parliamentary Debates (Commons) 116, No.68, 338, & (Lords) 36, No.76, 502.

ment of India had envisaged that there would be an enquiry, but they did not wish to put the whole administration publicly on trial, reawakening interest and publicising grievances; they favoured departmental investigations. They had earlier resisted a suggestion from Surendranath Banerjea for an enquiry after the Delhi riots of 30 March; Chelmsford had replied to Montagu's first query: 'I have always contemplated announcing an enquiry into these disturbances when order has been restored and normal conditions prevail. I have held my hand, however, because I do not wish to give the appearance of discouragement to officers who are performing onerous, distasteful and responsible duties.' Now his Government added that they saw 'serious disadvantages attending the investigation of matters about which feeling both European and Indian has been deeply stirred'. They had concluded that there were three incidents which might have been unreasonable - the public floggings, the firing at the Jallianwala Bagh, and the use of aeroplanes to bomb crowds at Gujranwala. They conceded that there might have been others. But they informed the Secretary of State that they would 'certainly have preferred to be left to make such enquiries as were necessary ... and to deal with any ... officers whose conduct might be found to deserve either censure or punishment in the ordinary course'. They agreed that they were 'bound to see that ... measures taken ... are reasonable' and 'to enquire dispassionately into any cases where there appears to be any reason for thinking that ... limits have been exceeded'. But they did not like the Secretary of State's way of achieving this end.⁵³ In short they wanted justice - if necessary retribution - but they feared publicity. They knew that, if given the material, Indian politicians now had the skill and the machinery to make capital out of the government's errors and excesses.

The Government's objection was endorsed by Sir George Lloyd, who wrote to Montagu of his fear about the consequences of an enquiry. Harcourt Butler suggested similarly that an enquiry would enhance racial tension, and that acts of clemency would have a better effect. Montagu advised against being apprehensive at things 'being thrown into the melting pot again as a result of an Enquiry': he thought that the situation was becoming quieter, and that an enquiry was 'the only possible way to deal with the Punjab situation'. He wished to avoid a 'pompous indictment' of Chelmsford's administration, but insisted that

⁵³ Banerjea to PSV, & to Maffey (telegram & letter), 3 April, CP22, & V to S/S, 5 May 1919, CP10; H.Poll. 1-14, Aug. 1919.

it was necessary to dissipate 'monstrous allegations'.⁵⁴ In view of the Secretary of State's opinions and his announcement to the Commons, the Government of India proposed an enquiry covering the Panjab, Delhi, Bombay and Bengal, and investigating the disorders and the measures taken to deal with them. They did not wish to include the question of causes, as this would provide an opportunity for politicians to attack the whole administration and would 'leave a dangerous legacy of bad feeling'. For members they suggested a chairman from Britain, a high-ranking military officer, a senior civilian and an Indian; meetings would be in public unless the committee directed otherwise.⁵⁵ Of the local governments which were addressed on this scheme, Bengal was strongly opposed to an enquiry and Bombay thought it would be open to the most serious objections. The Panjab government agreed to an enquiry and were prepared to allow it to discuss causes; Delhi thought an enquiry 'inevitable' but added that it was unfortunate that it should be held at a time when the country might have settled down again.⁵⁶ The Government of India set out their objections (as we have seen), but agreed, in their reply to the Secretary of State, that an enquiry was now unavoidable. They modified their original proposals to include a second Indian member (so as to represent both Hindus and Muslims), and to allow investigation into the question of whether the disorders were organised, and if so why and by whom. Thus they included some consideration of causes without risking a general investigation of past administration - they had accepted the Panjab point of view, as they had realised that Montagu had mentioned 'causes' in his Commons statement. They also wished to minimise the risks for them by having the committee appointed by and reporting to the Government of India.⁵⁷

A majority of Chelmsford's Council also agreed that they should not now conduct their own preliminary enquiry, on the grounds

⁵⁴ Lloyd to Montagu, 30 Dec., MP24, & Montagu to Lloyd, 8 Aug. & 2 Oct. 1919, MP22; Chelmsford to Montagu, 31 July, & Montagu to Chelmsford, 11 June & 31 July 1919, CP5. See also Harcourt Butler to Chelmsford, 25 July 1919, CP23.

⁵⁵ HD circular, 21 June 1919, H.Poll. 4, Aug. 1919; Chelmsford to Montagu, 31 July, CP5, & V to S/S, 2 Sept. 1919, CP11.

⁵⁶ H.Poll. 6-9, 12 & 18, Aug. 1919.

⁵⁷ V(HD) to S/S, 12-13 July 1919, ibid. 14; V to S/S, 11 Aug. 1919, CP11. In view of the local government's opposition, Bengal was excluded from the scope of the inquiry; see IOR J&P3132/19.

that it would be thought to anticipate or prejudice the main committee. Sir William Vincent did not agree because of the immediate need to collect evidence and perhaps also to take action against some officers. Montagu supported the majority view.⁵⁸ The Government of India had therefore not only accepted a public enquiry; they had also transferred to it exclusively the decision on the disturbances and the hopes for appeasing public opinion. It was necessary to make sure that the committee would be as useful as possible, and the Government favoured appointing a well-known English judge as Chairman. None were available, and they were forced to accept the appointment of a little-known Scottish judge, Lord Hunter. Chelmsford expressed his disappointment at this decision. The Government were also unable to avail themselves of the prestige of Sir Edward Gait, as he was personally unwilling to serve, and it was decided that it would be invidious for the head of one province to sit in judgment on the affairs of another.⁵⁹ The Government had decided that it might help the committee if they agreed to suggestions in the Imperial Legislative Council, where Indian members led by Malaviya requested a third Indian member on the committee and were prepared to accept an extra non-official European as well. The Government asked Tej Bahadur Sapru to be the third Indian member, and when he declined appointed Jagat Narayan.⁶⁰ The other Hindu member, Chimanlal Setalvad, had been among the counsel excluded from the Panjab under martial law; Narayan had been a critic of the Panjab government in the past and had contributed to the Panjab Relief Fund. The local government had drawn these facts to the attention of the Government of India, but had not protested - on the contrary they thought the information might be useful later in showing the impartial constitution of the committee.⁶¹

Public acceptance of the committee was nevertheless put at risk by a disagreement with the Congress. The All-India Congress Committee had appointed a sub-committee under Malaviya to attend to

⁵⁸ V(HD) to S/S, 1 July 1919, H.Poll. 15, Aug. 1919; H.Poll. 188, Oct. 1919.

⁵⁹ H.Poll. 187, 190, 197, 198-200, Oct. 1919; Chelmsford to Montagu, 20 Aug. 1919, CP5.

⁶⁰ Chelmsford to Montagu, 13 Sept. 1919, CP5; H.Poll. 192, 201-216, Oct. 1919; ILC Proceedings, 10 & 12 Sept. 1919, ibid., 425.

⁶¹ V to S/S, 12 June 1919, CP12.

the question of the Panjab enquiry. This sub-committee demanded that the principal local leaders should be released from prison for the duration of the enquiry, in order that they might give evidence before the Hunter committee and thus assure people that the investigation was to be full and impartial. The local government offered to provide facilities for any prisoners who wanted to testify - they would be released on bail for as long as necessary to allow them to give evidence and instruct counsel - but Malaviya refused to be satisfied with anything less than unconditional release on security. Accordingly the Congress decided to boycott the Hunter committee, and instituted their own enquiry under Motilal Nehru. No prisoners gave evidence to the Hunter committee, although some were represented by counsel. A few prisoners who had been released later offered to travel to Bombay to testify; Lord Hunter declined their offer on the grounds that after six weeks in Lahore his committee had completed their hearings on the Panjab.⁶²

In their report the Hunter committee on the whole vindicated government policy, including the actions of local officers. They considered, for example, more than thirty-six instances of firing by troops, police or (on two occasions) from aeroplanes, and justified all but two.⁶³ But this favourable verdict was not very useful. Firstly the Indian members of the committee had written a minority report. They questioned the existence of a rebellion and the need for martial law, but admitted that some persons were rightly tried for waging war, and did not contradict the majority's general approval of government policy; except in a few cases they dissented over the severity of the condemna-

⁶² Chelmsford to Montagu, 3 Dec. 1919, CP5; draft reply to parliamentary question, 7 June 1920, IOR J&P3132/19; Malaviya to PSV, 13 Nov. 1919, CP23 & H.Poll., 473, Feb. 1920; *ibid.* 474-480. Hunter concluded that 'no further concession was necessary to give the Congress Committee the fullest opportunity for placing before us any evidence relevant to the enquiry' - Hunter to HD, 8 March 1920 (with Hunter Report), CP47. On the appearance of counsel, see H.Poll., 469-471, Feb. 1920. Gandhi also requested the withdrawal of the restrictions on him in view of the enquiry; see Gandhi to PSV, 2 Oct. 1919, CP23.

⁶³ IOR J&P3132/19; & see Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee 1920, CP47 - especially, for general approval by the majority, pp. 1-18 (Delhi, Ahmedabad, Viramgam, Kaira, Bombay city), 72-86 (introduction and continuance of martial law) & 87-99 (martial law administration); for substantial agreement by the minority, pp. 103-104; for criticisms by the majority, pp. 30-36 (Amritsar), 55-56 (Gujranwala), 94-98 (exclusion of counsel, various orders and 'fancy punishments'); & for further criticisms by the minority, pp. 104 & 115-130 (introduction of martial law), 131-138 (Dyer), 139-150 (objectionable orders), 151-159 (armoured cars & aeroplanes), & 160-166 (courts & punishments).

tion of particular excesses. Nevertheless the existence of a division on racial lines inevitably undermined the persuasiveness of the official enquiry as a whole. Secondly the Congress committee had reported strongly condemning the Panjab government and the Government of India, and making (on the evidence of a different set of witnesses) accusations of excesses even greater than those revealed by the Hunter committee. Finally, and most of all, the positive findings of the majority and minority reports of the official enquiry had been completely outweighed and obscured by the discovery and publication of the details of one incident, the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar.

General Dyer had arrived in Amritsar and taken control before the imposition of martial law. He decided on 12 April to issue a proclamation forbidding public meetings, and had this proclaimed in several parts of the city. On the afternoon of the 13th he was informed that a meeting was being held in the Jallianwala Bagh, an almost completely enclosed square. He marched to the square with troops and an armoured car, entered with the troops through a narrow alley, and immediately ordered the soldiers to open fire. More than 1500 rounds were fired, directed at the thickest parts of the crowd as they tried to escape through the only other exit. Casualties were high - the number of deaths was later estimated officially at just under four hundred, and by the Hindu charitable organisation, the Seva Samiti, at about 530 - and the casualties would presumably have been higher if the entrance to the Bagh had not been too narrow for the armoured car. Dyer then left the scene without making any arrangements to attend to the wounded.

The evidence before the Hunter committee had made it clear that this shooting was completely unjustified. Dyer had at first claimed that his object 'was to disperse the crowd', but, under cross-examination, he admitted that probably he could have dispersed the crowd without firing and that he 'meant to punish those who had disobeyed the order and to give them a lesson'; he had thought he would 'make a wide impression throughout the Punjab'. He admitted that he would have used the armoured car if it had been possible, and that he stopped firing because ammunition was running low. It was revealed that the crowd had not been riotous - they were listening to a lecture - and that Dyer had not given them any warning or a chance to disperse. It was suggested that the proclamation forbidding meetings had been inadequately publicised and that many in the crowd were villagers who had come to Amritsar for a traditional festival. It was this body

of evidence which provided the main shock to opinion.⁶⁴

Dyer's action bore no resemblance to established practice or instructions. The Panjab government was later to order that no unnecessary violence should be used under martial law. The Panjab Police Rules stated:

4. When an officer ... determines to resort to the use of fire-arms, he shall, when the circumstances of the case admit of this being done, before giving the order to use such arms, give ... to the crowd a special warning that if they do not disperse an order to fire upon them will be given, and that the Police will fire with buckshot or balled cartridges.

6. As a rule only very few files should be allowed to fire at first. Three or four shots ... may suffice to disperse a large crowd; but the officer ... must use his discretion

8. No firing should be permitted a moment after the necessity for it has ceased to exist.⁶⁵

These rules, though not binding on a military officer, were presumably still in force until martial law had been declared. The shooting at Jallianwala Bagh had been shown to be indefensible in motive and out of all proportion to what was necessary. The Commissioner, Amritsar Division, was later to report: 'We lost control of Amritsar on 10th April and did not recover control of the city till 12th April'.⁶⁶ There was, therefore, no apparent need for further action on the 13th except to disperse an illegal gathering. According to the evidence of Captain F.C.C. Briggs, who had been attached to Dyer's staff, the General had been warned on the morning of the 13th that a meeting was to be held that afternoon. Dyer had made no attempt to prevent it and had not believed that the meeting would be held. Briggs also claimed that on the 12th Dyer had mentioned that he intended, once his proclamation had been well-circulated, 'to take strong measures'.⁶⁷ Dyer's own evidence bore this out: on hearing that the meeting was being held, he had made up his mind, he said 'that if his order was defied he would shoot

⁶⁴ Ibid., 30-36 & 131-138; The Times 15 Dec. 1919; Daily Express 13 Dec. 1919.

⁶⁵ Panjab Police Rules, p. 55, IOR J&P1566(2200/19). Compare United Provinces Police Regulations, ch.VI, para.66, loc.cit.

⁶⁶ Note by [Holderness], IOR J&P3132/19.

⁶⁷ Statement of evidence by Capt. F.C.C. Briggs, 11 April-8 May 1919 IOR J&P3132/19. The Hunter Committee saw this statement but did not include it in the evidence appended to the Report, as Briggs had died on the Northwest Frontier before being cross-examined.

straight away' - he had made up his mind before he had assessed the needs of the situation.⁶⁸ In his official report on the incident, he stated that 'It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect, from a military point of view, not only on those present, but more especially throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity'.⁶⁹ This point is very important, for it disposes of the argument that the extreme position taken by Dyer before the Hunter Committee was a distortion introduced because an honest soldier was harried and out-maneuvred by Hindu lawyers far too clever for him. On the evidence of his own report, written in August 1919, there can be no doubt that Dyer acted in the Bagh unnecessarily and for improper motives. It is difficult not to interpret Dyer's own explanations of his purpose and his admitted intention of teaching the crowd a lesson, as revealing that the shooting at the Jallianwala Bagh was a deliberate and pre-meditated attempt to revenge the murdered Europeans of Amritsar. It was the job of the soldier to keep order, not to instil terror nor to act as judge and executioner.

Sir George Lloyd concluded that the misfortune was that a 'thoroughly stupid' (though perhaps honest) soldier had had to deal with such a situation.⁷⁰ Certainly Dyer's conduct at Amritsar was not altogether out of character, in spite of his 'distinguished' record: in November 1916 Chelmsford had complained of a 'policy of adventurism' pursued by Dyer in Sarhad in South-Eastern Persia; Dyer had been removed and in Chelmsford's view the position had improved.⁷¹

Before the Hunter committee and the revelation of the details, the Amritsar shooting had not received the attention it warranted. The bombing at Gujranwala (which the committee also criticised) had been objected to, as had some of the more bizarre punishments under martial law. There was no mention of the Jallianwala Bagh in the complaints of the moderates' conference at the end of April 1919; not one of many

⁶⁸ See above, note 64.

⁶⁹ Holderness to Montagu, 30 June 1920, IOR J&P3132/19; V to S/S, 2 July 1920, CP13.

⁷⁰ Lloyd to Chamberlain, 13 June 1920, ACP18/1/9.

⁷¹ Chelmsford to Hardinge, 25 Nov. 1916, CP15. Nonetheless Dyer was awarded C.B. for his part in this campaign. For his record, see Appendix.

questions in the House of Commons mentioned the shooting before August. The All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution on 8 June, mentioning the Jallianwala Bagh first among many other incidents.⁷² Not until the Imperial Legislative Council debate on the Indemnity Bill in September was the shooting singled out for attention and fairly full accounts made public. But even then there was little attention paid in the India Office or, it seems, the Government of India.

One reason for the lack of official attention was probably the confusion over the number of casualties. The Government of India first reported casualties of two hundred, and this statement was repeated in the London Times of 19 April. On the 17th the Government had corrected their first report by adding that the casualties were deaths. The India Office, by a coincidence, seem to have received this second telegram at 11.00 a.m. on the 17th, before the first which arrived at 10.00 p.m. that evening. The India Office was at no time in the possession of incorrect information. Nevertheless only the first telegram (arriving second) was communicated to the press. Full particulars were not given until 28 May. In addition to this confusion, there was a dispute about the wounded. It was at first assumed that the wounded would be about three times the number of deaths (the proportion usual in war); but it was later recognised that such a high proportion was unlikely with the close range firing which occurred at the Jallianwala Bagh. The Seva Samiti verified only 192 wounded - and, although the number must have been higher, given a natural tendency to conceal participation in the Bagh meeting, the Government of India, in repeating the Samiti's figures, argued that it was at least possible for the number of wounded to be lower than the number killed. The number of deaths also remained under-estimated until September when Sir William Vincent suggested in the Imperial Legislative Council that there were probably about 334 - instead of Dyer's estimate of two hundred.⁷³ Even two hundred deaths represented a very large number, as large as that for fatalities from all the other incidents during the disorders, but the situation in the Panjab was being presented by the

⁷² Banerjea to PSV, 29 April 1919, CP19; IOR J&P3132/19. There were Commons questions on matters relating to the disturbances, on 28 May (2), 17 & 23 (3) & 30 (3) July; the AICC meeting was at Allahabad.

⁷³ The Times 19 April 1919; V(HD) to S/S, 18 March 1920, CP12; H.Foll. 347-353, Feb., & 317 & 318, April 1920; IOR J&P3132/19 & 1566(2200/19).

local government and others in terms of conspiracy and rebellion. Perhaps the scale of Indian natural disasters should also be remembered - quite apart from the influenza epidemic, for example, nearly 2000 people died in a cyclone in Bengal in October 1919.⁷⁴

The shooting had been presented to the local government, to the Government of India and to the Secretary of State as a necessary action in a dangerous situation. The Commissioner at Amritsar considered that 'the blow ... saved the central Panjab from anarchy, loot & murder'. The Government of India had earlier reported the shooting (on information from the Panjab) with the explanations that 'At Amritsar there was defiance ... of a proclamation forbidding public meetings, and it was necessary to fire on the mob', and that 'Further particulars show that fifty sepoy's faced unlawful assembly of 5000'. General Dyer gave a brief verbal report to O'Dwyer during a fifteen minute interview on 16 April. No written reports were received in London until October - Dyer had not made his written report, with the first mention of his motives, until August, and even then it was submitted to the Army Department and not seen by the Viceroy. Montagu and others at the India Office had met O'Dwyer on his return to Britain, but had not received the impression (according to Sir T.W. Holderness) that the force employed by Dyer had been in excess of the necessities of the situation. Indeed O'Dwyer had left the Panjab before seeing Dyer's report. Accordingly the details of Dyer's evidence came as a surprise.⁷⁵

Montagu had a reply drafted for the House of Commons stating that 'Until the evidence of Genl. Dyer reached this country last week the S/S was without information as to what took place in the Jallianwala Bagh'. He meant, as he explained later, that he did not know the details as they emerged before the Hunter committee. He had suggested that Dyer should be relieved of his command, when telegraphing to the Viceroy early in June, but his objections had focussed on Dyer's 'crawling' order, which still had his main attention, with other 'inexcusable' orders, as late as September 1919.⁷⁶ The Government of India, too, had been in ignorance. Chelmsford explained to Montagu that in April he had

⁷⁴ Ronaldshay to Montagu, 21 Oct. 1919, MP30.

⁷⁵ 3 Notes by Holderness, 15 Dec. & 2 later dates, O'Dwyer to Montagu, 30-31 Dec. 1919, Holderness to Montagu, 30 June 1920, IOR J&P3132/19. Another copy of O'Dwyer's letter was sent to Chelmsford with O'Dwyer to Maffey, 31 Dec. 1919, CP23.

⁷⁶ See above, n.75; Parliamentary Debates (Commons) 130, 2147-2157, & 131, 412-417, 1023-1028 & 1111-1419 (23 & 30 June, & 5 & 7 July 1920); S/S to V, 5 June, CP10, & 17 Sept., CP11, & Montagu to Chelmsford, 17 July & 18 Dec. 1920, CP5.

known of the small number of Dyer's force, the fact that the proclamation had been disobeyed, and the possibility of Dyer's being attacked if he hesitated. He knew no further details until he read Dyer's evidence to the Hunter committee.⁷⁷ In reply to Montagu's call for Dyer's dismissal, Chelmsford had telegraphed of the General's 'otherwise admirable handling' (that is apart from the 'crawling order') and had urged that to act against him would give a handle 'to political sensation-mongers ... when things have practically settled down'.⁷⁸ Thus, at this time, in June 1919, he was not considering the Jallianwala Bagh shooting. Later, after the Hunter committee, he argued that Dyer's evidence had been exaggerated, that Amritsar had been in a state of rebellion, and that Dyer had been right to consider that position. But he admitted that Dyer had been wrong to think of himself as responsible for the state of the province, and he no longer opposed Dyer's dismissal: he explained to Montagu that he had not acted earlier because he was waiting for the report of the Hunter committee.⁷⁹ Such scruples were general in Chelmsford's handling of the situation. Montagu had suggested that he should have made public his private objections to flogging and the 'crawling' order, and have announced his moves to forbid them. But the Viceroy had believed that, in such a serious situation, it was essential that subordinates should feel they had full support. Montagu had agreed that it was right to support the local authorities at the time, but suggested that this did not prevent expressing an opinion afterwards; Chelmsford had explained that, although he was not defending 'O'Dwyerism', his principle had been to assume his officials right until they were proved wrong.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ V to S/S, 2 July 1920, CP13.

⁷⁸ V to S/S, 8 June 1919, CP10.

⁷⁹ V to S/S, 21 March 1920, CP12, & 23, 24 & 30 Dec. 1919, CP11. By this time Chelmsford, who had once made excuses for Dyer, was no longer accepting any: Craddock wrote suggesting that Dyer had not realised there was no way out of the Bagh, or that the treatment of Miss Sherwood, the European missionary who had been assaulted, had been much worse than had been revealed and that this knowledge had affected Dyer's judgment; Chelmsford replied merely that he was sceptical that there were any unknown facts about Miss Sherwood's case. See Craddock to Chelmsford, 23 Dec., and Chelmsford to Craddock, 31 Dec. 1919, CP23. Chelmsford's change of heart seems to have come during December, as full reports became available. He had first thought that Dyer, though a bluff soldier, had well survived his ordeal before the inquiry committee; see Chelmsford to Harcourt Butler, 21 Nov. 1919, CP23.

⁸⁰ V to S/S & S/S to V, 30 Dec., CP10, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 4 & 25 Sept., & Montagu to Chelmsford, 29 Aug. & 11 Sept. 1919, CP5. Chelmsford's excuse was a trifle disingenuous. The normal procedure, as outlined by Chamberlain in 1916, was that officials thought responsible

The Government could have been quicker to investigate the details of the Jallianwala Bagh incident. But their neglect was to some extent matched by a delay in public awareness generally. The large casualties were of course bound to cause alarm and resentment; but not until the details and motives were revealed to the Hunter committee was the shooting shown to have been a massacre. From this point the Government of India began to lose the capacity to limit the progressive alienation of Indian opinion. Bhupendranath Basu noted: 'just as another great act of conciliation was about to be inaugurated, the Punjab incident fell like a thunderbolt riving in twain the reuniting forces of the great war ...'.⁸¹ It was difficult to see how to recover the situation. The Panjab government abandoned any idea of claiming the cost of the disturbances and compensation for losses by direct taxation - the municipality of Amritsar had agreed to provide by direct taxation compensation to a total of 18½ lakhs over five years. The government also decided not to collect the cost of extra police from Gujranwala, Amritsar and Lahore. They had suggested that a pension of up to Rs.5.0 should be paid for persons disabled or killed where families were more or less destitute. The Government of India had not then agreed, as they thought the payments might be construed as an attempt to buy silence at a time when the disturbances were being investigated. A total of Rs.12,000 was quietly distributed by the Government of India to the dependants of villagers killed at Jallianwala Bagh, and once the Hunter committee had reported a further Rs.15,000 was provided for dependants living in Amritsar.⁸²

The Government of India had been anxious to forestall the Congress report by earlier publication of the official committee's verdict. They did not succeed in this, but nevertheless were fairly satisfied that 'little interest' was being taken in the Congress accusations. To the Secretary of State, who suggested a further enquiry into these accusations, they stressed that the non-official investigation

for offences were suspended pending an enquiry - their retention of positions of authority was recognised to create dangerous feeling. See Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 3 Aug. 1916, CP2. The difference in the Panjab case was that on Montagu's initiative normal procedure - an internal government enquiry - had been suspended.

⁸¹ Note by Basu, 8 Dec. 1919, IOR J&P1566(2200/19).

⁸² V(HD) to S/S, 29 Jan., 6 Feb. & 6 March 1920, CP12; H.Poll. 231-234, April 1920.

had been undertaken by parties already publicly committed to a condemnation of the Panjab administration, and that their report was patently biassed and exaggerated - complainants could take action through the courts if they wished (although only two minor cases had been instituted). But the Government nevertheless investigated all of the major Congress allegations against government officers, and made, for their own purposes, detailed refutations of the Congress evidence.⁸³

The criticisms from the Hunter committee could not be dealt with so informally. It was necessary to issue a statement. The initial reaction of Chelmsford's Council was to accept the majority report almost without exception, and to admit the cogency of much of what the minority had said, agreeing with them particularly in disapproving of long prison sentences. In the Government's view, Dyer, having acted beyond what could reasonably have been thought necessary and with inadequate humanity, should be compelled to retire - Chelmsford told Montagu: 'I cannot contemplate the retention of a man of his mentality and with his record'. The Government agreed that Dyer's proclamation should have been published more widely, condemned his failure to give a warning beforehand or medical assistance afterwards, and found his continuation of the shooting after the crowd had begun to disperse to be indefensible and a misconception of his duty. But they did not propose to prosecute Dyer; they intended to remain neutral in the event of a private prosecution. The Government also criticised O'Dwyer's approval of Dyer's act - they thought it would have been 'wiser' if he had found out the details first - but they intended to exonerate the Lieutenant-Governor from any other censure. For the other officers who had acted improperly, the Government proposed to ask the Panjab government to take appropriate action - certain conduct should be condemned and some officers censured. The Delhi and Bombay authorities should be commended. Regret should be expressed for the lives lost, and steps announced which would prevent any repetition of the mistakes or the misuse of power. In March 1920, J.L. Maffey, the Viceroy's Private Secretary, writing to Vincent, had supported a suggestion of Sastri that the lack of a government expression of sympathy for the loss of innocent lives was causing a continuation of bad feeling; Maffey had hoped that the right note could be struck in the Government of India resolution. The Government also proposed to announce that compensation

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V(HD) to S/S, 25 March, 5 & 7 April, 24 May, 1 & 19 June 1920, CPL2; H.Poll. 376-381, Aug. 1920.

would be paid to victims and dependants suffering on account of the Jallianwala Bagh shooting.⁸⁴

Montagu proposed that the British Cabinet should also make an announcement, and suggested that the Government of India resolution should begin with the Cabinet statement and go on to give the Government's views. The Government thought this an unusual procedure and argued that any omissions on their part would be construed as disagreement. It was eventually decided that the two governments should publish 'despatches' specially written for the purpose and based on the Government of India's proposed resolution and the Cabinet's statement. The Government of India wished to give their 'despatch' a date as near as possible to that of their real communication to the Secretary of State, if not of the Viceroy's telegram of 21 March, then of the draft resolution sent in the week of 10 April: they were anxious to counter charges that they had delayed unduly. Montagu did not agree - it would have publicised the delays which had occurred in London, and there had already been parliamentary questions on the publication of the Hunter report - and therefore the Indian 'despatch' was dated 3 May; the Secretary of State's 'reply' was dated 26 May, the date of its publication along with the Hunter report.⁸⁵

In their 'despatch' the Government of India defended the exclusion of Gandhi, which had been criticised by the minority report of the Hunter committee, and endorsed the favourable findings of both majority and minority on the action taken in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Virangam and Bombay City. The minority had argued that there had been no rebellion in the Panjab, no conspiracy and no justification for martial law, but the majority believed that there had been a rebellion, that martial law had been justified, and that, although there was no evidence of a conspiracy, it was difficult and perhaps unsafe for the government

⁸⁴ V to S/S, 21 March, & draft resolution of G/I, week of 10 April, CP24, & Maffey to Vincent, 19 March 1920, CP24. The Government's attitude was no doubt influenced by a report that the King entertained 'a great ... admiration for O'Dwyer'; see Meyer to Chelmsford, 5 Sept. 1919, CP15.

⁸⁵ S/S to V(HD), 6 May, & V(HD) to S/S, 11 May 1920, CP12; H.Poll. 126-161, June 1920; G/I(HD) to S/S, 3 May, & S/S to G/I, 26 May 1920, H.Poll. 162-163, June 1920. There were Commons questions on the publication of the Hunter Report, on 17 & 24 (2) March & 26 April 1920. The Government of India had sent H.W. Williamson, a United Provinces police officer who had been secretary to the Hunter committee, on deputation to London to assist the Secretary of State and express the Government's view; see H.Poll. 18-35, Aug. 1920. For references in the following paragraphs to criticisms by the Hunter committee, see the descriptive analysis, above, note 63.

at the time not to assume there was. The Government of India, with Shafi dissenting, accepted the majority view and pointed out that they had had no choice but to rely on the Panjab reports of a rebellion and a critical situation needing martial law - they quoted the local government's telegram in full. Both minority and majority, with different degrees of severity, condemned detentions without trial: the Government of India, while justifying more preventive detentions, admitted that long imprisonments, especially in nine cases singled out by the minority report, had been a serious error. On trials in general the majority had had favourable comments, while regretting that certain cases had not been tried in the ordinary courts and criticising the exclusion of outside counsel. The Government of India agreed with this view. The use of aircraft on two or three occasions at Gujranwala had been criticised by both reports, the minority adding that the pilot had not used sufficient discretion: the Government of India were not prepared to criticise the pilot but agreed that instructions had been inadequate - they proposed to issue better instructions. Thus far the Government's 'despatch' followed their original intention of endorsing the majority view. On the central matters, however, they went further.

Both reports had had severe criticisms of certain martial law orders: the majority condemned the 'crawling' order of Dyer and the public flogging of certain offenders, the students' 'roll calls' imposed by Colonel Johnson in Lahore, an order of General Campbell requiring Indians to salaam on meeting Europeans, and other 'fantastic' penalties; the minority added objections to almost all of the Lahore orders, to the flogging of a marriage party, and to actions by three officers, Colonel O'Brien, Bosworth Smith and Jacob. The Government of India accepted almost all the criticisms of both reports. They announced that steps would be taken to avoid 'fantastic' penalties in future and that the officer who ordered the flogging of the marriage party had already been censured - in fact they asked the Panjab government to reopen the case and consider further measures. They admitted that some (though not all) of the Lahore orders had gone too far - they agreed with the minority particularly in condemning the confinement of students and professors after the destruction of a martial law notice on college property. It may be that the Government's condemnation would have been total, given the needs of the situation, if they had not earlier defended one of Colonel Johnson's measures to the Secretary of State - the Home Department had justified the order threatening imprisonment, fine and whipping for continued refusal to open shops, on the grounds that closure had been an expression of resistance to the government and that anyway the

order had not been invoked.⁸⁶ As it was the Government concluded in their 'despatch' that the administration of martial law had been 'marred' in particular instances by a misuse of power, by irregularities, and by 'injudicious and irresponsible acts', and they announced their intention of issuing instructions which would associate civil advisers formally with the military in future emergencies; they also reported that they had asked the local government to take action against the officers who had been criticised.

On the crucial matter of Dyer and Jallianwala Bagh, the majority had criticised the failure to give warning or stop firing as the crowd dispersed, and the fact that Dyer had decided on firing before he had arrived at the Bagh or been confronted with an emergency; they condemned his attempt to create a moral effect and denied that his action averted a rebellion. The minority added to these criticisms strong condemnations for Dyer's failure sufficiently to publish the proclamation forbidding meetings, his suggestion that he would have used machine guns, his firing until his ammunition was almost exhausted, his assumption that the crowd in the Bagh consisted of persons guilty of the earlier outrages, and his failure to attend to the wounded. The Government agreed with both reports that warning should have been given, that the continuation of firing was indefensible, and that the firing was in excess of the needs of the occasion; they supported the minority view that the proclamation was insufficiently published and that the wounded should have been tended. They criticised O'Dwyer as in their draft resolution, and announced that Dyer was to be asked to resign. They ended their 'despatch' with a reminder that only 88 out of 1779 were still in prison as a result of the outbreak, with an expression of regret at the loss of life and a promise of compensation, and with the observation that the lesson of the disasters was that non-cooperation (currently being advocated again by Gandhi) was too dangerous a weapon.

The Secretary of State's 'reply' differed from the 'despatch' in the vehemence of its language. The Secretary of State recorded his tribute to the officers who had not been criticised, and stressed the British Government's 'obligation' to and 'fullest confidence' in Lord Chelmsford personally. Montagu justified martial law. But he admitted that its administration had been marred, not generally but also not uncommonly, by a spirit which promoted improper and inhumane punishments,

humiliating to Indians and causing unwarranted inconvenience - as if the officers involved had been governing a hostile country. Dyer, in the view of the Secretary of State, had violated the British Government's principle of using the minimum necessary force, and thus had caused 'lamentable and unnecessary' loss of life. His 'crawling' order had 'offended against every canon of civilised conduct'; at Jallianwala Bagh his failure to give a warning had been 'inexcusable' and his failure to tend the wounded was an 'omission from his obvious duty'. He was 'not entitled to select for condign punishment an unarmed crowd which ... had committed no act of violence, had made no attempt to oppose him by force, and many members of which must have been unaware that they were disobeying his commands'. Dyer's 'conception of his duty ... was so fundamentally at variance with that which His Majesty's Government had a right to expect from and a duty to enforce upon officers ... , that it is impossible to regard him as fitted to remain entrusted with the responsibilities which his rank and position impose on him'. The matter was being referred to the Army Council.

Thus the condemnations made by the majority of the Hunter committee had been clearly endorsed by both the Government of India and the British Government: the Government of India sought to place some emphasis on the difficulties of the situation, but on the main points their position, if not their terminology, was close to that of the Secretary of State and not greatly removed from that of the minority report. Chelmsford professed himself perfectly satisfied with the procedure adopted. But he admitted: 'Of course ... we shall not please anyone, but that is not our business. The European community will be offended at our judgment on Dyer, and the extremists wanted either my or O'Dwyer's head on a charger I think, however, that the ultimate verdict will be that we have been strictly judicial in our treatment of the matter'.⁸⁷ Montagu was also apprehensive about the results of the publication of the Hunter report and the two 'despatches'; later he admitted that he might have made a mistake in ordering an enquiry. He had written to Lord Hunter in August 1919 that the government had nothing to fear from a searching enquiry and that the purpose was to restore public confidence. Later he wrote to Lloyd (who had always been apprehensive): 'until the enquiry opened, I had not the slightest conception that anything would be revealed which would cause us embarrassment. I thought the enquiry would justify everything that

⁸⁷ V to S/S, 20 May 1920, CP12.

had been done, and the Government of India assured me that they had nothing to fear'.⁸⁸

The English language newspapers responded predictably. All those which were English-owned, except for the Times of India, gave varying degrees of support to General Dyer, 'the saviour of the Panjab'. All those which were Indian-owned, except for New India, the Indian Daily Telegraph and the Indian Mirror, considered the majority Hunter report to be whitewashing and called for more severe penalties for Dyer.⁸⁹ This racial division did not bode well for the usefulness of the Governments' 'despatches' in restoring confidence among English-educated and politically-minded Indians. Any chance of a good effect was lost, however, when the British Parliament debated the Hunter report and the action taken against Dyer. There were Members in both Houses who were prepared, as Meyer explained to Chelmsford, to praise Dyer for actions they would have condemned as 'Hunnishness' if they had been committed by a German general in Belgium. But Montagu, as he himself admitted, made the situation much worse by delivering a provocative speech in the Commons. Maffey, who was in Britain on leave, called this speech 'utterly deplorable': it gave the impression only of 'nervousness, pallor and lack of judgment' so that Maffey could feel antipathy 'sweeping all over the House'. Montagu spoke heatedly, abandoning his prepared speech, and was rattled by hostile interjections; he tried to label Dyer's defenders as advocates of a doctrine of 'frightfulness' and he thoroughly 'ruffled' the Conservative Party. The Government carried the vote in the Commons, after rallying support, by 247 votes to 37; but in the Lords they were defeated 129 to 86. The sole issues, in Maffey's view, had become: 'Is it English to break a man who tried to do his duty?' and 'Is a British General to be downed at the bidding of a crooked Jew?'.⁹⁰ The Morning Post started a subscription for Dyer, who had been forcibly retired; the fund was

⁸⁸ Montagu to Hunter, 29 Aug., to Chelmsford, 2 Oct. 1919, CP5, to Ronaldshay, 20 May, MP27, & to Lloyd, 9 Sept. 1920, MP22.

⁸⁹ See H.Poll. 8, June 1920. The Pioneer, Englishman, Civil and Military Gazette, Statesman, Madras Mail, Rangoon Times, Rangoon Gazette, Empire, and Advocate of India (all English-owned) were sympathetic to Dyer. The Times of India would have supported Dyer if he had not used excessive force. The Indian Daily News, Amrita Bazar Patrika, Bombay Chronicle, Independent, Leader, Tribune, Bandematran, Bengali and Hindu (all Indian-owned) called for more severe punishment of Dyer and criticised the majority Hunter Report. The Indian Daily Telegraph and New India supported the Report; the Indian Mirror argued that Montagu had sacrificed Dyer.

⁹⁰ S/S to V, 10 July, CP13, & Maffey to Chelmsford, 10 July & 18 Aug., & Meyer to Chelmsford, 15 July 1920, CP16.

eventually to reach £26,000. In India officials and military were formally barred from contributing to the fund; this was small reply to the damage already done to Indian opinion.⁹¹

A further factor compounding resentment was the action taken against the officers who had been criticised. The local government censured three of their European officers - one of these (Bosworth-Smith) was forced to retire early. On the other hand one Indian police officer was reduced in rank and another reduced and retired as a result of their failure to try to deploy police under their command to prevent the murders of three Europeans in Amritsar. The Panjab authorities had defended the actions of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar; the Government of India insisted that these officers had improperly abdicated control to the military and censured them for this failure. The Government of India also censured three other officers for improper orders. General Campbell (of the 'salaaming' order) was informed of the Commander-in-Chief's regret and displeasure at his measures; the Commander-in-Chief declined to accept any excuse from Colonel Doveton, another inventor (at Kasur) of injudicious and irregular punishments. No action was taken against Colonel Johnson who had been similarly inventive at Lahore - he was a territorial officer and since demobilised.⁹² In the face of continuing Indian demands, Montagu, although he had agreed in April 1919 that 'The use of force on a substantial scale ... was no doubt the right course', and had suggested in his 'despatch' that censure would be an appropriate reaction to the excesses, now argued that 'more substantial punishments' would have been a better salve to Indian hurts. He was particularly alarmed at the prospect of future promotion for the censured officers. Lord Willingdon had suggested to him that the dismissal of some of the officers would have an enormous effect.⁹³

Chelmsford pointed out that censure would permanently be taken into account in any promotion - one of the officers had already

⁹¹ Chelmsford to Reed, 11 Jan. 1921, CP26; H.Poll. 414-416, July 1920.

⁹² V to S/S, 14 Aug., & (HD), 12 Sept. 1920, CP13; H.Poll. 85-88 & 93-96, Sept. 1920. Compare the delay in awarding honours in connection with the disturbances; see L. French (for G/Panjab) to Hignell (FSV), 7 May 1920, CP24.

⁹³ Montagu to Chelmsford, 22 April 1919, CP5; S/S to V, 15 & 23 Sept., & (HD), 22 Sept. 1920, CP13; Willingdon to Montagu, 15 July & 18 Sept. 1920, MP20.

been passed over twice for positions for which he would otherwise have been a strong contender. The officers themselves felt the censure very strongly, and the Amritsar Commissioner had decided to retire as a result of the government disapproval. Bosworth Smith's early retirement was equivalent to a fine of Rs.12,000. The Government of India, Chelmsford reported, had considered in full Council several factors in assessing the proper action. They felt that they had to make allowance for the difficult conditions and the previous good records of the officers. They had to act in accordance with their own resolution promising support and with the expressed opinion of His Majesty's Government that prevention not vindictive punishment should be their main object. They had to consider also the effect of harsh punishments on the rest of the service, and the pain and humiliation already caused by the public criticism by the Hunter committee and the Government. Finally they had to take into account the action against Dyer, the most serious offender by far - the Government of India had done the most they could by refusing to employ him; the Army Council in Britain had made this ban general and forced Dyer's retirement. The Government of India argued, therefore, that forcible retirement was the most severe punishment they could inflict on officers guilty of lesser offences. Chelmsford did not agree that dismissals were necessary or would be justified by the majority report. He strongly deprecated Montagu's suggestion that the expediency of influencing the non-cooperators should take precedence over the justness in the government's treatment of its officers.⁹⁴ Chelmsford had been, as he claimed, 'strictly judicial': but Indian opinion needed some punitive show sufficiently harsh to ease the grievance - words censuring officers may have been good justice, but they were bad propaganda.

The Government of India had been unable to assuage the sense of grievance caused by the Panjab disturbances and particularly the revelations of the Hunter committee. The Government's task had been made more difficult by European support for General Dyer in India, in Parliament and in Britain. Indian opinion also found the Government's condemnation inadequate and their punishments derisory. But it is unlikely that any action open to the Government would have sufficiently captured the imagination: Dyer would have had to be hanged and half the Panjab service dismissed - and European opinion would not have stood for that. In January 1920 the Amritsar Congress

⁹⁴ V to S/S, 18 Sept., & also (HD), 6 Oct. 1920, CP13; Chelmsford to Reed, 28 Nov. 1920, CP25.

had called for the impeachment of O'Dwyer and the recall of Chelmsford. In February some newspapers had begun to assert that 'Montagu must go'. The Indian demands were too high to be satisfied - and this was true over a wide range of opinion: Chelmsford refused to attend a conference with Bombay moderates late in 1920, arguing that it was impossible to discuss the Panjab on the basis of the moderate demands for the dismissal of or non-payment of pensions for the censured Panjab officials, for modification of the Turkish treaty, and for a promise of total self-government (except for foreign relations and military affairs) after five years.⁹⁵

Chelmsford could not see how to heal the hurt. He refused to act further against the Panjab officials, but proposed to compensate Indian sufferers more liberally.⁹⁶ Sir Valentine Chirol urged that the government should 'repudiate more emphatically ... the deplorable conclusions which Indian public opinion has drawn, not altogether unreasonably, from many of the things that happened in the Punjab and have happened since in regard to them'. Chelmsford replied that they had already clearly repudiated the doctrine of 'preventive massacre' and the practice of 'punishment by humiliation'.⁹⁷ The Government of India returned to their policy of keeping quiet and hoping that the ill-feeling would go away. Chelmsford, against his personal wishes (for he knew the decision would be misrepresented), accepted the advice of MacLagan and the moderates, Surendranath Banerjea and Sirdar Sundar Singh, and disallowed a debate on Panjab affairs in the Imperial Legislative Council.⁹⁸ Montagu suggested that it might be best to repeal the Rowlatt Act, but the Government of India refused. But as early as July 1919 the Bengal Government had recommended that it was not worth the risk of using the Act, and in August the Government of India had agreed, with the proviso that the Act should be used in preference to more severe measures if this could be done safely. Montagu's view had been that the only satisfactory procedure was 'open prosecution and conviction in the Courts', and that repressive executive

⁹⁵ V(HD) to S/S, 7 Jan., 4 Feb., 19 & 26 June 1920, CP12; Chelmsford to Reed, 11 Jan. 1921, CP26.

⁹⁶ Chelmsford to Lloyd, 4 Dec. 1920, CP25, to Reed, 11 Jan., & to Sly, 26 Jan., & see Sly to Chelmsford, 1 Jan. 1921, CP26.

⁹⁷ Chirol to Chelmsford, 5 Jan. 1921, CP26.

⁹⁸ V to S/S, 14 Sept. 1920, CP13; Chelmsford to Reed, 11 Jan. 1921, CP26.

powers, however justified by committees, were only second best.⁹⁹

In January 1921 Chelmsford decided to move towards an acceptance of this view. He suggested a legislative committee to consider the repressive powers, including the Rowlatt and Press Acts.

In this atmosphere the Panjab question was finally debated in the legislative council. A resolution was moved by Jammadas Dwarkadas declaring the 'firm resolve' of the Government of India to maintain that the British connection was 'based on the principle of equal partnership and perfect racial equality', regretting that the Panjab martial law administration had departed from this principle and deeply wounded 'the self-respect of the Indian population', and calling for 'adequate compensation', comparable with that awarded to European sufferers, for the families of those killed or wounded at the Jallianwala Bagh. The Home Member gave assurances that the Panjab Government would be asked to deal generously in awarding compensation, and the resolution was carried unanimously. A third clause demanding 'deterrent punishments' of the officers responsible had been deleted without a division. The Government considered the general tone of this debate to have been very good; and Stanley Reed, though sceptical himself, reported to Chelmsford that his Bombay friends thought the Panjab issue was now dead.¹⁰⁰

It was not. The problem was that the shock had not only strengthened the resolve and added to the racial and religious estrangement of the politically minded; it had also affected classes which, although to some extent already influenced by popular agitation, had seldom before felt very strongly about politics.¹⁰¹ At the time of

⁹⁹ Montagu to Lloyd, 9 Sept. 1920, MP22, & to Ronaldshay, 21 Nov. 1918, CP27; H.Poll. 181-182, Nov. 1919. To Montagu's suggestion that they should use Regulation III of 1818, Chelmsford had repeated the rationale of the Rowlatt Act as a special and necessary reserve power to meet emergency situations; see V to S/S, 6 May 1920, CP12.

¹⁰⁰ V(HD) to S/S, 17 Feb., CP14, & Reed to Chelmsford, 15 Feb. 1921, CP26.

¹⁰¹ For an indication of the depth and extent of feeling; see, for example, S. Banerjea, Nation in Making, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras 1925 (1963), 304-305; Motilal Nehru, The Voice of Freedom, London 1961, 4-28; The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. XIX (Nov. 1920 - April 1921), 49, 102-107 & 408-409; Jawaharlal Nehru, ed., A Bunch of Old Letters, London 1960, 5-6 & 15-16; article by K. Natarajan in Indian Social Reformer 12 Sept. 1920, in Willingdon to Montagu, 18 Sept. 1920, MP20. To some extent the shock of the Panjab reprisals had been such that it had been accepted into the popular imagination where it remained impervious to government appeasements; for an example of the resultant emotional slanting see R. Gundu Rao, The Panjab Atrocities, Mysore 1922,

the disturbances, a letter to the Viceroy from Rai Sahib Bishamber Nath demonstrated this new development, in a strange combination of loyal phrases, conservative acceptance of British paternalism, and rigorous indignation at the Panjab atrocities: it was this side of Indian opinion also which had been alienated. Bishamber Nath wrote:

Your Excellency, you are great and God has made you great. The destiny of India ... is entrusted to Your Excellency's charge. India, or at any rate a great majority of it, expects great benefits at your hands. Do not pray, great as you are, be led away from the right course by the attacks of those who do not appreciate the inner greatness of your heart and the good which is in it. It is the tree laden with fruit at which everybody throws a stone and it is a tree laden with fruit which bends itself to the ground notwithstanding efforts to the contrary. Do pray in your greatness show mercy to the poor and innocent teeming millions of India and so mend matters that it may soon tread on a prosperous and progressive path. My heart throbs at the critical state in which India is and the present situation has, in fact, affected my liver For the sake of all that is great and good, pray adopt a conciliatory policy.

Bishamber Nath correctly predicted in another letter: the Panjab repression 'will be an evil day to the peace-loving subjects of Government, and the Government also, with this thorn in their side, will not have a smooth and peaceful time of it'.¹⁰² Neither in their supervision at the time, nor in their subsequent actions, had the Government of India been able to satisfy the Bishamber Naths of India. The loss of confidence at this time was crucial because it was more general than ever before.

8-10, & at p. 2 this description of the Rowlatt bill: 'It empowers the authorities under which term falls even the meanest C.I.D. in the land 1. to arrest even the greatest, the richest and the most respectable person without serving any warrant on him, or giving any reasons for doing so; (2) to conduct trials as speedily as they like without giving any right of appeal and all in camera; 3. to prevent persons from having counsel of their own choosing and lastly, 4. to commit or acquit a person as each officer's whims and fancies suggested.'

¹⁰² Bishamber Nath to Chelmsford, & to the editor of the Leader, 20 April 1919, CP22. For Bishamber Nath, see Appendix.

Chapter 6. Against Satyagraha

The war raised expectations and changed attitudes, and none more than those of many Muslims. After the war, Muslims became increasingly involved in politics, and politics with the Muslims. By 1920, no grievance was more potent or of more general importance than the supposed wrongs done to the Khilafat, as the Caliphate was known in India. The Government of India had anticipated the danger, but had been powerless to avoid it.

Throughout the war they had treated Muslims with particular care. At sensitive moments, such as the revolt of the Sherif of Mecca or the announcement of a secret treaty proposing to cede Constantinople to Russia, the policy was to suppress alarming and inflammatory news, allowing it to 'trickle in' unannounced, but to give private explanations and reassurances; to put right or avoid grievances (as with the assistance given to Haj pilgrims), but to oppose agitation when it was thought dangerous, as with the so-called 'silk letters' conspiracy and other expressions of extreme pan-Islamism.¹ A similar mixture of caution, conciliation and toughness marked the handling of Muslim riots in Calcutta in 1918.² The Afghan War in 1919 was also handled with an eye for Muslim feelings - full publicity was given during the campaign, and afterwards Chelmsford insisted on a conciliatory attitude to the Amir in spite of the strongest objections from London and Lord Curzon

¹ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7, 14 & 21 July, & O'Dwyer to Grant, 26 June 1916, CP2; V(F&PD) to S/S, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 15 & 27 July 1916, CP7; Chelmsford to Carmichael, 24 July, & Communique, 31 July 1916, CP17; Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 8 July, & V to G/Bombay, 25 July 1919, CP23. On the Russian treaty, see V(F&PD) to S/S, [Aug. 1916] (2 telegrams), & 28 Dec., & V to S/S, 19 Nov. 1916, CP7. The following discussion may be seen in the context of the prevailing theory that the British sought to 'divide in order to rule', a theory so general that it is almost pointless to document it. To give some examples, however, the question may be pursued in M.N. Das, India under Morley and Minto, London 1964; Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, Bombay 1964; I.D. Kaushik, The Congress Ideology and Programme 1920-1947, Bombay etc. 1964, 290-294; M. Mujeeb, The Indian Muslims, London 1967, 432-433; W.C. Smith, Modern Islam in India, Lahore 1963 (2nd ed.); N. Gerald Barrier, 'The Punjab Government and Communal Politics, 1870-1908', Journal of Asian Studies XXVII, 3 (May 1968), 523-539; Stephen E. Koss, 'John Morley and the Communal Question', ibid. XXVI, 3 (May 1967), 381-387; & Z. Islam & L. Jensen, 'Indian Muslims and the Public Services, 1871-1915', Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan IX, 1 (June 1964), 85-149 (especially 148-149).

² See H.Poll. 164-173, 180-194 & 199-201, Nov. 1918; ILC Proceedings, 19 Sept. 1918, 292-293, IOR J&P1589(4468/19); Chelmsford to Montagu, 17 Sept., CP4, V(HD) to S/S, 3 Sept., CP9, & Ronaldshay to Montagu, 1 & 18 Sept. 1918, MF29; Lawrence, Second Marquess of Zetland, 'Essayez', London 1956, 108-116; & J.H. Broomfield, 'The Forgotten Majority: The Bengal

in particular.³ The critical issue, however, was the question of the Turkish peace terms. The Government of India made strenuous efforts to place the Muslim viewpoint before the British Government and the Peace Conference; they insisted that, for their purposes, the minimum concession was the retention by the Caliph of Constantinople and of nominal suzerainty over Mecca.⁴ But, even apart from international considerations, there was no hope of this view carrying weight. The British Government had decided against both of these concessions as early as 1916.⁵ Lloyd George, with Austen Chamberlain's agreement, stressed the importance of 'completely smashing' Turkey; Lord Curzon called himself a strong 'anti-Turk'.⁶ Lord Hardinge, now with the Foreign Office, was ready to see Constantinople ceded to Russia; the Political Department of the India Office, in a minute of 1916, argued that 'the only satisfactory solution is the reduction of the Ottoman Empire to such political non-entity that it shall be worth nobody's while to tamper with it', and Lord Islington, the Under-Secretary, took a similar view.⁷ Even Edwin Montagu, who claimed to have done all he could to make the Indian Muslim view known, and who, in the end, considered that the Allies had made 'a monstrous Peace', nevertheless in 1918 wrote a Cabinet memorandum in which the main burden of the argument was that Turkey must

Muslims and September 1918', in D.A. Low, ed., Soundings in Modern South Asian History, London 1968.

³ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 26 June, 31 July, 7, 8 & 20 Aug., 18 & 28 Oct., & 24 Dec. 1919, CP5, & 4 March, 12 April, 23 & 30 June, & 4 Aug. 1920, & 12 Jan. 1921, CP6; Montagu to Chelmsford, 11 Sept., 31 Oct. & 28 Nov. 1919, CP5, & 13 March 1920, CP6; Speeches II, 228-230; Chief British Representative, Indo-Afghan Peace Conference (Sir Hamilton Grant) to V, 8 Aug. 1919, CP24; V(F&PD) to S/S, 9 June 1919, CP10.

⁴ V to S/S, 10 May, & (HD) 3 & 18 May, CP10, & 17 Nov. 1919, CP11, & 2 Feb. 1920, CP12; H.Poll. 529, May 1919; Ronaldshay to Montagu, 14 May & 20 Nov., MP30, Willingdon to Montagu, 6 Sept., MP19, & Lloyd to Montagu, 21 & 28 Nov. 1919, MP24.

⁵ See A.J. Balfour, 4 Oct. 1916, 'The Peace Settlement in Europe', & Report of Lord Curzon's Committee of Imperial War Cabinet on Terms of Peace (Territorial Desiderata), ACP20/9/9 & 33.

⁶ Curzon to Kerr, 12 March 1920, Lothian Papers GD40/17/208; Meston to Chelmsford, 23 March 1917, Meston Papers 1; Montagu to Lloyd, 14 April 1920, MP22.

⁷ See 'An Appreciation by Lord Hardinge on the Note by Chief of Imperial General Staff dated March 29, 1917' (12 April 1917), ACP20/9/37; 'Minute by Political Department, India Office, The War with Turkey' (25 May 1916), probably by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, & Lord Islington, 'The War with Turkey' (13 June 1916), ACP21/6/22-23.

be deprived of territory and must be seen to have been defeated, not come to terms with.⁸ The Government of India had realised the hopelessness of their position quite early, and sought to prepare the ground by warning that the peace terms were likely to be severe - this was stressed in private meetings and in the Viceroy's reply to a Muslim deputation in January 1920.⁹ They also sought to publicise their own efforts. When harsh peace terms were offered in May 1920, Chelmsford issued a statement extending his 'encouragement and sympathy'. The Central Khilafat Committee, formed to direct the Muslim campaign, responded, in a letter signed by eighty-two Muslims and endorsed by Gandhi, by asking the Viceroy to make common cause with them, even to resign if necessary.¹⁰ In the face of such aspirations, Chelmsford's stand was inadequate. Yet, by expressing sympathy he had come near to a public admission of a divergence between his policy and that of the Peace Conference.

Curiously, the strictly conservative and illiberal demand for the continuance of the Turkish Empire - the Khilafatist leader, Shaukat Ali, wanted it to stretch from Morocco to the Khanates of Central Asia¹¹ - was to become the centrepiece of a campaign for Indian self-government. The Khilafat issue combined with others to feed Gandhi's non-cooperation campaign of 1920-1922, a major challenge in both extent and novelty. The special problem of Muslim unrest, although inflamed by the war with Turkey and its aftermath, did not result in a distinctive Muslim policy - it was met with strategies which accorded in every way with the idea of tactical non-interference. But with

⁸ Cabinet Memorandum, 24 Oct. 1918, in Montagu to Chelmsford, 7 Nov. 1918, CP4; & see Montagu to Chelmsford, 20 May & 3 June 1920, CP6, & to Willingdon, 16 April 1919 & 20 May 1920, MF16.

⁹ See Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 15 & 22 May, & O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 27 April 1919, CP22; V(HD) to S/S, 3 May 1919, CP10, & 28 Jan. & 2 Feb. & V to S/S, 8 & 20 Jan. 1920, CP12; H.Poll. 98-113, 363, 368, 373, 524-527, & 532, May, & 362, 364, 372-375, June 1919, 413-416, Feb. 1920, & also 193-194, Sept. 1916; Speeches II, 388-394. For later private exhortations, see Chelmsford to Lloyd, 9 Feb., & V to G/Bombay, 25 April 1920, CP24. The course had been urged by Gandhi; see Gandhi to Hignell, 27 July, & Hignell to Gandhi, 5 Aug. 1919, CP23.

¹⁰ V to S/S, 10 May, & (HD) 18 May 1919, CP10, & 2 Feb., 19 May (Gazette Extraordinary 15 May), & 29 June 1920, CP12; H.Poll. 101, Sept. 1920; Speeches II, 224-225. For an account of the Turkish peace negotiations up to Montagu's resignation in 1922, see S.D. Waley, Edwin Montagu, London 1964, 239-251 & 271-284.

¹¹ H.Poll. 368-373, May 1919.

Gandhi's campaign it was again possible to argue that this policy had failed - that Indians were not appeased, agitation not contained. The story of the government's measures against satyagraha is therefore one of a series of questionings of the established policy.

The first crisis came in March 1920 when Gandhi, who had joined the Khilafatists, called a hartal. From Bengal Ronaldshay had expressed alarm at meetings organised by Shaukat Ali and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad in cooperation with a group of Calcutta pan-Islamists. The meetings had passed resolutions which declared that Muslim loyalty was conditional upon favourable peace terms; and similar declarations were to be featured in the proposed hartal. Ronaldshay recommended that the Government should make a public disavowal of this idea. The Home Department considered that the situation was worsening, and saw the question characteristically as a balance between the danger of unchecked agitation and that of action against individuals. In Council Vincent favoured the issuing of a Government resolution warning that action would be taken against agitators. His colleagues were uneasy, but did not like to oppose the Home Member in his own field. The other local governments were consulted and did not favour the suggestion - Bombay, the Panjab, Bihar and the United Provinces strongly disapproved. Chelmsford decided not to accept Vincent's advice, and made no announcement. He explained to Montagu that he had thought a government statement would be 'unwise': government sympathy had put the Khilafatists 'somewhat in a quandary'; threats of repression would only give them cause for complaint. He agreed to allow Bengal to make a local announcement if necessary; but no such announcement was made, nor perhaps was possible in view of the silence at the centre. Government servants were warned that no exception would be made to the general prohibition of their participation in political demonstrations.¹²

The initial response to the Khilafat campaign, therefore, was to continue the cautious, tactical approach. Several factors helped this decision. The central feature of Chelmsford's approach had been to appease Muslim feelings, not to oppose them. There was some truth in the argument put forward by Gandhi himself, that his influence had helped to wean 'the party of violence from its ways'.¹³ In June the

¹² See Ronaldshay to Montagu, 8 April 1920, MP31; V(HD) to S/S, 7, 12 & 17 March, CP12, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 17 March 1920, CP6. The local government consensus was that any announcement was likely to do more harm than good.

¹³ H.Poll. 101, Sept. 1920; Gandhi to Chelmsford, 22 June 1920, CP24.

movement was believed to have passed into the hands of fanatical Maulvis. But at that time there was a joint meeting with a Congress committee in Allahabad, when the Central Khilafat Conference appointed a sub-committee to direct its campaign; and the effect of this Hindu participation was to avert or delay some of the more flamboyant Muslim proposals - Hindus had made it clear, for example, that any advocacy of joining an Afghan invasion would result in active Hindu opposition.¹⁴

Gandhi's non-violent approach also presented difficulties in law. In June 1920 the Government requested legal opinion on the feasibility of prosecuting Gandhi and Shaukat Ali under the Indian Penal Code for their advocacy of non-cooperation. The Home Department stressed that this was only in case it was 'considered necessary to take legal action later'. The legal opinion, however, stated that prosecution would be doubtful and therefore unwise, probably at least until the third stage of Gandhi's campaign,¹⁵ which would seek to encourage the resignation of Indian police and military. (It was thought possible that Shaukat Ali might be tackled earlier, as his speeches tended to use stronger language.)¹⁶

Gandhi postulated a symbolic divorce from the alien rulers. He envisaged the surrender of titles, suspension of legal practice, non-participation in government loans, withdrawal from government schools, abstention from the reformed councils, avoidance of official functions, refusal to join the army, and boycott of British goods. The positive side was stressed in attempts to form national schools and to provide arbitration in place of the courts.¹⁷ The campaign required that Gandhi should gain control of the Congress, and fire the public imagination. To the Government the prospects of this campaign seemed slight - and this too

¹⁴ V(HD) to S/S, 19 June 1920, CP12.

¹⁵ A Khilafat meeting in April had approved 4 stages for satyagraha: (1) boycott of titles, war loans and Councils; (2) resignation of civil posts; (3) resignation of police and military posts; (4) non-payment of taxes. These were described as the 'progressive abstention from cooperation with Government'. See Justice (Madras) 19 April, & Searchlight (Patna) 29 April 1920; H.Poll. 100, Sept. 1920. In Young India 5 May 1920, Gandhi explained that stage (3) was a 'distant goal'; in the event the campaign was not to develop beyond an elaboration of stage (1).

¹⁶ H.Poll. 100, 102 & 147, Sept. 1920.

¹⁷ V(HD) to S/S, 10 July & 3 Sept. 1920, CP13.

encouraged their non-interference. The surrender of titles was the easiest form of non-cooperation: by the end of May few titles had been relinquished.¹⁸ Other stages would require more courage and greater sacrifice. Chelmsford believed the lure of office would prove too strong for a successful boycott of the councils, and he expected that Gandhi would not carry the Congress on this - they could not afford to abdicate and leave all political initiative to their rivals. Chelmsford calculated also that total withdrawal from government schools would present the Congress with the problem of educating eight million pupils, or the choice of leaving them without education.¹⁹

Thus he explained to Montagu that he was not gloomy about the prospects; he could not convince himself that non-cooperation was practical. All they had to do, he thought, was 'keep cool'. Chelmsford was not even convinced that Gandhi was seriously seeking political advantage: he quoted an explanation from Bombay, that Gandhi was merely out to cause trouble through 'pique and vanity'. Chelmsford conceived his main task as one of convincing people 'of the folly of the whole thing'; he knew he would 'never convince them by repressive measures'.²⁰ He avoided interference not because he hoped to convert the agitators, but because he knew persecution might create sympathy for their ideas. His view of Gandhi's campaign was such that in August 1920 he hoped that the point for action would not come.²¹ He referred an uneasy Montagu to past experience. His Government had earlier resisted a clamour, some of it from Montagu, for action against Subramania Aiyar. The inaction had succeeded: Sir Subramania had been forgotten within two months. Chelmsford admitted he was comparing small things with great, but insisted the principle was the same: Sir Subramania's case had taught him that they must exercise patience also with Gandhi.²²

As before, the policy was also confirmed by apparent success. The Khilafat Day in March was observed generally by Hindu as well as

¹⁸ Ronaldshay to Montagu, 26 May 1920, MP31.

¹⁹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 3 & 30 June, CP6, & V to S/S, 24 Oct., & (HD) 16 Oct. 1920, CP13.

²⁰ Chelmsford to Montagu, 6 & 27 Oct., CP6, & V to S/S, 24 Oct. 1920, CP13. See also V to S/S, 17 July 1920, CP13: 'repressive action would only stimulate' the movement.

²¹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 25 Aug. 1920, CP6.

²² Chelmsford to Montagu, 4 Aug. 1920, CP6. See above pp.85-86.

Muslim shopkeepers, but there were no disturbances and government servants did not take part. In Bombay the Muslim community split when loyalists voted against the conditional loyalty resolution. A secret meeting was believed to have approved Gandhi's plan for progressive steps in swadeshi and non-cooperation; but signs were also reported of a reaction against violence and objections to the boycott of British goods.²³ A further week's hartal was called in April, but local governments reported either little interest or complete failure - though they stressed that there was much plotting and that speeches were still violent in tone.²⁴ Gandhi called another hartal for Sunday, 1 August; it was given impetus by the news of Tilak's death. Almost all shops closed in Maratha districts, in Madras, and in headquarter towns elsewhere; but most local governments stressed the lack of general observance or enthusiasm.²⁵ Thus every stage in Gandhi's mounting campaign was qualified, in government reports, by reservations and hints of failure. Non-interference seemed to be containing the threat.

Remarkably, the prevailing mood of the central Government in mid-1920 was one of confidence and optimism. There was a tendency, from the lowest District Officer to the Viceroy, to write reports which minimised the dangers: perhaps they had come to believe their own propaganda. They concluded that violent language might be defeating itself and that there was little evidence that non-cooperation would catch on. Several provinces had reported that agitation was spreading less quickly or was abating. In some places moderate councils were thought to be prevailing; in others speeches seemed less violent. In Nagpur Muslim leaders had declined to endorse satyagraha.²⁶ The Government recognised that it was hard for moderates to abstain, particularly with elections near, but they hoped for the isolation of the protagonists of violence.²⁷ Chelmsford was impressed by the Leader of 14 May 1920, which admitted that the Government had 'displayed an

²³ Lloyd to Montagu, 26 March 1920, MP25; V(HD) to S/S, 21 & 25 March 1920, CP22.

²⁴ V(HD) to S/S, 23 April 1920, CP12.

²⁵ V(HD) to S/S, 6 Aug. 1920, CP13.

²⁶ V(HD) to S/S, 23 & 30 April, 7 May, & also 26 June 1920, CP12.

²⁷ V(HD) to S/S, 11 June 1920, CP12.

exceptional equanimity of temper at a time when no efforts have been spared to fan religious passion'.²⁸ In June the Home Department noted that the non-cooperators were becoming less extreme - the campaign was to be limited and voluntary; private servants and government employees were not to be coerced. The Home Department concluded that the Khilafat agitation did not seem to contain 'much real feeling' any more.²⁹ The Gandhian challenge was not being mounted sufficiently quickly to shock the Government into a change of policy.

There remained, as also in the past, enough danger to ensure repression was kept in reserve. Police reports remained 'alarming', and the Government knew that incendiary issues were before the public. Apart from the peace terms, the Hunter Committee Report on the 1919 disturbances prevented much improvement in the Indian temper - especially in view of the European reactions. Chelmsford pointed to Parliamentary debates and a provocative stand by the European Association; he recorded without satisfaction a 'similar and particularly fatuous resolution' by the Bihar Planters.³⁰ The Home Department were aware that the mid-year calm could be a lull before the storm, that the agitators, rather than trying to sustain indefinitely a high pitch of excitement, could be biding their time - Shaukat Ali was alleged to have 'roundly abused' local leaders in Delhi for 'promature activities'.³¹ It was also possible to interpret any retreat from extremism, indeed the whole of Gandhi's contribution, as a temporary ploy by fanatics, calculated to arrest the defection of the moderates and widen the base of the movement. There were signs that the extremists were trying to consolidate their position. Gandhi had been elected President of the Home Rule League, and it was recognised that it might be dangerous if he succeeded in converting the League to his programme. The Home Department watched such organisational developments with particular attention.³² Optimism was tempered by nervous surveillance.³³

²⁸ V to S/S, 19 May 1920, CP12.

²⁹ V(HD) to S/S, 11 & 19 June 1920, CP12. For later programmes see V(HD) to S/S, 3 Sept. 1920, CP13.

³⁰ V to S/S, 17 & (HD) 11 June 1920, CP12, & also 7 Dec. 1920, CP13.

³¹ V(HD) to S/S, 14 & 20 May 1920, CP13.

³² V(HD) to S/S, 7 May 1920, CP13.

³³ For a summary of Home Department policy see V(HD) to S/S, 28 May 1920, CP12.

The Government made ready to act should a new crisis develop. Local governments were instructed to compile lists of principal agitators against whom action might be taken. Some minor figures were prosecuted.³⁴ The Army Department had become 'greatly exercised' over attempts to interfere with soldiers and recruits; therefore the Government recommended also the prosecution, where possible, of anyone who interfered with the army.³⁵ But when Montagu suggested that action be taken against persons using seditious language, the Home Department were unwilling to comply: it might have meant attacking people of importance.³⁶ They were prepared to use even the ordinary law only against minor figures for whom, unlike national leaders, the notoriety of martyrdom was not sufficient to compensate for its discomfort.

There were several disputes with local governments in the mid-1920s. Madras wanted to extern the Khilafat leaders, notably Gandhi and Shaukat Ali; the central Government repeatedly refused to agree, noting that persecution was just what Gandhi was inviting, and insisting that there were all-India implications on which they must decide. It was obvious, they felt, that Gandhi would defy any such order, and thereby force them to arrest him.³⁷ The Panjab Government wanted to proclaim the Lahore area under the Seditious Meetings Act; the Government of India refused this too. The local authorities insisted that violent speeches were becoming worse and worse, and that the situation was dangerous - 15,000 railway workers had gone on strike, and there was unrest among Muslims and Sikhs. In fact, violent agitation was confined to a small section, the communities were divided internally, and there was only conjecture about political involvement in the railway strike. The central Government could not understand why offenders had not been prosecuted under the ordinary law, but gave as their categorical opinion, 'that it is desirable to avoid the application of repressive measures to the present political situation, if this can

³⁴ Chelmsford to Maffey, 9 Sept. 1920, CP16.

³⁵ V to S/S, 17 June 1920, CP12. The army did not have much need for alarm; combatants numbering 15,500 and a total of 20,000 were recruited in 1913-1914, and 61,500 and 157,000 in 1919-1920: see Chelmsford to Montagu, 13 Oct. 1920. Chelmsford suspected military judgments in political matters; see Chelmsford to Montagu, 23 Nov. 1920, CP6.

³⁶ V(HD) to S/S, 25 April, CP2, & Chelmsford to Maffey, 9 Aug. 1920, CP16.

³⁷ H.Poll. 29-33 & 172-177, May 1918, & 128, Aug., & 273, Nov. 1920.

possibly be helped, till it has been seen whether the non-cooperation movement ...is going to obtain substantial support or prove a failure'. They had no wish to show their hand by a fresh notification under the Seditious Meetings Act. They forbade the taking of any action while Gandhi and Shaukat Ali were visiting Lahore. They wanted to be informed well in advance if the local government proposed to act under existing sanction after the leaders had left. Chelmsford still maintained that policy should not necessarily be concerted, that local governments should be allowed latitude; but he insisted also that all-India considerations must be allowed to influence local action. In this case, the Government were 'most anxious to avoid precipitating disorder'; they wanted some weapons in reserve.³⁸

The Government of Bombay also met with a refusal when they requested permission to use the Defence of India Act to take sharp action against Mullahs and others who were spreading false rumours in Sind: the Government of India ordered proceedings to be taken under the ordinary law if possible. On this occasion, however, the local Governor, Lloyd, agreed; he wrote to Austen Chamberlain: 'All my officials wanted me to prosecute right and left from the beginning, but I would not do so I determined to ... be patient till I got a good opportunity'. Later a prominent religious leader, Pir Mahbub Shah, was prosecuted, despite his going on hunger strike, and then released in a gesture of 'benign contempt'.³⁹

Also in mid-1920, some Muslims took their protest further and tried to emigrate from India. This, the Hijrat movement, was a specifically Muslim problem, though discouraged by many Muslim leaders; it was hardly comprehensible to their Hindu allies. The movement was perfectly legal, but there were clearly dangers in any large movement of people towards the Afghan frontier, with prospects of excitement at the starting-points in Sind, the Central Provinces and elsewhere, en route in the Panjab or Baluchistan, and at the final departure point, Peshawar. The Government, therefore, tried to discourage the pilgrim-emigrants (or muhajarin). In July a special train had been allowed to carry 750 muhajarin from Sind to Peshawar; this provision was at first

³⁸ H.Poll. 71 & 72, Aug. 1920; V to S/S, 17 July 1920, CP13. Earlier MacLagan's government had followed Chelmsford's policy and refrained from prosecuting for violent speeches at the Amritsar Congress; see MacLagan to Chelmsford, 3 Jan. 1920, CP24.

³⁹ See Lloyd to Chamberlain, 17 Sept., ACPL18/1/13, & to Montagu, 23 July, 27 Aug. & 17 Sept. 1920, MP25; V(HD) to S/S, 9 & 16 Aug., CP13, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 11 & 19 Aug. 1920, CP6.

temporarily and then permanently removed following protests from the Panjab, Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province - the desire to conciliate had to give way before the need of maintaining order. The Foreign and Political Department suggested that a deputation from the frontier should be sent to Mecca to reassure Muslims (this was vetoed in London); that only restricted numbers should be allowed to leave for Afghanistan, to give time for propaganda among the remainder; that postal censorship should be imposed to isolate the Northwest Frontier from the Panjab and thus contain the movement. Earlier the Department had urged prompt legal proceedings against the most violent agitators. One leader had already been interned and another excluded from the province; and the Chief Commissioner, Sir Hamilton Grant, was ready to deal 'relentlessly' with any outbreak of disorder. He combined this policy with one of explanation, making a speech himself in Peshawar, and sending a party of 'influential Khans and Maulvis' to one troubled district to 'persuade people of their folly'.⁴⁰

Discouragement and local control kept the exodus within bounds. The Afghan welcome cooled; Gandhi's non-cooperation movement provided an alternative protest within India; and abruptly the hijrat collapsed. Chelmsford stressed that it had been best to trust to local officers to persuade people out of their folly, and that it had been important not to interfere with a largely religious movement, even when it was believed to be politically inspired. He authorised Grant to make a public appeal for funds to help the muhajarin who were returning to India - many of them had sold their lands and possessions and had nothing to return to.⁴¹ The Viceroy had rebuked Grant for sending in inadequate reports,⁴² but there had been no practical divergence in policy. The hijrat movement was treated with the familiar mixture of conciliation, propaganda and control.

Chelmsford did dispute with Grant, however, the speech which the Chief Commissioner had made on the Khilafat problem and which he wished to publish. Publication meant all-India circulation; and Chelmsford's objections thus provide a useful yardstick to his priorities in mid-1920. The Viceroy wanted certain changes in the text

⁴⁰ F&PD to CC/Northwest Frontier Province, 6 Aug., CC to PSV, 10, 24, 28 & 30 Aug., Grant to Chelmsford, 7 Aug. & 2 Sept. 1920, CP25; CC to V, 7 May 1920, CP24; H.Poll. 195-204, Aug. 1920.

⁴¹ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 11, 19 & 25 Aug. 1920, CP6.

⁴² Chelmsford to Grant, 12 Aug. 1920, CP25.

as it was telegraphed to him. Grant had apparently referred to Turkish 'downfall' and 'punishment'; Chelmsford preferred the words 'misfortunes' and 'reparation'. Grant claimed he avoided religious issues because he did not understand them; Chelmsford wanted him to state that it would be 'unwise' for him to discuss religion. Grant admitted to having discouraged 'political meetings'; Chelmsford insisted that he must have discouraged 'meetings likely to promote unrest'. Thus Chelmsford demonstrated the principles of his policy - that the government should avoid expressions likely to cause offence, be neutral on religious matters, and not interfere with legitimate political activity. He also showed his care for the Muslim position: Grant had suggested that 'perhaps' a just Turkish state would rise again; Chelmsford, preferring to identify the government as far as possible with Muslim aspirations, would have had him 'hope' for this rebirth. All these changes were to the telegraphed text, and were in fact the result of misunderstanding. Equally significant, however, was Chelmsford's final objection. He insisted, even against the full text of the speech, that Grant would have to omit a sentence which claimed that Hindus were not sincere in their support of the Khilafat movement. Chelmsford believed this would provoke the charge, which he was determined to avoid, that the government was trying to divide and rule. Grant declined to make this omission, arguing that it would be noticed; Chelmsford therefore refused to allow publication.⁴³ In practice, although there was concern at the collusion between Hindu and Muslim politicians, there was no serious attempt to separate the two by the adoption of different policies.⁴⁴

The same principles had been confirmed for the non-cooperation campaign. The tactical approach seemed to have been accepted as a dictat and unhesitatingly applied. In July Chelmsford had set out the conditions under which he would abandon non-interference. His Government would allow Gandhi 'full rope', he informed the Secretary of State, 'unless and until collision is precipitated by action of non-cooperators, or if it becomes clear that [the] movement is likely to

⁴³ CC/Northwest Frontier Province to V, 7 May, & PSV to CC, 8 & 10 May 1920, CP24. (The Secretary was reporting Chelmsford's wishes.)

⁴⁴ See above, note 1; and also Kenneth W. Jones, 'Communalism in the Punjab. The Arya Samaj Contribution', Journal of Asian Studies XXVIII, 1 (Nov. 1968) - as this article shows, there could have been many causes for the worsening Hindu-Muslim relations after the brief co-operation under Gandhi; it is arguable that as it became obvious that the British intended to leave, rivalry between the possible heirs to power and fears about future governments were unavoidable.

prove an unexpected success'.⁴⁵ These conditions had not been met.

But in October Chelmsford admitted that non-cooperation had caught on more than expected. While the Government looked on, Gandhi had achieved a tremendous coup. He had originally adopted the Khilafat campaign and converted it to satyagraha. Then he had fused the religious issue with a national and racial one by stressing the enormities of the British response to the Hunter Report. To many, especially young Hindus, some of whom had not been very active in politics but were now aroused, Gandhi seemed to present the only sane and positive response to these indignities.⁴⁶ Thus Gandhi tightened his hold on the Congress until it endorsed and identified itself with both the Muslim grievance and the Gandhian method. The Government had predicted that this would not happen.

The Special Calcutta Session was a personal triumph for Gandhi. Congress emerged committed to a first stage which conformed almost exactly with Gandhi's programme. The details of the campaign were controversial and there were differences of opinion. It had taken a long debate in full session before Gandhi was able to have his way; and earlier the Subjects Committee had argued for several hours and proved unable to reach a decision - it was divided three ways between Gandhi's supporters (such as Shaukat Ali, Yakub Hasan, and Chakravarti), his partial supporters (Malaviya, Das and Pal), and his opponents (Mrs Besant, Jinnah and Dwarkadas Jammadas). Moreover, in the Government's view the result in full session had been achieved by a 'juggle' - that is, delegates had been able to vote only for satyagraha in some form (Gandhi's motion or the Das amendment excluding the Councils from the boycott), and about half had abstained.⁴⁷ However, with the decision passed, many of the doubters fell into line. By 26 September forty-five Council members or candidates had withdrawn, mainly, the Government believed, out of loyalty to the Congress. C.R. Das and the Bengalis he

⁴⁵ V to S/S, 17 July 1920, CP13.

⁴⁶ See V to S/S, 24 Oct. 1920, CP13. For the best example of this reaction to Gandhi, see Michael Brecher, Nehru A Political Biography London 1959, 58-83 (& especially at p.64 the quotation from Nehru's autobiography, Toward Freedom: his reaction to Gandhi's satyagraha society 'was one of tremendous relief. Here at last was a way out of the tangle, a method of action which was straight and open and possibly effective'.)

⁴⁷ V(HD) to S/S, 10, 18 & 26 Sept. 1920, CP13; Ronaldshay to Montagu, 15 & 22 Sept. 1920, MP31.

had led in opposition to the boycott were among those who conformed.⁴⁸ It had been agreed informally at Calcutta that those who could not abide by the majority decision should leave the Congress. This is, therefore, the measure of Gandhi's victory, but also of the new political maturity of the Congress. With this the movement became more disciplined and dangerous. Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Patel were appointed to frame instructions for the campaign. Gandhi's position was unassailable.

In October the victory was made permanent and institutionalised. The All-India Congress Committee considered and adopted instructions for satyagraha; they made some alterations in the draft, mainly to strengthen its effect. A further sub-committee, comprising Gandhi, Kelkar, Patel, and Rangaswami Aiyangar, proposed that Congress delegates (one for every lakh of population) should be returned on a district basis; that the All-India Congress Committee should be reconstituted and reduced to more business-like proportions (with one hundred members); and that the expression 'constitutional means' in the aims of the Congress, Article One of the Constitution, should be amended to read 'peaceful and legitimate means'. The Subjects Committee, which had provided such a forum for disagreement at Calcutta, was to be abolished; every town was to have its own committee to encourage the movement.⁴⁹

These changes required ratification at the next Congress session, due in January at Nagpur. In the interim Gandhi sought to mobilise local Congress committees and Home Rule Leagues to enforce the Calcutta programme. His campaign ensured that there would be only moderates in the new Councils, a situation which, as Chelmsford noted, was to be deplored.⁵⁰ Gandhi tried to enforce the boycott of the elections as well. Montagu considered this the one area in which the Congress had chosen its ground wisely: the poll was bound to be small and Congress could claim the credit for it.⁵¹ The campaign also began

⁴⁸ Ronaldshay was a little surprised at the number of withdrawals; see Ronaldshay to Montagu, 22 Aug. 1920, MP31. The reaction of B.C. Pal, running against the trend, is discussed in H. & U. Mukherjee, Bipin Chandra Pal and India's Struggle for Swaraj, Calcutta 1958, 113-121.

⁴⁹ See V(HD) to S/S, 9 & 26 Aug. & 30 Oct. 1920, CP13; & D.C. Tendulkar, Mahatma Vol.II (1920-1929), Bombay 1951, 18-19.

⁵⁰ V(HD) to S/S, 16 Oct. 1920, CP13.

⁵¹ Montagu to Ronaldshay, 9 Nov. 1920, MP27.

to have some success among students. After a visit by Gandhi and the Ali brothers, the students at the new Aligarh University demanded the renunciation of government grants. The Principal banned outsiders from addressing the students, and the Syndicate called on parents to control their sons. Two hundred parents wrote to disapprove of Gandhi's interference, and another seventy called their boys home.⁵² Congress also tried to involve students and young men by adopting the Servants of India idea of Volunteers - Congress apparently intended them not for social work but as substitutes for the police. The Government thought this development potentially dangerous, and asked local governments to consider whether they had the powers to deal with the Volunteers if they should begin to drill with arms.⁵³

The Government were not convinced that non-interference would have to be abandoned, but their uneasiness was increasing. Anxieties crystallised when Gandhi made a 'bad speech' which left him open to prosecution. He told a Lucknow audience of 40 to 50,000 that Indians were slaves, that the Government was devilish, and that to cooperate was sinful. The Viceroy considered that in this speech and in his manipulation of the Home Rule League and the Congress, Gandhi had virtually abandoned any pretence of aiming at self-government within the Empire. He concluded that Gandhi was giving way to wilder councils, either because he was conscious of failure or because he was surrendering to his Muslim colleagues. The question of arresting Gandhi was considered in Executive Council on 19 October.

The objections were that an arrest would probably lead to disorder, consolidate the extremists, weaken the moderates, and jeopardise the elections. There might even be industrial trouble. The arguments for prosecution were that inaction might lead to a worse situation, and that moderates might be discouraged through an absence of protection. Chelmsford remained convinced that repression would not do, and there was no change in policy. Lloyd had reported him 'quite resolute on the matter' before the Lucknow speech.⁵⁴ The Viceroy was committed to non-interference not only in general but also in its application to the satyagraha campaign. He was not ready to admit

⁵² V(HD) to S/S, 24 Oct. 1920, CP13.

⁵³ Ibid.; & see below, note 58.

⁵⁴ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Oct. 1920, CP6; V to S/S, & ibid. (HD), 24 Oct. 1920, CP13; Lloyd to Montagu, 15 Oct. 1920, MP25.

failure or error. He rehearsed all the arguments against any arrest, and emphasised particularly that his policy enjoyed moderate support, which repression would squander, and that interference was the last weapon - there would be nothing should it fail. The Government, he noted, had kept their tempers 'despite the greatest provocation', and should continue to do so unless 'actually driven into repressive action'. The time to act might come after the elections when moderate opinion might be persuaded to acquiesce - he hoped he might secure the partnership of the new Councils. Chelmsford believed time was on their side. He told Montagu: 'Each day of patience, each day nearer the establishment of the new Councils, is a day gained'. All local governments except Burma agreed with the decision not to prosecute.⁵⁵ Rupert Gwynne continued a campaign in Parliament to have Gandhi arrested; Montagu promised not to interfere, but he reported each renewed attack. Chelmsford's defence was simple: so far his policy had maintained order.⁵⁶

Thus non-interference was reaffirmed. But at the same time the increased alarm showed itself in some tougher measures. The Panjab Government was permitted, at the end of October, to proclaim the districts of Lahore, Amritsar and Sheikhpura under the Seditious Meetings Act. At first religious meetings and meetings in the municipalities of Lahore and Amritsar were excepted from the restriction, but early in November these exemptions were cancelled and the Act was applied to the whole Province. These steps were directed mainly against the Sikhs. Before the Lucknow speech, the Home Department had been content to direct district officers to discuss political matters with leaders, take no action that would alienate sympathy, reason with extremists, and encourage any reasonable politicians. Now, instead, the Seditious Meetings Act was back in force.⁵⁷ At the same time local governments in general were reminded to act against anyone who preached violence.

⁵⁵ V to S/S, 24 Oct. 1920, CP13; Chelmsford to Reed, 28 Nov., CP25, to Montagu, 2 & 23 Nov., CP6, & also to Maffey, 9 Nov. 1920, CP16.

⁵⁶ S/S to V, 19 Nov., V to S/S, 23 Nov., & (HD) 24 Nov. 1920, CP13.

⁵⁷ V(HD) to S/S, 16 & 30 Oct. & 12 Nov. 1920, CP13.

There were sixteen such cases by 23 November, always with sobering effect.⁵⁸

Once again the Government were able to point to encouraging signs. Gandhi was now advocating that the procreation of children should be given up throughout India - reinforcing Chelmsford's belief that Gandhian 'folly' could be left to destroy itself.⁵⁹ Gandhi's success with students had not earned him much goodwill among parents, and the Home Department hoped his 'meddling' would do much to discredit his campaign. They also took heart from suspicions among some Muslims at the way in which their colleges and not those of the Hindus were being singled out for Gandhi's attention.⁶⁰ Non-cooperation was still supposed not to be making much progress. Even in the elections there were already 182 candidates for 55 seats. In Bengal and the Central Provinces there were signs of disagreements and possible splits among the extremists; in Bombay Jinnah and nineteen others had resigned from the Home Rule League when a meeting attended by 61 out of 6000 members approved a constitutional change calling for 'complete' swaraj.⁶¹

But Gandhi showed no sign of disappearing, and in early November the Government began to consider action on several fronts. They wondered if they should institute prosecutions for all definite breaches of the law - there were doubts about the wisdom over a long period of the tactical use of penal laws: to some it seemed cynical and ill-advised to prosecute only when expedient, not whenever the law was broken; and others agreed with Willingdon who declared that Gandhi and Muhammad Ali had been allowed to say 'such scandalous things' that

⁵⁸ V to S/S, 23 Nov. 1920, CP13. At this time action was taken against the Volunteers in Delhi. They had prevented the burial of a prominent Muslim who had refused to renounce his titles before his death; Chelmsford decided that this would be a good moment to act - when public opinion would be with the Government - and accordingly had the leaders arrested and their movement declared unlawful. See Chelmsford to Montagu, 23 Nov. 1920, CP6. See also V(HD) to S/S, 13 Dec. 1920, CP13.

⁵⁹ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 27 Sept. CP6, & to Maffey, 9 Sept. 1920, CP16.

⁶⁰ V to S/S, 24 Oct. CP13. Perhaps to encourage this, Chelmsford strongly urged Ronaldshay to hurry with the opening of Dacca University (to allay suspicion that Calcutta Hindus were causing a delay); see Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 19 May & 9 June 1920, CP24.

⁶¹ V(HD) to S/S, 12 Nov. 1920, CP13.

he could not think they could say anything worse that would justify prosecution in future.⁶² The Government decided that a distinction must continue to be made between prosecution of local leaders for violent or seditious speeches, and prosecution of non-cooperators on the ground that the movement as a whole was illegal. The latter course was deprecated, and, although in theory national leaders might have been prosecuted for their speeches, no such prosecutions were made.⁶³ The Government were also considering action against persons who sent objectionable telegraph or postal messages, and the withholding of government advertisements from papers which advocated satyagraha.⁶⁴ Such measures were not designed to counter disorders or acts of non-cooperation; they were intended to hinder the 'real danger', as Chelmsford described it, from the 'constant vilification of the Government'.⁶⁵

Finally, the Government decided to issue a resolution explaining their policy of non-interference and appealing for a strong effort to stop further propaganda among students and the masses.⁶⁶ With this public announcement, the policy of non-interference would seem to have received the accolade. But such proclamations always implied the threat of reprisals if the aims were not achieved; and this resolution of November 1920, in many ways the most confident and explicit assertion of Chelmsford's method, represented in other ways a hardening in attitudes as a result of anxiety. In July Chelmsford had hoped there would be no need for action. In October he admitted that action might be taken after the elections. Thus the resolution offered the public an unspoken choice between helping the policy of non-interference and facing the consequences of that policy's failure. The resolution was an attempt to support non-interference; but it was possible that it would become the first salvo in a campaign to secure moderate support for the suppression of satyagraha.

For the remainder of 1920 the Government, continued to interpret the situation in terms which suggested that non-interference

62 Willington to Montagu, 15 Nov. 1920, MF20.

63 V(HD) to S/S, 29 Nov. 1920, CP13.

64 V(HD) to S/S, 8 Nov. 1920, CP13.

65 V to S/S, 24 Oct. 1920, CP13.

66 V(HD) to S/S, 8 Nov. 1920, CP13; H.Poll. 273, Nov. 1920 (HD resolution, 6 Nov. 1920).

was still effective. From Aligarh Gandhi had moved on to Amritsar and Lahore. He created a temporary excitement among students, and, although 350 students at Islamia College, Lahore, signed a protest against non-cooperation, the College had to be closed. At the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College, Lahore, only three students out of more than a thousand withdrew; but Khalsa College, Amritsar, also had to be closed. Its managing committee decided to ask for withdrawal of government control in the management of local schools, and the local government was prepared to grant this in some measure. The Anjuman-Himayat-ul-Islam, the controlling body of the Islamia College, voted overwhelmingly to remain affiliated to Panjab University. Dr. Kitchlew took possession of some of the buildings, but was ordered to leave. By mid-November the college had reopened, and by December it was back to normal. Some modifications in the constitution of the Governing Body were planned. Gandhi had gone on to Allahabad where he addressed some two thousand students, thirty or forty of whom signed their adherence to non-cooperation.⁶⁷

At Aligarh, the Trustees had voted against non cooperation, and in response Muhammad Ali with about one hundred students occupied the college grounds. The College Secretary called upon him to leave, and next day appealed for help to the District Magistrate and the police. After this show of force, Muhammad Ali was persuaded to withdraw peacefully. He addressed the students and told them to leave. The University Act was brought into force, with the Raja of Mahmudabad as Chancellor, and in December the University opened. A National College had been started in Aligarh, but at the end of November, with two bungalows and one hundred students, it had achieved one lecture.⁶⁸ Muhammad Ali went on to Benares, where classes continued as usual - there was no disruption even when Gandhi added his weight.⁶⁹ There had been more fertile ground in Calcutta. Trouble had occurred in the Madrassa, and the Arabic Department had been closed sine die. But the Government wrote to the parents, denying any wish to force their sons to attend, and asking for their wishes in the matter. The majority of students returned. The Madrassa reopened, although attendance in the Arabic Department remained below normal. A National Madrassa was ostensibly offering tuition in the Zachariah Mosque - in December no tuition was

⁶⁷ V(ED) to S/S, 10 Dec., & (HD) 30 Oct. 1920, CF13.

⁶⁸ V(ED) to S/S, 1 & 4 Nov. & 10 Dec., & (HD) 27 Nov. 1920, CP13.

⁶⁹ V(ED) to S/S, 20 Nov. 1920, CF13.

being given.⁷⁰

Elsewhere there was little serious trouble. About sixty students went on strike in the Islamia College, Peshawar; half a dozen left Pachiyappa's College in Madras. In Bombay a national college was opened at Ahmedabad with some seventy students; there were some renunciations of the government connection, and scattered withdrawals of staff and students - the most significant being two assistant professors and thirty-three students from Gujarat College.⁷¹ In Delhi there was minor trouble at the Anglo-Arabic School, and the Principal of Ramjas College resigned, declaring himself for non-cooperation.⁷² The campaign had resulted in minor dislocation, but not many students had been willing, in the Leader's phrase, to follow Gandhi 'into the wilderness'.⁷³ The temporary success bore out Chelmsford's belief, shared by Montagu, that education was not a very likely area for lasting non-cooperation.⁷⁴

The elections were more seriously interrupted, but in few cases totally. There had been very few seats - none for the Government of India - with no candidates, though a number had only one. In all provinces except the Central Provinces a majority of seats were contested.⁷⁵ In Bengal, for example, there were 327 candidates for 113 seats in the Provincial Council, with no contest in nineteen out of ninety-four constituencies, and no seat without a candidate. In neighbouring Bihar and Orissa, 184 candidates sought 68 seats, two seats having no candidates.⁷⁶ In contested seats, polling varied. It was poor in some parts of Bengal and Madras, in the latter case being hampered by floods. In Bombay the poll was only 10-15%; in Lucknow, on the other hand, it was 60%, and in some urban areas in Madras it was

⁷⁰ V(HD) to S/S, 4, 8 & 11 Nov. 1920, CP13; Ronaldshay to Montagu, 18 Nov. 1920, MP31.

⁷¹ V(ED) to S/S, 20 Nov. 1920, CP13.

⁷² V(ED) to S/S, 4 Nov. 1920, CP13.

⁷³ V(HD) to S/S, 5 Dec. 1920, CP13.

⁷⁴ See, for example, V to S/S, 23 Nov., CP13, & Montagu to Ronaldshay, 18 Nov. & 8 Dec. 1920, MP27.

⁷⁵ V to S/S, 5 & 17 Jan. 1921, CP14, & (RC) 31 Dec. 1920, CP13.

⁷⁶ V(HD) to S/S, 23 Nov. & 13 & 22 Dec. 1920, CP13.

higher still. In the Panjab an average number voted, but prosecutions were necessary over intimidation of voters and a near riot in Lahore.⁷⁷ About a dozen 'men of straw' - candidates whose obvious unsuitability was intended to discredit the elections - were returned in the Central Provinces, Bengal and Delhi (where intimidation was alleged to have ruined the election). Another five such candidates were returned to the Imperial Legislative Assembly. But the Government had expected low polls, with a newly and greatly widened franchise; and in general they thought reasonably good Councils had been returned.⁷⁸

In November Chelmsford had concluded that, with schools, lawyers, elections, and surrender of titles, they were 'winning all down the line'.⁷⁹ He was able to continue in this belief to the end of the year. In late December there was a lull in agitation. The non-cooperators were preparing for the Nagpur Congress. Chelmsford refused a suggestion that he should issue a conciliatory statement. He did not believe this would have a good effect on the extremists, who would only find objections in the most innocent words.⁸⁰ Gandhi had embarked on a fund-raising tour as a prelude to Nagpur. Large numbers attended his meetings, but with mixed results. In Arrah his visit stimulated army recruiting. Bengal reported that Gandhi was venerated, but his programme regarded with the tolerance extended to children's games. The Home Department did not know whether enough subscriptions had been raised even to pay for the tour.⁸¹

The main issues before the Nagpur Congress were the proposal to change the aims of Congress, and the conduct and progress of satyagraha. The 22,000 delegates were divided between those who opposed any change in the aims, and those who wished to revolutionise them and openly seek a republic. Gandhi stood between, and secured a compromise, carrying his own resolution by a huge majority. He explained that the new aim of Congress, 'swaraj', could be with or

⁷⁷ Lloyd to Montagu, 19 Nov. & 3 Dec., MP25, & Ronaldshay to Montagu, 16 Dec. 1920, MP31.

⁷⁸ Gandhi explicitly refuted this view in Young India 24 Nov. 1920; see The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi XIX (Nov. 1920-April 1921), Ahmedabad 1966, 21, & also 183.

⁷⁹ V to S/S, 23 Nov. 1920, CP13; see also Chelmsford to Montagu, 21 Dec. 1920, CP6.

⁸⁰ See V(HD) to S/S, 5-7 & 12 Jan. 1921, CP14; Chelmsford to Montagu, 28 Dec. 1920, CP6; Lloyd to Montagu, 3 Dec. 1920, MP25.

⁸¹ V(HD) to S/S, 29 Dec. 1920, CP13.

without the British connection as circumstances required. The Subjects Committee was divided on how to secure swaraj; but unity was preserved there through the resolution of C.R. Das: non-violent non-cooperation was to be put into effect as the Congress or the All-India Congress Committee decided. In the meantime parents were to try to withdraw children under sixteen and establish national schools; students were to devote themselves to satyagraha if their consciences so demanded; trustees, managers and teachers were to help to nationalise their schools. Lawyers were to make greater efforts to suspend practice, and merchants were gradually to boycott foreign trade. Village and provincial organisations were to further the campaign, and a band of national workers was to raise funds.⁸² The position of Das was a notable success for Gandhi. Das had reportedly gone to Nagpur to oppose educational non-cooperation; he was apparently won over. He decided to give up legal practice and devote himself to satyagraha. On his return to Bengal the majority of students left their classes.⁸³ All opposition had been nullified by Nagpur; there was no prospect of a split in either direction. The nationalists were ready for another period of intensive agitation. The pre-Congress lull had ended.

The Home Department, however, decided that the adherence to Gandhi's programme was little more than a saving of face. The Council elections were no longer an issue: Congress had declared the representatives unrepresentative and called on them to resign, but it was little more than a matter of form. The boycott of schools and the withdrawal from the courts had not had permanent success in the past; they seemed no less impractical now. The Government concluded that, whatever the appearance at Nagpur, the Congress leaders had realised the futility of their campaign. The Government expected future agitation on a new front. They predicted that the main attention would turn to propaganda among the masses, particularly tenantry and labour.⁸⁴

The Government thought the rural situation worst in the United Provinces. In early January agrarian unrest broke out near Rai Barcli.

⁸² See V(HD) to S/S, 5-7 & 15 Jan. 1921, CP14; & The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi XIX (Nov. 1920-April 1921), Ahmedabad 1966, 158-168, 182-200, 206-209 & 217-220.

⁸³ Ronaldshay to Montagu, 20 Jan. 1921, MP32.

⁸⁴ V(HD) to S/S, 15 Jan. 1921, CP14. This was not a new apprehension: Chelmsford had expected increasing political involvement after strikes in Madras and Bombay; see Chelmsford to Lloyd, 16 Jan. 1919, CP22.

Villagers destroyed the taluqdars' personal crops, and on two occasions, at a total cost of nine lives, the police opened fire when faced by large mobs. Non-cooperators were allegedly involved. But the villagers had genuine grievances, which the Commissioners of Lucknow and Fyzabad were ordered to investigate. The local government admitted that the Oudh Tenancy Act needed amendment, and, hoping to secure concessions from the taluqdars, they appointed a special officer to undertake the revision. By 24 February the trouble had subsided. A number of agitators had been arrested.⁸⁵ The Province was next disturbed by a strike in the railway workshops. There were attempts to stop a mail train, but the police kept the situation under control. The strike continued into late February, although at that time nearly all the running and office staff had returned to work.⁸⁶ Economic reasons also caused restiveness among schoolmasters, patwaris, and chaukidars.⁸⁷

In Bengal, non-cooperators were believed to be instrumental in a strike of taxi-drivers. There were no economic grievances; the objections were to government control. Elaborate preparations were discerned, and the strikers refused to discuss matters with the authorities. The intention, the Bengal Government reported, was to paralyse Calcutta during the visit by the Duke of Connaught. The situation was serious owing to intimidation by upcountry Sikhs and Muslims. On 21 January, the local government considered there was strong evidence that the strike was out of control. Orders were issued suspending the licences of those who continued to strike, and the Government of India were asked to approve the deportation of non-Bengalis under the Defence of India Rules. The Government of India refused to agree to wholesale deportations, and objected to the use of a wartime measure long after the war. But they authorised the use of the Act, if absolutely necessary, to deport a limited number of up-country drivers to their homes. The cancellation of licenses had some effect, and the strike was over on 24 January.⁸⁸ It was followed two days later by a strike of tramway employees. This was still unsettled in late February. Anglo-Indian drivers were being given police pro-

⁸⁵ V(HD) to S/S, 13 & 23 Jan. & 24 Feb. 1921, CP14.

⁸⁶ V(HD) to S/S, 17 & 24 Feb. 1921, CP14.

⁸⁷ See also the handling of a railway strike in the Jamalpur workshops; H.Poll. 366-372, Feb. 1920..

⁸⁸ V(HD) to S/S, 20, 21 & 23 Jan. & 8 Feb. 1921, CP14; Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 21 Jan. 1921, CP26.

tection; one shooting incident had resulted in a magisterial enquiry.⁸⁹

Over the same period, at Muzaffarpur in Bihar, there was a serious outbreak of hat looting. It was believed to be committed or inspired by sympathisers with the non-cooperation movement. Local zamindars were encouraged to organise peons to protect the shopkeepers from terrorisation, and the Commissioner was asked to prosecute where possible. Planters were warned of the need for restraint. This outbreak was short-lived.⁹⁰ In January there had also occurred in Bihar an incident in which a cooly was strick by a European for stealing sugar-cane. He claimed to be seriously hurt, although the hospital could find nothing wrong with him; his fellow-workers became excited and attacked the Superintending Engineer and two other Europeans. Twenty-five armed police were called in, and work was suspended. The Government laboriously reported this trivial occurrence to the Secretary of State - demonstrating perhaps an excessive sensitivity to industrial unrest.⁹¹

Elsewhere the Government found other alarming omens. In the Central Provinces the bulk of the people in towns and larger villages were found to be familiar with the idea of non-cooperation.⁹² In the Panjab a propagandist committee had been formed under Lajpat Rai, and was spreading its ideas among the rural classes. The peasantry was already discontented; one officer identified the problems as the compulsory disbanding of soldiers and their reluctant return to their villages, the corruption of officials, and promises made or imagined during the war. The central Government thought the situation potentially serious. Any problem in the Panjab was also complicated by the unrest among the Sikhs. The Sikh League had adopted non-cooperation, and a movement to contest control of the temples had been gaining momentum.⁹³

⁸⁹ V(HD) to S/S, 24 Feb. 1921, CP14.

⁹⁰ V(HD) to S/S, 21 Jan. & 8 Feb. 1921, CP14.

⁹¹ V(HD) to S/S, 29 Jan. 1921, CP14.

⁹² V(HD) to S/S, 23 Jan. 1921, CP14; Sly to Chelmsford, 14 Jan. 1921, CP26. But there was also an opposite reaction; see Peter D. Reeves, 'The Politics of Order', Journal of Asian Studies XXV (Feb. 1966), 261-264, for an account of anti-non-cooperation in the Central Provinces.

⁹³ V(HD) to S/S, 8 & 17 Feb. 1921, CP14. There were two parties of Sikhs, the reformers (with an extremist branch, the Akali party) and the old Sikhs (the Sanatan party). The latter were in possession of virtually all shrines, whose Mahants (or guardians) regarded themselves as hereditary tenants enjoying the income in return for performance of religious duties. The reformers wanted common ownership of the shrines

In Madras there had been a long mill strike, in which the men would not abate their demands, and the management would not recognise the Union. Also, in Malabar, a campaign for tenancy reform was causing concern.⁹⁴ In Bombay some districts predicted difficulty in collecting land revenue - although it was thought possible that this was no more than the usual attempt to secure remissions for a partial crop failure.⁹⁵ Two other signs were not encouraging. A large anti-cow-killing conference had been held at Kanwal in the Panjab, and the temperance movement was spreading in Bihar and Orissa. Both of these held the prospect of disorder. In February, the Bhagalpur Division in Bihar was disturbed by intimidation and picketing of liquor shops; in March similar trouble erupted in the Central Provinces - it began with attacks on liquor shops in Nagpur leading to more than thirty arrests, and ended with six deaths after angry mobs had rescued the prisoners and stoned the police.⁹⁶

It was tempting to attribute all the unrest to non-cooperators. Some nationalist leaders encouraged this tendency. Chotani, the president of the Central Khilafat Committee, sought to adapt the movement to its more active role: he issued a manifesto on the need for executive organisation in the Congress and the Muslim League; he advocated standing committees to control finance, national education, national industries, and propaganda.⁹⁷ In Bengal, B. Chakravarti, C.R. Das, Abdul Kalam Azad and two others issued a village organisation scheme pending further action by the Provincial Congress. It included the establishment of primary schools, village banks and arbitration courts, the boycott of foreign goods, and attempts to reduce the area of jute

and use of the revenues for the benefit of the community. After a meeting of the Sikh League (at which Gandhi was present) in October 1920, the reformers had begun to take possession of the shrines. There were riots at Tam Taran shrine, and a terrible massacre at the Nankana near Lahore. The local government decided to introduce legislation after an enquiry by a legislative committee; they also called a meeting to discuss the situation. A committee was placed in charge at Nankana; for the time being the government undertook to protect shrines against attacks. Gandhi blamed the British for the tragedy. See V(HD) to S/S, 4, 6 & 17 March 1921, CP14, & The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi XIX (Nov. 1920-April 1921), Ahmedabad 1966, 396-402, 407 & 421-425.

⁹⁴ V(HD) to S/S, 8 Feb. 1921, CP14.

⁹⁵ V(HD) to S/S, 17 Feb. 1921, CP14.

⁹⁶ V(HD) to S/S, 29 March 1921, CP14.

⁹⁷ V(HD) to S/S, 15 Jan. 1921, CP14.

cultivation and prevent the consumption of liquor.⁹⁸ The intention was to carry the Gandhian programme to the villages. Later the Bengal Government reported that Gandhi's influence was spreading among the illiterate classes: rumours were being circulated crediting Gandhi with the fall in the price of cloth and ghee.⁹⁹ More directly, Shaukat Ali welcomed the rural unrest in the United Provinces as proof that non-cooperation would ultimately succeed;¹⁰⁰ and his brother, Muhammad, warned students that India would gain swaraj, if not with their support, then with the help of agriculturalists. A politician from Bhagalpur visited the coalfields and announced the formation of non-cooperation and labour associations.¹⁰¹ The Government were apprehensive about the rural disturbances, and expected attempts to engineer industrial troubles for political purposes. The time was ripe for a further hardening in the government attitude.

For most of January the original Gandhian programme did seem to have fallen into abeyance, over most of the country, in favour of the new attempts to widen the movement's popular support. Panchayats in the Panjab, arbitration courts and Seva Samitis in the United Provinces, plans to boycott the visit of the Duke of Connaught, scattered withdrawals of students, a few more national schools, a ban on overseas trading by the Umbrella Trades Association: outside Bengal, these were the sum of a quiet month for the official satyagraha campaign.¹⁰² But the Home Department had been wrong in predicting that Gandhi's programme had failed and the main attention would turn to politicising the masses. By February the original campaign had been resumed.

The commercial element had gained impetus with a fall in the exchange rate of the rupee - by 19 February it was only 1s.3 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Many Indian traders, alleging an assurance from Montagu or the Government that the exchange rate would be stabilised at 2s.0d., declined to honour

⁹⁸ V(HD) to S/S, 24 Jan. 1921, CP14. On prohibition, see P.D. Kaushik, The Congress Ideology and Programme 1920-1947, Bombay etc. 1964, 177-179.

⁹⁹ V(HD) to S/S, 24 Feb. 1921, CP14.

¹⁰⁰ V(HD) to S/S, 24 Jan. 1921, CP14.

¹⁰¹ V(HD) to S/S, 23 Jan. & 17 Feb. 1921, CP14.

¹⁰² V(HD) to S/S, 23 Jan. 1921, CP14.

their overseas orders. Most of the important Piece-goods Associations passed resolutions against the payment of drafts at less than 2s.0d. exchange. By mid-February, the exchange banks had proved unable to collect between £6 and £8 million sterling in bills, and uncleared stocks to a value of Rs. 16 crores had built up in Bombay. This was certainly a boycott of foreign trade; but, as the Government pointed out, the majority of dealers were 'probably using [the] political motive as [an] excuse for evading serious loss...'. It was nearly the end of March before the importers decided to meet their bills - and then the Congress Working Committee promptly sought means to deflect the decision.¹⁰³

Attention was focussed more closely on the royal visit and again on education. The Duke of Connaught was in India to inaugurate the reformed Councils. The non-cooperators did not achieve a total boycott, but did produce a marked lack of enthusiasm in Bengal and Delhi. In Madras a rival meeting was held. Only in Bombay was the Duke greeted by cheerful and cheering crowds.¹⁰⁴ Chelmsford explained why the response was disconcerting:

...in recent years the attitude of India towards Great Britain has altered and we now have to face the hostility of an unscrupulous party which does not hesitate to employ every device however discreditable extending even to an attempt to belittle the importance of the Duke's visit.¹⁰⁵

Lady Blanche Lloyd writing to Chamberlain captured the curious psychological effect which the situation had upon the British in India: '...it sometimes gives me the queerest feeling,' she wrote, 'to think that here we are, living among, entertaining, and trying to do our best for, a crowd of people who mostly hate us all the time, not personally, perhaps, but for what we represent.'¹⁰⁶ The reaction to the royal visit was new and serious: there had been an attempt, partly successful, to achieve not only popular rejection of aspects of British policy, but also symbolic repudiation of the British connection.

Bengal alone had not been relatively free of educational disturbances during January. The Bengali students had been excited

¹⁰³ V(FD) to S/S, 19 & 21 Feb. & (HD) 29 March 1921, CP14.

¹⁰⁴ V(HD) to S/S, 23 & 29 Jan. & 8 & 24 Feb. 1921, CP14; Ronaldshay to Montagu, 20 & 27 Jan. 1921, MP32; G/Madras to V, 11 Jan., & G/Bombay to V, 23 Feb. 1921, CP26.

¹⁰⁵ V to S/S, 19 Feb. 1921, CP14.

¹⁰⁶ Lady Blanche Lloyd to Chamberlain, 31 Dec. 1920, ACP18/1/17.

since C.R. Das made his grand gesture dedicating himself to satyagraha. Towards the end of the month there were extensive strikes among students in Calcutta, mainly in privately-managed colleges. The Madrassa was not affected. Large numbers of students collected in College Square and prevented candidates from attending law examinations. In Dacca the College and Madrassa remained open, but the situation throughout the province was grave and worsening steadily. Early in February the atmosphere was calmer, with schools, law colleges and university classes undisturbed; but all other colleges had been closed mainly to enable parents to remove their sons from the influence of the non-cooperators. A visit from Gandhi gave the strike impetus once more. The Education Department considered that the colleges should not be reopened until students could attend without possibility of interference. A magistrate's order against obstructing students had apparently helped in Dacca, where the Government college was still open, but a similar notice had had no effect in Mymensingh. The probable result of reopening in disaffected areas would be, in the Department's view, police intervention and street fighting.¹⁰⁷

Gradually the resurgence spread to other provinces. In Burma more than half the students were on strike at the beginning of February; in Assam two colleges and a few schools were affected. In Madras five hundred students resolved to withdraw; in Bihar and Orissa there was a sudden strike in one college and attempts to intimidate students in others.¹⁰⁸ In Bombay seven hundred students declared themselves for non-cooperation, inspired by the example of Bengal. In early February only fifty or sixty had withdrawn, but the movement was encouraged by a Students' Convention under the leadership of Patel. By 21 February, 633 students had left; nine anglo-vernacular schools, representing 2771 pupils, had renounced government grants; Gujarat College had lost five professors; and thirty-eight teachers had left various other schools.¹⁰⁹ In the Central Provinces, at Nagpur, there were 250 students in national schools; by mid-February between 50 and 84 per cent of High School pupils were attending school, but numbers were declining.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ V(ED) to S/S, 20, 24 & 27 Jan. & 8 & 10 Feb. 1921, CP14; Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 19 & 25 Jan. 1921, CP26.

¹⁰⁸ V(ED) to S/S, 2 Feb. 1921, CP14.

¹⁰⁹ V(HD) to S/S, 17 Feb. & (ED) 21 Feb. 1921, CP14.

¹¹⁰ V(HD) to S/S, 24 Feb. 1921, CP14.

In the Panjab the campaign had been revived under Lajpat Rai. A virtually complete strike had taken place in the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College when the Managing Committee refused to invite Lajpat Rai to address the students. The excitement was caught in other colleges in Lahore, and four in all were closed. The Government and Islamia Colleges were unaffected at first, but later their students voted for non-cooperation, began to disturb lectures, and put pressure on the staff to resign. In Amritsar a large majority at Khalsa College voted to leave and preach non-violent war in the countryside, and a number did quit the College after a meeting held by Dr Kitchlew. The non-cooperators also held a well-attended Students' Conference at Gujranwala.¹¹¹

The combination of this activity with the indications of industrial and rural unrest was sufficient to force the Government's hand. And yet, such was the commitment to non-interference, optimism still prevailed sufficiently to save the main part of the policy. The Government decided that the student unrest was mainly an ebullition to impress the Duke of Connaught, and was unlikely to be long-lived. Chelmsford predicted on 14 February:

The students are seeing for themselves the damage they are suffering from this course and are gradually coming back. Gandhi's advice to them to take to the spinning wheel is not likely to encourage them. I am confident we shall win through, but we must have patience.

A little later he was buoyantly forecasting clearer skies and a better atmosphere, while admitting that the next two or three months (much of which would be in the hands of the new Viceroy) would test his optimism.¹¹² And again this optimism seemed justified by events. By mid-February the situation had eased, although on the 21st two Panjab colleges were still closed. By the end of the month most colleges had opened, and early in March local governments were reporting satisfactory or improving conditions.¹¹³

¹¹¹ V(HD) to S/S, 29 Feb. & 8 Feb. 1921, & (HD) 5 Feb. 1921, CP14.

¹¹² V to S/S, 14 & 19 Feb. 1921, CP14. Agitation among the masses was expected to be sporadic, hampered by lack of funds. In one issue of Young India (9 March 1921), Gandhi denied that attempts were being made to 'tamper' with the masses, but provided a translation of his (Hindi) instructions to peasants of the United Provinces. See V(HD) to S/S, 23 Jan. 1921, CP14; The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi XIX (Nov. 1920-April 1921), Ahmedabad 1966, 418-419.

¹¹³ V to S/S, 14 Feb. & (ED) 24 Feb. & 3 March 1921, CP14.

Nonetheless the situation was changing: it was true that each upsurge in Gandhi's campaign was relatively short-lived, but each was also more severe than the last. The Government thought the non-cooperators were trying to force the pace, and that students were being recruited as propagandists among the masses.¹¹⁴ There was an inevitable reassessment of policy, with two results - renewed efforts at appeasement, and a further stiffening of attitude.

Already, at the end of January, the Government had reopened their campaign for a modification of the Turkish peace terms - the Home Department again placed 'most strongly on record' the contention that substantial concessions on the Khilafat could be refused only on peril of very grave consequences for India. In mid-February the Viceroy was most anxious that an Indian Muslim delegation should be received and given some concessions in the peace negotiations.¹¹⁵ Earlier Chelmsford had urged that the Duke of Connaught might make a conciliatory statement on the Khilafat question.¹¹⁶ A second line of appeasement was to emphasize the role of the new legislatures, in the hope of establishing the reality of the reforms and consolidating moderate opinion. The Government had decided to make this point by accepting resolutions that were moved in the legislature; and they also suggested that the Duke of Connaught, in opening the Imperial Legislative Assembly, should make specific reference to this decision. They suggested that he stress that under the 1919 Act the Government was to be influenced by the legislature 'to an extent incomparably greater than...in the past', and that Chelmsford's Government would give the 'fullest possible effect' to this principle. The statement was delivered, after some verbal changes, substantially in the form drafted by the Home Department.¹¹⁷

But appeasement was not enough. In January, the Government, apprehensive at rural and industrial unrest, had decided to address local governments on the new situation. They were responding to the supposed new direction of the campaign. While awaiting local government replies, and as the situation developed, they settled on a five-

¹¹⁴ V(HD) to S/S, 8 Feb. 1921, CP14.

¹¹⁵ V to S/S, 6, 19 & 20 Feb. & (HD) 26 Jan. 1921, CP14.

¹¹⁶ V(HD) to S/S, 2 Feb., & S/S to V, 4 Feb. 1921, CP14. The Duke also seems to have suggested a conciliatory statement himself (after the very wording had been decided!); see Lord Cromer to V, 6 Feb. 1921, CP26.

¹¹⁷ See above, note 116, & V to S/S, 8 Feb. 1921, CP14.

point plan. They would watch the attempts to disaffect rural and labouring classes, introduce special legislation whenever required, employ counter-propaganda, vigorously prosecute non-cooperators who were guilty of inciting to violence or making seditious speeches, and finally enforce general respect for the law, for example in the case of clearly unlawful assemblies.¹¹⁸ The first three points were unremarkable, and the Government had stressed explicitly that they did not intend any great policy change. But the last two provisions, with their stronger emphasis on the law and prosecutions, represented another distinct hardening in attitude: they continued the change which had been evident during the previous year and, in November, implicit in the Government's Resolution explaining their policy.

In late January, in Karachi, Abdul Rahman, the editor of the local Khilafat paper, was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment on a charge of sedition.¹¹⁹ As with the central Government's decision, this isolated action came rather in advance of the events which were to stimulate the fuller use of stern measures. During February these became more frequent. In the United Provinces, public meetings were prohibited under the Indian Penal Code in seven districts of Oudh, and several prominent local leaders were arrested. Later a further eight persons were tried and imprisoned for interfering with candidates for an examination at the Sanskrit College, Benares. A column of arms was marched through Sultanpur and Fyzabad districts, and was reported to have had a good effect. In March the Government of India agreed to the application of the Seditious Meetings Act to four districts for up to one year, after further disturbances in Rai Bareilly.¹²⁰

Meetings had been prohibited in most districts in the Panjab, and in February the Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee was confined to Lahore under the Code of Criminal Procedure. In Madras the Calicut District Magistrate prohibited Khilafat meetings and arrested Yakub Hasan and three others. The Chairman of the Calicut Municipality resigned in protest. A hartal was held in Madras to protest these imprisonments, but the police dispersed the crowd without great difficulty. In the Legislative Council there was no division on a

118 V(HD) to S/S, 23 & 29 Jan. 1921, CP14.

119 V to S/S, 29 Jan. 1921, CP14.

120 V(HD) to S/S, 8 & 24 Feb. & 17 & 29 March 1921, CP14.

resolution against the action, as the debate strongly supported the District Magistrate.¹²¹ In the Northwest Frontier Province in March, when the local Khilafat Committee was widening its activities, the Deputy Commissioner of Bakka kel was permitted to ban Khilafat meetings, with the intention, if defied, of arresting the leaders under the Frontier Crimes Regulations.¹²² In the Central Provinces, the Vice-President of the Nagpur Municipality, Dr M.R. Cholkar, was arrested under the Indian Penal Code. There was a large protest meeting and a general hartal in Nagpur, followed by some looting of liquor shops. Meetings were prohibited for a month, and there was no further trouble. The Deputy Commissioner interviewed the leading non-cooperators and warned them that the Government was determined to maintain order.¹²³ In Bihar and Orissa a vigorous campaign against offenders was stigmatised by the Independent of Allahabad as a 'tide of repression'.¹²⁴

The Government were directing pressure largely at preventing public meetings and propaganda by means of the ordinary law. They reported that the provincial governments were encouraging the local authorities in more uniform and coordinated steps to counteract the non-cooperation movement. They believed that loud protests from the extremists indicated that the policy was hampering their activities.¹²⁵ The stronger measures did involve the risk of a final confrontation with the non-cooperators. In February Chelmsford admitted that Gandhi would have to be arrested if he showed 'deliberate and provocative defiance' on his visit to Delhi where the Seditious Meetings Act was in force. The Government remained rather at the mercy of their local officials in such circumstances.¹²⁶ But this was an increased rather than a new danger for the Government's policy. N.M. Shafi had explained in November to Willingdon: the 'policy of sitting tight & doing nothing is right now';¹²⁷ the Government recognised that there might come a time when to do nothing would be wrong. Thus the harsher local tactics

121 V to S/S, 24 Feb. 1921, CP14.

122 V(HD) to S/S, 6 & also 29 March 1921, CP14.

123 Ibid., & V(HD) to S/S, 24 Feb. 1921, CP14.

124 V(HD) to S/S, 6 March 1921, CP14.

125 V(HD) to S/S, 17 March 1921, CP14.

126 Chelmsford to Montagu, 14 Feb. 1921, CP6.

127 Willingdon to Montagu, 15 Nov. 1920, MP20.

did not mean that the Government envisaged a reversal of their method of non-interference at the national level, or intended to prohibit non-cooperation as a whole. The central principles of the approach remained unchanged. In February 1920, Chelmsford explained his position once again. The real danger, he maintained, lay in the extremists on either side - British ones who always saw 'in the big stick a remedy for every evil', and Indian ones who wanted nothing better than for the Government 'to use the big stick'.¹²⁸ For several years Chelmsford had occupied the middle position, consistently and to his own satisfaction. The satyagraha campaign had not shaken his confidence in this approach.

This fact is remarkable, not only in terms of the challenge presented by Gandhi, who, though not fully successful, remained undefeated, but also in terms of the fierce opposition which Chelmsford's policy aroused. Those, like Lord Willingdon, who had opposed it from the first, were now confirmed in their opinion. Willingdon thought non-interference merely a failure of courage; he scorned it as the method of 'Hush. Hush'. Once, after an uneventful visit from Gandhi and Shaukat Ali, he admitted to doubts; but generally he became more and more incensed every time that 'd---d fellow Gandhi' came into his jurisdiction and he was not allowed to intervene. He wanted to act, and argued that they were allowing the non-cooperators to organise - the agitation would not be killed by 'a policy of drift'; 'masterly inactivity' was no way to govern. Some of his views were seen by Sir F.W. Duke and Lord Lytton, and cannot have increased confidence at the India Office.¹²⁹

Of the other provincial heads, Lloyd, at a moment when he had lost all confidence in Chelmsford, wrote to Montagu complaining that Simla was hopelessly out of touch - 'where it is firm it fails to be sympathetic, where it attempts to be sympathetic it succeeds only in being weak'. He believed that the release of Shaukat Ali had been a mistake - Montagu did not agree but admitted that he thought Shaukat should have been 'put back again immediately he opened his mouth'. Lloyd's idea was 'to pay out rope and hit the agitator hard', while still showing sympathy for nationalist hopes. After seeing Chelmsford in October 1920, Lloyd was again prepared to endorse the Viceroy's

¹²⁸ Chelmsford to Lord Reay, 2-3 Feb. 1921, CP16.

¹²⁹ See Willingdon to Montagu, 27 June, 8 Aug., 8 & 28 Sept. 1920, MP20, & 3, 6, 20 & 27 Jan. & 6 & 31 March 1921, MP21, but also (for some less condemnatory moments) 4 & 22 Aug. 1920, MP20.

policy. He confided in Chamberlain that the repressive course would have to be followed right through riots and bloodshed once it was begun, whereas Chelmsford's tactics, although they might do much damage, might succeed. At the end of 1920, however, Lloyd was convinced that Gandhi's movement had failed and that the Government should destroy what remained of his influence. In the new year Lloyd wrote to Montagu that they could not 'go on drifting vaguely'; they must either make terms with Gandhi or repress his movement. At the end of February he was happier again; but he was never fully committed to Chelmsford's approach.¹³⁰

The non-cooperation campaign convinced most of the other Governors that the policy was misguided. Ronaldshay was reticent about giving his opinion, but he was clearly uneasy. He believed the non-cooperation campaign could end only in violence and that this was the aim of its leaders. He remarked that many people - later he mentioned particularly the 'loyal Muhammadans' - were 'puzzled at the length to which the extremists are permitted to go'. He made a speech at Krishnagar against the Khilafat and satyagraha movements, and believed that the favourable response from local leaders showed that 'there are two points of view from which to look at a policy of inaction'. He thought the Government must make it clear that certain things, such as tampering with the army and the police, would not be tolerated. He was worried, in August 1920, that the central Government had not 'publicly defined' their attitude, with the result that no-one knew where they stood and no uniformity of action was possible between local governments. Montagu, to whom these fears had been expressed, suggested that the Government of India might have had 'special difficulties' in making their attitude clear. No-one, he insisted, would stand in the way of any action against Gandhi once it was seen as really wise; but provinces had to be a little diffident in pressing strongly for action against someone whose activities had an all-India aspect.¹³¹ Ronaldshay hinted at his uneasiness to Chelmsford, and, when pressed for definite suggestions, tentatively put forward, in March 1921, an idea that Gandhi might be prosecuted if he persisted in his campaign after a personal

¹³⁰ See Lloyd to Chamberlain, 15 Oct. 1920, ACP18/1/5, & to Montagu, 26 March, 3 April, 23 July, 13 Aug., 15 Oct., 19 Nov. & 3 Dec. 1920, MP25; Montagu to Lloyd, 9 Sept. 1920, MP22.

¹³¹

Ronaldshay to Montagu, 9 & 23 June, 6 & 21 July, 1-3 & 17 Aug. & 20 Oct., MP31, & Montagu to Ronaldshay, 20 April & 16 Aug. 1920, MP27.

appeal offering concessions.¹³²

Craddock's Government strongly criticised the Government of India's policy in an official despatch at the end of 1920. Chelmsford replied sharply that, while he welcomed private comment, 'there must be no official criticism' when policy had been laid down distinctly; he hoped that there would be no 'recurrence of any such thing'. Craddock had urged earlier that conciliation was not understood in India and would have 'no permanent effect'. 'To the extremist,' he argued, 'the British Government is an enemy'; conciliation was interpreted as showing that surrender was near; the only policy was to give 'moderate and sensible men' a chance to come to the fore.¹³³ This view echoed that of the Chief Commissioner of Coorg, H.V. Cobb, who had sent the Home Department a strong minute in 1919; it had struck him that 'Our policy of late years ... has been to neglect our well-wishers and treat them as a negligible quantity; but at the same time to go out of our way to try and placate or conciliate our enemies. It is a policy ... which has not met with marked success I cannot recall the name of any really prominent extremist who has been won over by it to our side. On the other hand, many staunch Indian friends have complained to me that loyalty is not a policy that pays.'¹³⁴ Such opposition, reading a different lesson from the upheavals of 1919, was thus not new; but by the end of 1920 it had become fairly general. Sir Frank Sly joined the chorus; Harcourt Butler was still recording his hostility many years later.¹³⁵

It is important to understand what this attitude represented. There were three continuing elements: that conciliation discouraged loyalists and moderates, that it would not win over the extremists, and that it both allowed them the opportunity and encouraged them to preach unrest. It is not hard, therefore, to see why this criticism did not carry the weight which might have been expected. The Government of India had rejected all of these arguments. They did not place great faith in 'moderates', and anyway the most prominent of these publicly opposed the repression of extremists;¹³⁶ they no longer expected to win

¹³² Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 9 March, & Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 11 March 1921, CP26.

¹³³ Chelmsford to Craddock, 18 Nov. 1920, CP25; Minute by Craddock, 22 Jan. 1920, H.Poll. 134, July, & see also 46, May 1920.

¹³⁴ H.Poll. 266, July 1920.

¹³⁵ See Harcourt Butler, India Insistent, London 1931, 84.

¹³⁶ See V to S/S, 24 Oct. 1920, CP13.

over the extremists - their policy was to buy time not favour - but they believed it was repression not conciliation that would assist the nationalist cause.

It would have been more serious if the Secretary of State had joined the dissenters, as at one time seemed possible. Montagu was in two minds about the policy. In July 1920 he came under pressure, with questions in Parliament, to act against Gandhi. He continued to fear the consequences of action more than the dangers of inaction - the nightmare of a Gandhi on hunger strike in prison was enough to convince him. But the campaign was more successful than he expected, and he too became worried at the need to encourage the moderates. He also made nervous enquiries about reports that the government had not prevented Gandhi from drilling recruits. 'Your policy ... is a simple one,' he told Chelmsford, 'and we hope that in the end it will prove a wise one.'¹³⁷ There was no resounding confidence in that assurance. In November Montagu's defence of the policy was drafted, in a letter to Ronaldshay, as 'I think...the policy is a sound one'; Montagu corrected it by hand to read, 'I think...the policy is an intelligible one'. This was a fair account of his position. It was, he admitted, 'a gamble' - but at least it was a gamble with two throws; immediate intervention was a gamble with only one. He fell back on his policy of leaving such matters for decision by the men responsible in India. He wrote to Willingdon, sentiments repeated also to Chelmsford:

non-cooperation appears to be getting more dangerous, but I must leave it to people in India to decide how to deal with it. I never thought it would die of inanition. What I do think is that perhaps, and I speak with great diffidence, it is so impracticable and so disadvantageous that people will get sick of it.¹³⁸

Three factors, therefore, encouraged the Government to continue their old policy. Firstly, their handling of the situation was never openly challenged by the Secretary of State. Secondly, their own judgment and interpretation of wider issues required them to discount the basis of the local governments' criticism. Thirdly, as we have seen, their generally optimistic attitude to Gandhi's campaign remained unruffled by events: their alarm was answered by progressive hardening

¹³⁷ Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 & 27 July, 9 & 16 Sept., & 7, 20 & 28 Oct., but also 2 Dec. 1920, CP6; S/S to V, 15 & 22 July 1920, CP13.

¹³⁸ See Montagu to Ronaldshay, 17 Nov. 1920, MP27, to Willingdon, 16 Feb., MP17, & to Chelmsford, 16 Feb. 1921, CP6.

in their measures, and was never great enough to move them on the main principle of non-interference. There was also a final and decisive factor. Changing the policy required an act of courage: as Chelmsford insisted, repression of Gandhi would have been a final and irrevocable gamble which would have had to be carried through to the end. Without the pressure of unavoidable circumstances, the Government were unwilling to take this step, and it was for this reason, it seems, that they allowed themselves to be encouraged by each successive lull in the non-cooperation campaign. But what was perhaps equally important was that this final factor also discounted the criticism: the Secretary of State was daunted by it; and even the local governments, for all their private grumbling, shared the same reluctance when forced to make official recommendations. When their replies were received (to the Home Department enquiry) in March 1921, only Burma was prepared to advocate that non-interference should be abandoned.¹³⁹ Other local governments, of course, now had to convince Indian colleagues, and perhaps to persuade Indian legislators.

Thus the last questioning under Chelmsford resulted in an endorsement of his policy. He had been vindicated also in a complementary direction. As he had hoped, he had gained the acquiescence of the legislative assemblies before embarking on stronger measures. Several local governments had received votes in support of their policies, and in the Imperial Legislative Assembly a resolution to ban repressive measures had been rejected. The feeling of the Assembly had been against any weakening of the local governments' position. A resolution had been passed approving the Government's policy, while recommending the avoidance of any action under exceptional legislation. In March, the Home Department urged local governments to institute prosecutions more freely for incitement to violence, and against speeches 'calculated to produce feelings likely to lead to violence in the near future'.¹⁴⁰ This was the toughest position taken under Chelmsford. But its victims were to remain relatively minor figures only. Measures against Gandhi were specifically reserved to the central Government as issues of national importance. The two main lessons learnt in dealing with Annie Besant - the dangers of interference and the need for central supervision - had not been forgotten.

¹³⁹ Chelmsford to Craddock, 13 March, CP26, & to Montagu, 9 March 1921, CP6.

¹⁴⁰ See V(HD) to S/S, 29 March 1921, CP14.

Chelmsford had sometimes felt himself besieged by extremists on both sides. Even Lionel Curtis, that 'high priest of Empire', had taken the authoritarian view. Writing to Chamberlain, he pronounced: 'There will be no rest in India as long as it is said "Unless you obey, the Govt. of India may get very angry." ... There will be peace in India when there is a Viceroy who says "I will be obeyed".'¹⁴¹ Curtis, with many others, failed to understand the situation. Gandhi's agitation, like Mrs Besant's, was ambiguous, half-way between legal protest and revolution. Gandhi too was half-rebel, half-loyalist. It was in June 1920, as his campaign gathered way and he planned to defy authority and undermine the law, that he wrote to Chelmsford calling himself 'a devoted well-wisher of the British Empire'.¹⁴² The Government of India had to be equally dextrous.

¹⁴¹ Curtis to Chamberlain, 10 Nov. 1920, ACP23/10/12. Curtis also wondered if Montagu realised how gravely he had endangered his own work by 'diluting' the Government of India with three Indians; see Curtis to Chamberlain, 13 Nov. 1920, ACP23/10/14.

¹⁴² Gandhi to Chelmsford, 22 June 1920, CP24; & see above, pp.62-63.

PART THREE. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Chapter 7. The Goal

The 1919 reforms represented a deliberate attempt to make the Indian constitution conform to an evolutionary concept of British rule. The initiative was Lord Chelmsford's. Some time in 1915, while in India with his regiment, Chelmsford decided that British rule was 'aimless', characterised by a 'hand-to-mouth policy of giving Reforms piecemeal in response to agitation'; he saw that another advance would have to be conceded shortly and believed that it should conform to some general idea of the goal of British rule. His view was reinforced when S.P. Sinha, in his Congress Presidential address of December 1915, called for a declaration on the intentions of the British with regard to Indian self-government. Chelmsford adopted Sinha's questions: at his 'very first Executive Council' the new Viceroy asked: (1) what is the ultimate goal of British rule in India? (2) what are the first steps on the road to that goal? From the first, under Chelmsford, lines of advance were considered in terms of an attempt to plan coherently.¹

Chelmsford's Executive Council, augmented by Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, discussed Chelmsford's questions at informal weekly and later twice weekly meetings.² The Councillors were being asked to rethink their ideas, for Chelmsford was not the first to suggest reforms. His predecessor, Lord Hardinge, in an important memorandum of October 1915, had formulated a number of questions which were likely to arise at the end of the war, and which, in Hardinge's view, 'the conclusion of peace must find us prepared to consider'. The Councillors had already expressed views on Hardinge's

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Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 5 May, CP2, & to Hardinge, 12 May 1916, to Frederick Guest, 8 April, & to Selbourne (sic), 17 Oct. 1918, CP15, & to Sinha, 25 March 1921, CP26; Speeches I, 389-393; Sinha, Presidential address 27 Dec. 1915, H.Poll. 358, Dec. 1916. The reliance on Sinha's speech was of course a danger sign, as Sinha's election as Congress President had been engineered by Pherozeshah Mehta in an attempt to outflank the 'extremists' (who would have preferred Lajpat Rai). Next year these 'extremists' consolidated their hold on the Congress, and began to assert their own demands, so that Sinha's stand became out of date more quickly than would otherwise have been the case. See R.C., with A.K., Majumdar, edd., The History and Culture of the Indian People XI, Struggle for Freedom, Bombay 1969, 245-246.

2

Chelmsford to O'Dwyer, 18 & 25 May, & see to Willingdon, 4 July, CP17, to Hardinge, 2 Sept., CP15, & to Chamberlain, 12 & 18 Oct. 1916, CP2.

proposals.³ Under Chelmsford, however, they were being given a different starting-point, the question of the goal. Each member, as he was ready, separately summarised his ideas in a rough note which was then circulated among the other members. For three weeks Chelmsford held discussions with individual members on their own views, and towards the end of May 1916 asked Sir George Barnes to try to find common ground. There was more agreement than Chelmsford had expected: the Council agreed to a formula stating that the British goal was 'to endow India ... with the largest measure of Self-Government compatible with the maintenance of the supreme authority of British Rule'. One Councillor, Sir Sankaran Nair, the Education Member, had argued that the goal should be 'good government ... according to Western ideals' and that at present self-government was incompatible with Indian caste and class feeling and the low status of women. The other members - the British - all included some form of self-government and some degree of British suzerainty among their objectives.⁴

In the qualification 'compatible with the maintenance of the supreme authority', the term 'British Rule' had been introduced by Chelmsford himself, as a replacement for the words 'King-Emperor'. Sir T.W. Holderness of the India Office pointed out that this formula would be interpreted as a retreat from Hardinge's position: it appeared, unlike Hardinge's remarks, to hint that complete self-government would never be obtained.⁵ This had not been Chelmsford's intention. He had preferred the words 'British Rule' and had rejected 'King-Emperor' on the grounds that the latter seemed to him to involve 'Colonial Swaraj', a form of government to which, as it was 'wholly inapplicable to the conditions of India', he was 'not prepared to agree at the present moment'. His final qualification was important: the goal which was

³ 'Memorandum by H.E. the Viceroy upon Questions likely to arise in India at the end of the War'; Hardinge to Heads of Governments and Members of his Council, 30 Aug.; Meston, 7 Sept., Willingdon, 10 Sept., O'Dwyer, 13 Sept., Hailey, 17 Sept. 1915, to Hardinge; notes or letters by Sir Syed Ali Imam, 13 Sept., Sir W. Clark, undated, Sir Reginald Craddock, 16 Sept., Sir W. Meyer, 5 Sept., C.H.A. Hill, 4 Sept. 1915, & Sir Benjamin Robertson, undated: ACP22/2. See also Chirol to Chamberlain, 13 Oct. 1915, ACP12/43.

⁴ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 5 & 27 May & 16 June 1916, CP2; 'Formula', & notes by Home Member (Craddock), Finance Member (Meyer), Revenue & Agriculture Member (Hill), Legal Member (Lowndes), & Education Member (Nair), [26 or 27 May 1916], CP17.

⁵ Holderness, 'Memorandum on Viceroy's Formula', with Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 8 Aug. 1916, CP2.

being explained in this formula was not after all an ultimate one. At this stage, Chelmsford explained to the Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain, they should emphasise that, while they sought 'a gradual extension of self-government', they were determined not to abdicate their position - that would be for their successors.⁶ The formula, Chelmsford explained later in reply to Holderness' criticism, had 'served its purpose ... in clearing our minds and enabling us to see where we stood It represented a stage in our discussion from which we advanced to further stages'.⁷

Accordingly, in the final draft of the formula, the Government retained their caution but removed the ambiguity. Chelmsford had consulted Sinha, who had convinced him that the original form would not be satisfactory from the Indian point of view. 'The goal to which we look forward,' the Government stated, in the despatch which they sent to the Secretary of State in November, 'is the endowment of British India as an integral part of the Empire, with self-government, but the rate of progress ... must depend upon the improvement and wide diffusion of education, the softening of racial and religious differences, and the acquisition of political experience'. They contemplated India's gradual progress towards a larger and larger measure of control by her own people, the steady and conscious development of which will ultimately result in self-government' - though in a form 'regulated by the special circumstances of India' and not altogether on Dominion lines. In the view of Sir Claude Hill, expressed later in 1917, he and the other Council members were safeguarding themselves, as they were bureaucrats contemplating a permanent goal, even in this last reservation - in fact, he claimed, everyone contemplated that India would receive responsible government as in the Dominions except for modifications in detail.⁸

⁶ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 27 May & 8 Sept. 1916, CP2.

⁷ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 23 Sept. 1916, CP2.

⁸ 'Formula', 1 June 1916, CP17; HD despatch, 24 Nov. 1916, H.Poll. 358, Dec. 1916; Note, 26 June, with Hill to Chelmsford, 26 June 1916, CP18. See also Richard Danzig, 'Common Ground: the Early Stages of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms', unpublished Oxford B.Phil. thesis, June 1967, 70-71 (consulted by courtesy of Dr Danzig), which claims that Chelmsford accepted the change in the formula because he was desperate for an announcement. I would argue that Chelmsford made the change because he had been convinced that his wording was ambiguous and unacceptable, and that he was not then desperate for an announcement - indeed he refused one next month (see below, note 57). On the question of the form of self-government, see Georges Fischer, in his Parti travailliste et la décolonisation de l'Inde, Paris 1966, 54-55, where

The next question was how to take a definite step towards this goal. The Council discussions postulated three roads of advance: they were rewards for war service, the removal of grievances, and political progress. There was unanimity on the first two of these.⁹ Indeed in these areas the recommendations showed virtually complete continuity between Chelmsford's and Hardinge's policies: in both Hardinge's memorandum and the Government of India despatch of November 1916 the emphasis was placed upon rewarding the army through commissions, pay increases and various benefits, and upon answering grievances on matters such as the Arms Act, indentured emigration, and the cotton excise duties. Sinha, too, had stressed almost exactly these improvements in his Presidential address to the Congress.

There was substantial agreement also that two of the lines of political advance should be the increased employment of Indians in the higher branches of the public services, and the development of local self-government. Hardinge had supported these lines too - for him the latter was 'the safest and most natural line of development' which would 'diminish the force of demands for Colonial Self-government and other such claims which are neither understood nor really wanted'. Sinha, while regretting that Hardinge had not agreed to complete internal independence for local boards, also believed that local self-government was the way for Indians to gain swaraj. Under Chelmsford the Government of India were prepared to go further. They enunciated similar principles for both local self-government and the public services. For both the object was to be 'to train the people in the management of their own ... affairs'; the rule for both was to be that 'education of this sort must

he suggests that the doubt over the universal applicability of British institutions developed in the early 20th century - shared in the Labour movement by persons as diverse as Shaw and MacDonald - and he comments: 'Cette explication ne nous parait pas pertinente. Il semble, en réalité, que l'impossibilité de transplanter le modèle métropolitain est utilisée comme un argument pour refuser des réformes politiques substantielles'. He sees the Montagu-Chelmsford Report as a denial of such side-stepping. It might be argued, therefore, that Chelmsford and his Council were merely continuing a tradition which Morley, Minto and Crewe had all endorsed, and that the change came with the Report. I believe, on the contrary, that in 1916 the insistence on a form of government suitable to India was no more than a survival, and that Chelmsford's enunciation of the goal had already moved the Government of India away from this point, as shown in the changes they proposed (see below, pp.215-218). Hill at least recognised this consciously.

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Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 July 1916, CP2.

take precedence of mere considerations of departmental efficiency'.¹⁰

For the public services the increased employment of Indians in higher and more responsible posts was held to be 'essential to the progress of India towards the goal'. There had been disagreement in the Council on the one point of the emphasis to be given to the possibility of going beyond what the Public Services Commission had recommended - Craddock, supported by O'Dwyer and the Commander-in-Chief, Duff, was unwilling to commit the Government; Meyer, Lowndes, Hill and Nair insisted that it was necessary to admit that the situation had changed since the Report. Barnes remained uncommitted, and Chelmsford awaited the local government reaction before making a decision; the Council later agreed to state that the recommendations would be put into effect, subject to modification and extension where there were new circumstances. The guiding principle was to be to allow 'Full opportunity for Indians to qualify themselves for the more important posts in the public services, and to demonstrate ... their fitness for still more responsible duties'. Progress was to be set anew 'on sound and generous lines'.¹¹

In local self-government, it was decided that the 'local bodies must be as representative as possible', 'their control ... should be real and not nominal', and 'they must not be kept in leading strings, but must learn by making mistakes and profiting by them'. Government policy had already been set out on 28 April 1915 in a resolution on the report of the Decentralization Commission. In a memorandum of June 1916, however, the Viceroy set out and circulated to the local governments a revised version of his Government's policy. He confirmed that the resolution in Hardinge's time 'usually saw the right path', but stressed that now the Government of India were no longer 'content to let the local governments travel by it or not as these saw fit'. For municipalities, his Government had decided that the Commission's proposal for substantial elected majorities should be accepted and urged on local governments, with the corollary that the franchise should be sufficiently low to include the body of the rate-payers. Chairmen

¹⁰ See above, notes 1, 3 & 8. For a contemporary Indian suggestion on local government - wanting more power for panchayats - see M.S. Sesa Ayyangar, Madras Village Panchayats, Madura / 1915 /.

¹¹ Notes by Craddock, 3 & 10 June, Meyer to Chelmsford, & Meyer, Hill & Lowndes, 'Proposed formula re larger employment of Indians in the public services', 8 June 1916, & revised formula, undated, CP17; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 & 21 July 1916, CP2.

should normally be elected non-officials. For rural and district boards, where the Commission had recommended elected majorities with an official chairman, the Viceroy now urged that the local governments should begin the experiment, wherever possible, of non-official and preferably elected chairmen. Powers for local boards should also be increased. Municipalities, unless indebted, were to be quite free to impose or alter local taxation; under Hardinge this right had been subject to the local government power to vary any tax, a reservation which Chelmsford's Government considered to render the right 'nugatory'. In 1915 also the Government had been reluctant fully to accept the principle that where a local board paid for a service it should also control it; the Viceroy now insisted on going the 'whole way' with the Decentralization Commission - local boards were to have control, subject to general principles of conduct, and the local governments were instructed not to interfere on details. In particular, the compulsory reservation of parts of local funds for specified purposes was to be abolished, and unnecessary control over capital works was to be relaxed. Thus, Chelmsford's Government had introduced three main changes: they had asked that the rate of progress should be increased, they had refused to leave certain matters to the discretion of the local governments, and they had had enunciated a general rule that local bodies were to be subject, as in Britain, to 'ultimate powers of intervention' but not to day to day supervision.¹² They had accepted, however, a point which was made later by Chamberlain - that it was also necessary to provide safeguards through permanent officials.¹³ In 1918 Edwin Montagu was to claim that no official chairman should be 'let near' any local body: the Government of India had already accepted this ideal in 1916.¹⁴ They stipulated, as Chelmsford was to point out in 1918, only that the pace of development should not be so greatly enhanced 'as to bring about a fall'.¹⁵

Chelmsford's Government were divided on the question of legislative reform. Chelmsford had 'studiously avoided pressing any

¹² 'General Principles which should be observed in the Development of Local Self-Government', 30 June 1916, CP17; Memorandum circulated by Viceroy, H.Poll. 358, Dec. 1916. See also, for the Secretary of State's approval, S/S to G/I, 19 Oct. 1917, H.Poll. 337, March 1918.

¹³ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 15 May 1917, CP3.

¹⁴ Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 April 1918, CP4.

¹⁵ Chelmsford to Montagu, 18 April 1918, CP4.

opinion', as he was 'anxious to obtain the considered opinion of those whose experience would justify them in having strong convictions'.¹⁶ He was trying most of all to secure a unanimous despatch, for that alone would carry weight and conviction in London. But on legislative reform Craddock, who, as the member mainly responsible, could not be ignored, was again ranged with O'Dwyer and Duff, against Meyer, Hill, Lowndes and Nair. Craddock's group opposed any increase in the powers of the legislative councils. In Hardinge's time, Craddock had pointed out that the British were 'at the parting of the ways' in India - the main question was whether or not they were 'to convert the non-official Members from being representatives of interests ... to being representatives of a self-governing people entitled to control the executive'.¹⁷ To Chelmsford he insisted that the Government must continue the representation of 'classes and interests' and not introduce territorial constituencies; he advocated the replacement of district board constituencies (which tended to return lawyers) with electorates of landowners and commercial interests; and, if Muslim representation was to be retained, he favoured narrowing the franchise to bring it into line with that in the general electorates.¹⁸ The opposing group, on the other hand, favoured statutory changes for the legislative councils so as to increase their financial and administrative powers and develop the elective principle. Meyer and Hill argued, with some individual variation, for large territorial constituencies, non-official majorities in the provinces, and for some means of associating members with the government, for example as advisers on the budget.¹⁹

Chelmsford remained uncommitted. He was certainly disposed to be cautious - it might have seemed that he was likely to favour the viewpoint of Craddock whose judgment and knowledge he respected. In November 1916 he told a conference which was discussing the prospect of a permanent council for the Indian princes and chiefs, 'I would beg you to give time to development and growth, and the motto I would ask you to place before yourselves is Festina lente'. He was inclined to apply

¹⁶ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 23 Sept. 1916, CP2.

¹⁷ Memorandum by Craddock, 16 Sept. 1915, ACP22/2.

¹⁸ Minute by Craddock on Provincial Legislative Councils, 26 June 1916, CP17.

¹⁹ See above, note 4.

the same principle in reforms to British India. He told the Imperial Legislative Council that 'progress must be circumspect and on well considered lines'; he informed the Agra municipality: 'There can be no better school for training the political sense than that of Municipal administration'.²⁰ Craddock's case was reinforced also by his intention of reducing the predominance of lawyers in the councils - Sir James Meston of the United Provinces had drawn to Chelmsford's attention the grievances among landowners and had argued that this problem should have a 'very close bearing on the method of representation in the elective institutions of the future'.²¹ For his part, the Viceroy was concerned about other sections of the community as well: he told the Bengal Landowners Association that 'one of the most pressing needs of India' was 'the uplifting of the actual tiller of the soil'.²² There was also on Craddock's side some political logic. As W.S. Marris, while temporarily seconded to the United Provinces, had pointed out in a letter which Meston sent to Chelmsford, elected Indian majorities could mean a paralysis of government - one could not 'dis-sever legislation from administration'.²³ Certainly there were changes which Chelmsford refused to contemplate. In October 1916, a majority of the elected members of the Imperial Legislative Council put forward a scheme advocating large elected majorities and complete legislative control (subject only to veto) for all legislative councils. A nominated member, Zulfikar Ali Khan, described this notion (known as the Nineteen Members' scheme) as 'fantastic and visionary'. Chelmsford agreed: he thought it 'preposterous'.²⁴

But, for all this, Craddock's conservatism was untenable. Meston had replied to Marris that they could not stand still, and wrote to Chelmsford that if they were only 'sufficiently courageous' they need not fear 'the passing of sovereignty'. Chelmsford replied that he 'very

²⁰ Speeches I, 85, 88-89 & 232.

²¹ Meston to Chelmsford, 4 Sept. 1916, CP2.

²² Speeches I, 191.

²³ Marris to Meston, 22 Sept., with Meston to Chelmsford, 22 Sept. 1916, Meston Papers I.

²⁴ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 6 Oct., & Zulfikar Ali Khan to Maffey, 30 Sept. 1916, CP2; V to S/S, 24 Oct. 1916, CP7; & also memorandum by Ali Chaudhuri, & a review of the 19 Members' scheme by Raja Kushalpal Singh (member, United Provinces' Legislative Council), sent to Holder-ness, 18 May 1917, H.Poll. 243, May 1917.

much agreed' with the view that they could not stand still.²⁵ Craddock, at 'the parting of the ways' and refusing to contemplate turning the legislators into the 'representatives of a self-governing people', was undoubtedly trying to stand still. Privately, in spite of his caution and his desire for compromise, Chelmsford had already decided between the logic of Marris and the optimism of Meston - and between Craddock's fears and Meyer's and Hill's concessions. He wrote to Chamberlain in August 1916: 'I have come very definitely to the conclusion ... that we must take a step forward on the political side'.²⁶ He was confident of the support of the majority of his colleagues. Chelmsford's starting point, first asking what was the goal, had implied that the Morley-Minto constitution would have to be reconsidered.

The 1916 despatch, embodying the Government's reforms proposals, was nevertheless a conservative document. It reflected inevitably a careful papering over of the differences in the Executive Council. For the legislative councils there was to be no increase in powers - Meyer's group had had to give way. Against Craddock's advice there were, however, to be elected majorities and a wide extension of the franchise so as to create 'really large constituencies'. The division had crystallised about the issue of territorial electorates - Craddock wanted them forbidden, and Nair insisted that they should be obligatory. Chelmsford agreed to allow the type of constituency to be at local discretion. This was no solution, and Craddock still wrote a minute of dissent to the despatch. At the last moment Nair, who had agreed to everything in Council, suddenly decided to dissent as well; Chelmsford was convinced that he had yielded to political pressure.²⁷ The Viceroy's tactics had been to attain unanimity: they had failed.

But even disagreements and compromises could not obscure the nature of the change which had been introduced. In most matters the despatch had been greatly influenced by the earlier suggestions of Hardinge and Sinha. Indeed Hardinge was 'very satisfied' with the proposals and suggested that they were based on his memorandum.²⁸ But

²⁵ Meston to Chelmsford, 22 Sept., & Chelmsford to Meston, 14-15 Oct. 1916, Meston Papers 1.

²⁶ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 25 Aug. 1916, CP2.

²⁷ HD despatch, 24 Nov. 1916, H.Poll. 358, Dec. 1916; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 24 Nov. 1916, CP2.

²⁸ Hardinge to Chamberlain, 10 Jan. 1917, ACP12/102.

in the changes to the legislative councils Chelmsford's Government had introduced a new factor. Craddock had argued that territorial electorates were the crucial point at issue - if they were conceded there would be no retreat from a parliamentary system and the British would find 'further compulsory advances thrust' upon them.²⁹ The despatch had left this question undecided; but, in a memorandum to the local governments, Chelmsford had revealed his own views - he proposed to 'sweep away this complicated and anomalous system of class interests' and 'to substitute large constituencies primarily based on recognised territorial units, such as districts, and with a franchise pitched sufficiently low to admit of considerable bodies of voters'. Under his proposals no constituency would be considered satisfactory with fewer than three thousand voters. Moreover, even when electorates of interests and classes were to be retained, election was henceforth to be direct and not indirect - for example the body of the graduates and not the governors would elect any university representatives. The memorandum containing these views was appended to the reforms despatch, so that neither Whitehall nor the local governments were left in any doubt about the Viceroy's preferences. What was evident also was that Craddock was wrong to think that the postponement of the question of territorial electorates had prevented any commitment to a parliamentary system. The changes agreed for the franchise ensured a large increase in the numbers of the voters. And large electorates were seen as a definite step of preparation for self-government. The despatch explained that they were a first stage necessary before the legislatures could be allowed financial and administrative control.

The Government had concluded that the preconditions for self-government did not exist in India. They thought the Indians needed more unity and greater political experience: the 1916 proposals were directed consciously towards creating these conditions. There were to be efforts to widen and improve education, and to reduce racial and religious intolerance. The immediate channels were to be the public services and local self-government. A few Indians were to gain experience in the executive councils - half of all members (apart from the Governors) were to be Indians. But the legislative councils were also to be slowly developed. They were not to have control - although with elected majorities in the provinces their influence was to be more effective. The time for control, the Government believed, might 'come at some

²⁹ See above, note 18.

later stage': it would come presumably when the experiment of wider representation had created working electorates. The intention of the 1916 proposals, cautious as they were, was deliberately to 'pave the way for an ultimate enlargement of the constitutional powers of the provincial legislative councils'.³⁰

In 1888, Lord Dufferin, arguing for the introduction of the elective principle, did not suggest that it would involve any real representation of the people: the association of qualified Indians with the government was intended as a means of improving British administration - decisions would be better informed. Lord Lansdowne and the Government of India's despatch of 26 October 1892 supported this view; and in 1907 Minto's despatch of 21 March had stressed that the Government were 'no advocates of representative Government for India' - the 1909 reforms were an advance, therefore, 'in the direction of associating the people of India' with the British for the operation of legislation and administration.³¹ Lord Hardinge, in his memorandum of October 1915, had advocated the modification of the legislative council regulations, and had argued that if the British had any intention of raising India to self-governing status they would have to concede 'some measure of real popular control, especially in provincial questions as contrasted with questions of wide Imperial concern'. But what did Hardinge mean by 'real popular control'? In August 1911, his Government had put forward rather confused ideas for provincial self-government (under a central government permanently British); even this suggestion was in effect refuted by the statements made by Lord Crewe in the House of Lords on 22 and 24 June 1912. In the memorandum of 1915, moreover, Hardinge envisaged no more than changes in regulations to allow elected majorities in the provinces. His suggestions, unlike those of the 1916 despatch, were not a step towards even the goal of provincial self-government. He did not suggest that the Morley-Minto reforms should be upset; and, although he publicly espoused ultimate

³⁰ See above, note 27; the Viceroy's memorandum was Appendix III of the November despatch.

³¹ Minute by Dufferin, attached to G/I despatch, 6 Nov. 1888; Note by Lansdowne on Mandate of Parliament for Indian Councils Act 1892; G/India despatch, 26 Oct. 1892; Report of Committee considering Minto proposals, 1906; G/I despatches, 21 March 1907 & 1 Oct. 1908; annexures to Craddock's minute of dissent to the November despatch (see above, note 27). See also the quotations from some of these and other documents in C.H. Philips, ed., The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1907 (Select Documents on the History of India and Pakistan IV), London 1962, 60-69 & 80-95.

self-government and sought to appease Indian opinion, his proposals would have done no more than improve the existing machinery for consultation. As Chelmsford explained in July 1916, Hardinge's memorandum had dealt with isolated problems; in Chelmsford's view the British now needed to pursue 'the consideration and promulgation of a definite policy' and to accompany it with definite action.³² His Government had started from a more theoretical position - not how to appease Indians, but how to take a first step towards the goal of self-government. The result, by the time of the 1916 reforms despatch, had been a cautious compromise; but already there were some proposals - the abandonment of the non-representative idea of electorates - which constituted a new direction in policy. As Chelmsford was to explain later: 'The truth is the millstone of the Morley-Minto reforms is round our necks'.³³ The greatly widened franchise was not thought of as a better method of consulting Indian opinion; it was deliberately designed to help create representative electorates as a small step towards the distant goal of a transfer of power.

The India Office received the reforms despatch in January 1917. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State, wanted time to consider the proposals carefully. He was personally, at this stage, disposed to favour Chelmsford's compromise on the extension of the elective principle in the Councils; but he was doubtful of his ability to decide such questions. He formed a committee of the India Council to consider the despatch.³⁴ In March Sir James Meston, who was in London on deputation with Sinha and the Maharaja of Bikaner, representing India at the Imperial War Conference, reported privately to Chelmsford that the committee had not got beyond shaking their heads over the reforms despatch.³⁵ He was wrong; a few days later the committee made their report. With a few reservations they supported all the Government of India's proposals, but argued that the political changes did not 'constitute a coherent and well thought out plan of reform'. In terms of function the Councils were being left unchanged and this would 'perpetuate and aggravate a vicious system' of representation without responsibility. The territorial electorate would merely return more

³² Chelmsford to Meston, 20 July 1916, Meston Papers 1.

³³ Chelmsford to Curzon, 17 Nov. 1917, CP15.

³⁴ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 10 Jan. & 2 Feb. 1917, CP3.

³⁵ Meston to Chelmsford, 15 March 1917, Meston Papers 1.

of the already over-represented educated classes, who would manipulate their legislative majority, whatever the safeguards, to make the government's position intolerable. Thus the increase in representative character would be no advantage until the councils were given 'some degree of responsibility' for policy.³⁶ The committee had introduced a very important new idea.

Chelmsford insisted that the fault of the Morley-Minto reforms was that they did not attempt to create representative institutions on which responsibility could be devolved. The fact was that they had created a system in which there was no possibility for growth. Chelmsford had argued that they had skipped a whole stage in evolution, and that this had to be undergone before the grant of further powers.³⁷ But this idea, although it methodically prepared for future development, made no attempt to deal with the present faults of the Morley-Minto system. The India Council committee, while broadly accepting the Government of India idea of the goal and agreeing that the Councils should be made properly representative, argued that they would have to be reformed at the same time. Their disabilities demanded this; so did the political situation; so did the Government of India's own argument about the need to educate the Indians in politics - what was the use of the councils, if all that the members learnt was to criticise and obstruct the executive?

Chamberlain accepted the committee's arguments. He explained to Chelmsford, in May 1917, that he had been convinced that they must be ready for 'bold and radical measures'. He had consulted Sinha who had urged that the reforms must give 'increased responsibility to the elected representatives' and that a mere increase in numbers was not progressive.³⁸ It was not possible, Chamberlain decided, to continue with a system which made it the 'main function of the Legislative Councils to oppose and criticise the Government while remaining completely free from responsibility for the results of their action'. Chelmsford had introduced a new criterion when he related the proposed reforms consciously and directly to the goal of future self-government; now

³⁶ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 22 March 1917, CP3; Report on G/India despatch, by F.W. Duke, A.A. Baig, M. Hammick, C.S. Bayley, W.D. Sheppard, T.W. Holderness & Lord Islington, 16 March 1917, ACP21/4/4.

³⁷ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 June 1917, CP3.

³⁸ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 2 May 1917, CP3.

this same criterion was being used against the caution of his proposals. Chamberlain had agreed that they must train Indians in self-government, but had argued that it was not enough to train only public servants, local administrators, and electors. They had to train legislators as well, by investing the councils with 'some definite powers and with real responsibility for their actions', including greater authority over provincial budgets 'or some part of them'.³⁹ Chamberlain gave no indication of how 'some' (but not all) powers and 'real' (but not complete) responsibility could be given. But, by postulating popular control over 'part' of the budget, he made what was probably the first authoritative endorsement of the idea of a division of powers, the direction in which his thinking was to lead. On 22 May he explained to Chelmsford that the 'kernel' of the problem was 'the devolution of power and responsibility within such limited spheres as may at present be practical and safe'.⁴⁰ The first question, however, was how to proceed.

The Government of India originally envisaged a fairly rapid response to their proposals. But the war dragged on, and the prospect for an early advance grew more remote. At the beginning of May 1917, Chelmsford suggested to Chamberlain that he visit India and consult directly with the Government on the measures to be taken. 'You realise, I am sure,' Chelmsford wrote, 'how big the question is and how a visit from the Secretary of State would impress [the] imagination of [the] people'.⁴¹ Chamberlain did not favour this idea. He did not wish to leave England, on public grounds, and he was worried that a visit by the Secretary of State might be embarrassing to the Government of India and prejudicial to their authority. He had been considering appointing a committee to visit India.⁴² Some form of investigation was clearly necessary. The India Office had decided that the Government of India proposals did not go

³⁹ Ibid., & 15 May 1917.

⁴⁰ S/S to V, 22 May 1917, H.Poll. 305, July 1917. R.C. Majumdar is one of the few to have recognised Chamberlain's contribution; see R.C., with A.K., Majumdar, op.cit., 262-263 - see 261-287 on the reforms generally.

⁴¹ V to S/S, 1 May 1917, CP8.

⁴² Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 22 March, & 2 & 15 May, CP3, & see S/S to V, 22 May 1917, CP8.

far enough, and also had noted that official opinion in India spoke with a great number of different voices - the disagreements were to be carefully summed up, as arguments for an impartial enquiry, in an India Office memorandum written towards the end of May. Earlier in that month suggestions had been made for a parliamentary committee to consider the problems and report on the merits of the different schemes. Lord Islington, the Under Secretary of State, favoured an authoritative committee of enquiry by about five persons.⁴³ Sinha, who at one stage, until dissuaded by Meston, had thought of raising the question at the Imperial War Conference, was now urging free and public discussions of any reforms scheme before it was approved.⁴⁴ Chamberlain, having received this advice, decided on a small mainly private enquiry sitting in India for not more than one cold season. He explained to Chelmsford that he believed it was necessary for the impulse for change to come from outside the government - no bureaucracy would ever transform itself into self-government: the very virtues of bureaucrats, he claimed, 'are inimical to a Parliamentary system, and it is inevitable that they should magnify the difficulties and the dangers of any change'. The Secretary of State could not provide this independence - if he were in India, moreover, 'all eyes would turn ... to him, ... and he would be regarded as superseding' the Viceroy.⁴⁵ Chamberlain put his proposal before the British War Cabinet.⁴⁶

The Government of India were vehemently opposed to this idea. Chelmsford explained that the need was for speed - a committee would mean delay. It would also probably comprise people who were 'impartial', that is, Chelmsford claimed, 'people of definite political views but no experience of India'. How would they find members acceptable both to them and to Indian opinion? There would be an outcry if the committee recommended less than the Government; but it would be even worse if they recommended more - only the Secretary of State could do this as he was even more responsible for India than the Government. The questions to

⁴³ India Office Memorandum on Reforms, 24 May 1917, ACP21/4/5; Islington to Chamberlain, 11 May 1917, ACP21/5/10.

⁴⁴ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 8 May 1917, CP3; & see Meston to Chamberlain, 16 April 1917, ACP12/154.

⁴⁵ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 15 May, & also 29 March 1917, CP3. Chamberlain saw a commission as a conservative influence, a means of gaining authority to stand up to 'preposterous' demands from the Indian politicians, who had 'found out how to agitate'.

⁴⁶ Chamberlain, Cabinet minute, 22 May 1917, ACP21/4/16.

be decided, Chelmsford asserted, were questions of policy and not of fact. The decision could not be transferred away from those responsible.⁴⁷ Meston had written to Chelmsford privately recommending that he should 'accept a Commission and make sure of the personnel' - in the India Office, he reported, the atmosphere was 'very conservative'.⁴⁸ If there had to be a committee, Chelmsford argued, it should sit in India, as a small body of officials and non-officials, consulting official records and hearing selected witnesses in private, and then reporting to the Government of India. Of the members, one third (including the President) should be non-officials appointed by the Secretary of State, and the remainder should be Indians and officials selected in equal numbers by the Government of India.⁴⁹ But even to such a committee Chelmsford would still have had the strongest objections. His disapproval was shared by the new Home Member, Sir William Vincent, and endorsed by the Executive Council.⁵⁰

Chamberlain asked, what was the alternative? He had become even more convinced that it would be wrong for him to visit India as Secretary of State, and it was impossible to take the decision by mail. In June 1917 his resolve was strengthened by the report of the Mesopotamia Commission which, in investigating the reasons for the failure of the Mesopotamia campaign against the Turks, had criticised 'Hardinge's attitude to his Council' and challenged 'the constitutionality of his proceedings' - Chamberlain observed that this had brought suspicion on the Government of India as a whole, so that there was likely to be a demand for an enquiry even without reforms proposals.⁵¹ Chelmsford continued to oppose the plan, but concluded, as he admitted to Chamberlain, that he was 'flogging a dead horse'.⁵² It seemed probable at this stage that a committee of enquiry would be appointed.

From a very early stage there had been a second element in the reforms discussions. In June 1916, Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, had called for a statement on government policy. He wanted

⁴⁷ V to S/S, 30 May 1917, CP8; Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 May 1917, CP3.

⁴⁸ Meston to Chelmsford, 5 April 1917, Meston Papers 1.

⁴⁹ V to S/S, 30 May 1917, CP8.

⁵⁰ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 13 & 31 May, CP3, & V to S/S, 18 May 1917, CP8. See also G.N. Barnes to Chamberlain [June or July 1917], ACP12/10.

⁵¹ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 14 & 27 June 1917, CP3.

⁵² Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 26 May 1917, CP3.

it to stem the advance of the Home Rule movement, which he called the only 'live policy' before the country. He continued his pleas in July, when they were joined by those of Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, who wanted a statement that India's interests were not being jeopardised by the postponement of reforms discussions during the war.⁵³ Chelmsford recognised that the intention was that the declaration should tell Indians that immediate or early Home Rule was out of the question; Chelmsford was opposed to this 'non possumus' approach. He wanted to be able to say: 'You cannot have that, but I will give you this.' Thus, in his view, nothing short of full disclosure of the Government's plans would be useful.⁵⁴ Chamberlain agreed. He thought it would be impossible to make a declaration which would satisfy the public Willingdon had in mind and yet not be open to a wide range of interpretations: the British should deal with discontent, he suggested, by introducing practical reforms not by coining new phrases.⁵⁵ He had some doubts momentarily in November, when he was faced by suggestions that, without a declaration, the moderates would be swept away at the next Congress session. He was not convinced, but asked Chelmsford if it would be helpful to announce, without defining how the policy would be fulfilled or what shape self-government would take, that in future Indians would be increasingly associated with government, and that the Civil Service would have to learn to persuade and not command.⁵⁶ Chelmsford remained sceptical; he replied that he was 'doubtful whether any statement ... would be of any value unless it specifically stated [the] advance which we were prepared to make'.⁵⁷

His Government intended of course that a formula based on their suggestions should be announced shortly as just such a prelude to specific reforms. But Chelmsford's idea of the 'value' of the announcement differed from Willingdon's. For the Viceroy and his Council - as for Sinha - the announcement was primarily a stage in practical reforms; for Willingdon it was primarily a means of controlling agitation. Thus

⁵³ Willingdon to Chelmsford, 27 June & 8 & 18 July, & Pentland to Chelmsford, 16 July (plus Pentland to Chamberlain, 7 July) 1916, CP17.

⁵⁴ Chelmsford to Willingdon, 25 May & 15 & 24 July, CP17, & 14 July 1916, CP2.

⁵⁵ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 8 & 16 Aug., & to Willingdon, 15 Aug. 1916, CP2.

⁵⁶ S/S to V, 27 Nov., CP7, Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 27 Nov., CP2, & Chamberlain to Willingdon, 30 Sept. (with Crerar to Maffey, 28 Nov.) 1916, CP17.

⁵⁷ V to S/S, 1 Dec. 1916, CP7.

Chelmsford was not immediately swayed by developments among Indian nationalists. In December and January the 'extremists', as Willingdon had predicted, captured the Congress. They decided to formulate, with the Muslim League, a joint reforms scheme and a draft bill to amend the Government of India Act; they proposed to undertake large-scale propaganda in India and Great Britain, to collect a 'National Fund' of three lakhs of rupees, and, at the appropriate time, to send a deputation to petition Parliament.⁵⁸ Meston thought this 'united front' created a serious situation, and, adding his voice to Willingdon's and Pentland's, reported the suggestion of A.C. Mazumdar, the Congress President, that there should be a formal proclamation recognising the ideal of self-government.⁵⁹ Indeed it might have been expected that the Lucknow Pact would have had a decisive impact on government thinking. Among the lower reaches of officialdom, Hindu-Muslim entente seems to have been regarded - in the Panjab during the 1919 disturbances for example - with a mixture of suspicion, alarm and scepticism. But Chelmsford did not give it this emphasis. He continued to insist that the government could combat agitation only by formulating their own policy. His persistence emphasises again that discussions on reforms had started before the nationalist upsurge and not in response to it. For some the Lucknow Pact gave added urgency to their demand for a declaration; for Chelmsford it had no immediate impact on policy and merely added to his awareness of the seriousness of the situation.

Chelmsford went on believing that the declaration should be made by the Secretary of State so that it would be 'final and authoritative'. Later he was to admit: 'Perhaps if I possessed Hardinge's gift of honeyed phrase, which I do not, I might have staved off agitation for a while'; but he remained convinced that any statement he could have made would have been condemned as vague and taken on appeal to the Secretary of State.⁶⁰ He believed also that 'piecemeal publication' would not satisfy opinion but would give rise to demands for action on whatever was omitted - and give the impression, when further steps were announced, that the Government were giving way under pressure and could be 'squeezed'.⁶¹ A decision of the British Cabinet was therefore needed

⁵⁸ Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, 'Congress Memorandum on Reforms', with Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 28 Dec. 1916, CP2.

⁵⁹ Meston to Chelmsford, 11 & 12 Jan. 1917, CP18.

⁶⁰ Chelmsford to Montagu, 28 Aug. 1917, CP3.

⁶¹ Chelmsford to Willingdon, 21 Jan. 1917, CP18.

on the whole question of the reforms. Willingdon's approach would be both bad propaganda and bad policy. It was agreed in India that an announcement should be the first stage; but it was advocated for widely differing purposes.

In May 1917, when they heard that Chamberlain planned a committee of enquiry, the Government of India decided unanimously that it would not be safe to wait any longer for an announcement. The Russian Revolution had had an effect on India; and the Home Rule agitation was winning attention and raising expectations among those hitherto of less advanced views. To avoid further moderate defection, the Government of India asked the Secretary of State, in a telegram of 18 May, for permission to publish the explanation of the goal given in the 1916 reforms despatch. They proposed to announce that they intended to institute real and immediate reforms in local self-government and the public services, and to take steps towards the ultimate enlargement of the powers of the legislative councils. The intention was to recognise 'self-government within the Empire as a legitimate and praiseworthy aspiration deserving all encouragement', but to warn against 'revolutionary changes or rash experiments'. The Government admitted that there 'must be honest differences of opinion as to the rate of progress', but wanted to oppose those who, in the official view, were unscrupulously placing 'before an ill-informed public a political programme impossible of early attainment'.⁶²

The Government had simplified their demands on the British Cabinet, but they had not been converted to Willingdon's idea of a declaration merely to combat agitation. They were not suggesting a non possumus statement: the goal was specifically to be linked to immediate advance in certain directions. But they were willing, as they had not been before, to announce the goal and the lines of advance at a time when for details they could only add (as they proposed to do) that proposals were being considered by the Secretary of State. Until May the Government had been ignorant of the India Office reactions to their despatch - seven months had passed with little sign of progress - but they had expected a reply in the near future and therefore resisted local government demands for an announcement without details of reforms. Early in May, however, they were faced with the prospect of Chamberlain's committee of enquiry, and it became obvious that, if they continued to insist on announcing the goal and the reforms together, there would be

⁶² V & V(HD) to S/S, 18 May 1917, CP8.

no announcement for a long time, probably for several years. Thus, although the Government did not like the Willingdon approach and had not abandoned their objectives, they decided that they would have to issue a statement as a temporary stop-gap.⁶³ Agitation was alarming enough, but more alarming still was the prospect that Indian expectations would generally be raised unduly high - it was necessary to keep them within limits which bore some relation to what the Government expected to be able to concede. Chelmsford was aware that in detail the 1916 despatch was no longer adequate: 'I can only say,' he wrote to Chamberlain early in May 1917, 'that, having regard to the pace the world is moving, it almost appears to me reactionary'.⁶⁴ Clearly if the reforms were delayed too long, and the world continued to move, there would be little prospect of giving satisfaction to Indian aspirations.

After his wavering in 1916, the Secretary of State had remained firmly opposed to any announcement of the goal. In April 1917 Meston had reported that the King was personally opposed to a Royal Proclamation, feeling that he had been pestered enough as a result of the last one in 1911; in addition the India Office was apprehensive about any declaration.⁶⁵ Chamberlain shared the view of an India Office memorandum, that 'Issues of high policy must be settled before the formula can be touched'.⁶⁶ Thus he refused to allow a unilateral declaration by the Government of India; he insisted that the Home Government had to consider the issues first. But at the same time, on 22 May, when first putting forward his suggestion for a committee of enquiry, he asked the British Cabinet to consider making 'some general statement of ... policy'.⁶⁷ On 2 May he had reported to Chelmsford that he had 'more than once' dissuaded the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, from discussing India at the British or Imperial War Cabinets.⁶⁸ But

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Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 19 May, CP3, & to Willingdon, 21 May 1917, CP18.

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Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 May 1917, CP3.

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Meston to Chelmsford, 5 May 1917, Meston Papers 1.

66

India Office Memorandum on Reforms, 24 May 1917, ACP21/4/5.

67

S/S to V, & Cabinet memorandum by Chamberlain, 22 May 1917, ACP21/4/16-17.

68

Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 2 May 1917, CP3.

he had nevertheless begun to accept, in the face of the entreaties from India, that a declaration was necessary. The Government's telegram of 18 May had apparently finally made up his mind. He had also discussed the question with Meston, who urged an announcement in a note of 21 May.⁶⁹ Chamberlain had been finally and, he said, 'reluctantly' converted to the idea. But he still did not favour an elaborate formula, believing that it would stimulate controversy, and he wanted the statement to concern itself with the policy and not the goal of the government. He was still unwilling to prejudge the 'Issues of high policy'. He advocated a short and informal statement that the British intended to develop free institutions in India with a view to ultimate self-government, but that the stages must be at the discretion of the government. He had consulted with Sinha, who had seemed willing to accept this last condition.⁷⁰

In the following months Chelmsford repeated his demands, which became more and more strident. Early in June he urged an immediate announcement, if necessary, along the lines of Chamberlain's proposal.⁷¹ (He did not consider Chamberlain's formula to be very different from that of the Government of India - although he had hoped that the Secretary of State would find it easier to express the necessary qualifications in language 'which holds out a hope but which is free from ambiguity'.)⁷² Chelmsford was ever more conscious of the rapidity of political change; early in July he wrote: 'It is at least doubtful now whether the proposals in our telegram of 18th May, which would have been effective six weeks or two months ago, are suitable under present conditions'.⁷³ The local governors were by now unanimous in demanding an early announcement. The internment of Annie Besant had resulted in an unexpected upsurge in the Home Rule movement; in India, as in England, it was recognised that the report of the Mesopotamia Commission had had a 'disastrous' effect on the government's prestige. Meston reported that

⁶⁹ Meston, 'Note on Constitutional Reforms in India', & Meston to Chamberlain, 21 May, & Chamberlain to Meston, 19 June 1917, ACP21/5/24-26.

⁷⁰ J.B. Brunyate to Chelmsford, 20 June 1917, CP15; Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 2 & 15 May 1917, CP3.

⁷¹ V to S/S, 11 June 1917, CP8.

⁷² Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 June 1917, CP3.

⁷³ Ibid.

'the air has never been thicker with suspicion'; he believed that 'the anti-Government and almost the anti-British feeling among the advanced party is stronger than I have every seen it. Everything that we do is misrepresented.... The misunderstandings are spreading into wider circles ...'.⁷⁴ For his part Chelmsford had clearly become very irritated at the delays in London. Almost a year later he reacted with irony to the memory of this period: Montagu had told him that Chamberlain regarded himself as the 'father and mother' of the reforms, Chelmsford was glad to hear it - it was, he suggested, 'Perhaps the exercise of this dual function [which] led a year ago to the prolongation of the period of gestation almost to danger point'.⁷⁵

Chamberlain circulated Chelmsford's repeated telegrams to the Cabinet and urged immediate discussion of his own proposals.⁷⁶ The question went twice before the Cabinet (only once in the presence of the Prime Minister), but no decision was taken. By 5 July Chamberlain had abandoned hope of an early solution. He reported to Chelmsford, however, that Lord Curzon, who at first had concurred in the suggestion of a committee of enquiry, at the second Cabinet had argued that Chamberlain had been too hasty in rejecting the Viceroy's invitation to visit India. Chamberlain had again argued against a visit by a Secretary of State, but had expressed his willingness to resign in order to become chairman of a commission. He had also expressed reluctance to take on himself the whole burden of such a momentous decision. Curzon had then pointed out that, if he went as Secretary of State, he would still have advisers associated with him - and the other members of the Cabinet, Chamberlain reported, had seemed to favour this idea.⁷⁷ Chelmsford was 'delighted' at this prospect.⁷⁸ But at the same time he set out a full account of his position. The Home Government, he insisted, should either give the Government of India a free hand, or state clearly that the solution of Indian problems

⁷⁴ Meston to Chelmsford, 25 July 1917, CP19. See also Meston, 20 June, CP18, & 7 July, & Robertson, 15 July, & J.B. Wood (Political Secretary, F&PD) to Chelmsford, 20 July, & Chelmsford to Robertson, 21 July, & to Meston, 23 July 1917, CP19.

⁷⁵ Chelmsford to Montagu, 27 July 1918, CP4.

⁷⁶ Chamberlain, Cabinet minutes, 12 & 26 June 1917: see ACP21/4/18-20. See also V to S/S, 21 June & 6 July 1917, CP8.

⁷⁷ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 5 July 1917, CP3.

⁷⁸ V to S/S, 10 July 1917, CP8.

must wait until after the war. He explained to Chamberlain in a letter of 7 July:

I would have made this suggestion before, but it never occurred to me that after our proposals were made, days would slip into weeks and weeks into months without a decision being reached. You must forgive me if I write strongly, but it is only natural that we should feel the position in which we are placed. We are a Government which does not govern, and inasmuch as I took up this question some 15 months ago with the very object of not being caught napping, it is the irony of fate that, when the crisis comes, I have perforce to remain silent. I hold strongly to the principle that you and I must be in complete accord and I have acted loyally on that principle, but from the public point of view I think it would have been almost better that I should have spoken out on my policy at the risk of being censured or recalled than that the Head of the Supreme Government here should appear in a position of hopeless indifference.⁷⁹

Chelmsford now proposed a new formula for a declaration. He telegraphed to the Secretary of State suggesting the following wording:

His Majesty's Government, having considered the proposals of the Government of India, concur in the view of the Government of India that self-government within the Empire is the ultimate goal of British rule in India, but His Majesty's Government, in view of their many grave preoccupations arising out of the war, are unable at present to give consideration to the steps to be taken on the road to that goal. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government would impress on Indian politicians the desirability of patience and abstention from agitation, having in view the fact that the Empire is at the present moment in the throes of a great war.

At the request of the Viceroy, Mr. Chamberlain will visit India in the course of the next cold weather for the purpose of conferring with the Government of India and with representatives of different shades of opinion.⁸⁰

In May the most likely prospect had been for a declaration on policy followed by a commission of enquiry. Now, once again, there was a chance that the procedure would be, as the Government of India wished, a declaration on the goal followed by a visit by the Secretary of State.

In July Chamberlain resigned as a result of the strictures of the Mesopotamia Commission on maladministration for which the Secretary of State was ultimately responsible. Chelmsford, both to Chamberlain

⁷⁹ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 7 July 1917, CP3.

⁸⁰ See above, note 78.

and to the Prime Minister, immediately expressed, in addition to his regret, his concern for the fate of his policy. To Edwin Montagu, Chamberlain's successor, he offered his congratulations and at the same time stressed his hopes for an announcement and renewed his invitation to the Secretary of State to visit India. In August he reported a 'positive increase in urgency' and suggested yet another formula for a declaration - it followed roughly the lines proposed in July, expressing 'sympathy' for India's aspirations, but excluded any mention of the Secretary of State's visit. Chelmsford had modified his original stand: the positive advance, which had once been a sine qua non, was now reduced to a promise to examine the first steps, postponed because of the war, 'at the very earliest opportunity'.⁸¹ At the end of July a joint session of the Congress and the Muslim League under the presidency of Surendranath Banerjea, the 'moderate' leader, had endorsed a scheme of reforms calling for full legislative powers and elected majorities to be conceded to both the provincial and the Imperial legislatures at the end of the war. They had also demanded a pronouncement of the goal of British policy, the publication of the Government of India proposals of 1916, and the reversal of the policy of repression (to be symbolised by the release of Annie Besant).⁸² Opinion was coalescing against the government, and Chelmsford accordingly tried to streamline his demands in the hope of an immediate decision by the British Cabinet. His Government still maintained their view - as they explained on 12 August, 'A mere pronouncement as to the goal ... would not ... now meet the requirements of the case unless accompanied by some indications that an investigation will be undertaken as to the steps proposed in the immediate future for the attainment of the goal'.⁸³ In Chelmsford's formula these indications had appeared at their simplest, in the minimal form acceptable to the Government, as a promise of 'the very earliest' examination. The Government had moved a long way in their efforts to extract an announcement from the British Government.

Chelmsford had asked Montagu, on 8 August, to impress on the Cabinet that political agitation made it 'imperative' to have an

⁸¹ V to Prime Minister, 16 July, & to S/S (Montagu), 18 July & 2 Aug. 1917, CP8.

⁸² Banerjea to Chelmsford, 7 Aug. 1917 (plus Resolution, Congress/League Joint Session, Bombay, 28-29 July 1917), H.Poll. 638, Nov. 1917.

⁸³ V(HD) to S/S, 12 Aug. 1917, CP8.

announcement before the end of August. The Viceroy's patience was at an end. His telegram, when read in conjunction with his letter of 7 July to Chamberlain (which would have been due to arrive in the India Office), was in essence an ultimatum. He explained further in a letter to Montagu on 7 August: if Montagu did not make 'some announcement ... in the course of this month', Chelmsford warned, '... I shall have to speak very fully on our policy when I meet my Council' - the deadline was the opening of the Imperial legislature on 5 September. 'I have endeavoured to act in strict loyalty to the Secretary of State and His Majesty's Government,' Chelmsford went on, echoing the passage in his letter of 7 July when he had written of speaking out at the risk of censure or recall, 'and I think I have a right to ask that we should not in consequence be left in the lurch.'⁸⁴

In Montagu Chelmsford had a firm supporter. By the beginning of August the new Secretary of State had 'come to be eager' that the Cabinet would consent to his visiting India. At the end of July he had addressed a memorandum to the War Cabinet, seeking to reopen the question of the Indian reforms. In reply to Chamberlain, the Cabinet had claimed that it was impossible 'in the midst of a great war to give adequate time and thought' to such a question. Montagu pointed to the urgings of the Indian officials: 'I feel,' he wrote, 'that our duty to the Viceroy requires that he should be put in possession of a definite policy with which he and his Government can meet ... the growing Indian "opposition".' Montagu then introduced a very important new idea - endorsing the demand implicit in Chelmsford's urgings - 'We must endeavour,' Montagu told the Cabinet, 'to find some immediate announcement without prolonged discussion ... or efforts to solve vastly complicated questions'.⁸⁵ The India Office had insisted that the policy had to be decided before the formula. Montagu had turned this proposition on its end.

In the first weeks of August, he tried to secure a Cabinet discussion but found the Cabinet 'awfully preoccupied'.⁸⁶ At last, however, the discussion was agreed to. Montagu armed himself with a letter of support from Chamberlain; he lobbied every member of the inner Cabinet; he breakfasted with the Prime Minister on the day of

⁸⁴ V to S/S, 8 Aug., CP8, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 7 Aug. 1917, CP3.

⁸⁵ Montagu to Chelmsford, 3 Aug., CP3, & Montagu, Cabinet memorandum, 30 July 1917, ACP15/5/5.

⁸⁶ Montagu to Willingdon, 3 Aug., MP16, & S/S to V, 1 Aug. 1917, CP8. The 'Cabinet' was the Imperial War Cabinet, an inner group, supplemented from the larger according to the subject discussed; see A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945, Harmondsworth 1970, 111-112, & Stephen Roskill, Hankey, Man of Secrets, London 1970, 334-375.

the discussion. During the meeting he secured the cooperation of Lord Curzon; and the War Cabinet approved both a declaration and a visit to India by the Secretary of State to discuss the practical reforms. The Government of India had gained what they had so long been demanding. In his memorandum Montagu had adopted Chelmsford's view in strongly advocating the visit rather than a commission - Chamberlain had drafted a possible reference for a commission, and Montagu appended this to his memorandum as an indication of how 'alarming' and 'abhorrent' such a commission would be. By this time Chamberlain had changed his mind and also favoured accepting Chelmsford's invitation. Montagu had also supported the Government of India view that the declaration must include some statement as to action. His proposed formula included Chamberlain's version of the policy as 'the gradual development of free institutions ... with a view to ultimate self-government within the Empire'; otherwise Montagu's proposals were based broadly on the Viceroy's suggestions. The Cabinet changed the wording of the declaration, but in substance accepted all these proposals.⁸⁷

They had also accepted Montagu's reversal of the usual order of procedure. Faced with demands from India and at the insistence of the Secretary of State, the Cabinet had approved a declaration of policy at a time when they had not considered how that policy could be carried out. At Chelmsford's insistence, supported by Montagu, they had also agreed to announce immediate steps towards the formulation of a specific policy. Thus, unwittingly but irrevocably, without ever squarely considering the issue, they had committed themselves to approving in the fairly near future some considerable political advance for India.

The Cabinet had been divided on this question. Balfour, the Foreign Secretary (outside the War Cabinet), had opposed Montagu on his proposed announcement. Their disagreement hinged on the word 'self-government' - Balfour objected to making any such promise; Montagu insisted that the promise was essential, that without some mention of self-government the announcement would be useless: the choice, he believed, was not between that word and another, it was between that announcement or no announcement at all.⁸⁸ Curzon had intervened in the

⁸⁷ Montagu, Cabinet memorandum, 30 July 1917, ACP15/5/5; Chamberlain, draft terms of reference for a commission, ACP15/4/24; Chamberlain to Montagu, 8 Aug., ACP15/5/3, & S/S to V, 14 Aug. 1917, CP8.

⁸⁸ Montagu to Chelmsford, 7 Aug. 1917, ACP15/5/2.

Cabinet with the suggestion that 'self-government' should be replaced by 'responsible government'. What was vital for Montagu's proposal of course was the concurrence not of Balfour but of Curzon, Lord President of the Council, who regarded himself as holding a watching brief for the War Cabinet over all Eastern policy. Thus Montagu, although he would have preferred 'self-government' (as a word 'current in Indian discussion'), did not oppose the change - he was satisfied with the 'great liberality' of the formula Curzon had produced.⁸⁹ The final version, as read by Montagu in the Commons on 20 August 1917, was:

The policy of his Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the Administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.

Montagu thought that this probably pledged more than his formula: it committed the Government, as far as he could see, to 'some form of Parliamentary institutions'.⁹⁰ He did not point this out to the War Cabinet. Thus the British Government had not only committed themselves to political advance for India; it seemed that they had committed themselves to the form of that advance. They were apparently not aware of this; they had not considered in detail how responsibility could be 'progressively' realised. Curzon contented himself with hoping that in India Montagu would 'not in any way give away the show'.⁹¹ Montagu, by his own interpretation, did not see that he had any choice.

There has been debate on Curzon's contribution to the formula. In the first major account, Lord Ronaldshay, Curzon's biographer, gave the misleading impression that Curzon's position on the idea of reforms was ambiguous, and argued that Curzon adopted the phrase 'responsible government' from a speech made by Lord Islington at Oxford and entitled 'The Problems of Indian Government'. Ronaldshay believed that Curzon also recognised that his formula would lead to parliamentary institutions in India. It is worth noting that this view attributed by Ronaldshay to Curzon coincided, according to his later account, with the view held at the time by Ronaldshay himself: he supported the word 'responsible'

⁸⁹ Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 Aug., ACP15/5/8, & 21 Aug., CP3, & to Willingdon, 23 Aug. & 21 Sept. 1917, MP16.

⁹⁰ Montagu to Chamberlain, 15 Sept. 1917, ACP15/5/8.

⁹¹ Curzon to Chamberlain, 25 Aug. 1917, ACP14/1/5a.

while Governor of Bengal (he claimed) because it disposed of the 'astonishing illusion' that the reforms did not anticipate parliamentary government.⁹² Ronaldshay's interpretation, which has continued to find support, relies heavily on the speculation that Curzon had read Islington's speech before the Cabinet meeting, and had made the underlinings which occur on his copy where there are passages mentioning the words 'responsible government'.⁹³ The view also depends on a remark made by Curzon in a Cabinet minute; referring to the provincial councils Curzon wrote: 'I entertain no shadow of doubt that these bodies will gradually convert themselves into ... small Parliaments'. But Curzon went on in this note to stress that 'The real reform to work for is, however, not so much expansion of powers, ... as ... a more responsible class of non-official member'.⁹⁴ And the lines emphasised in Curzon's copy of Islington's speech advocated 'responsible government' for India, but included the explanations that the representatives would be 'held accountable to constituents free to displace them' if they failed to 'give satisfaction', and that it would be possible 'to make the elected councillors responsible for policy' only if 'a suitable system of elections' had been created.⁹⁵ Thus it is very doubtful that Curzon, even if he had read Islington's speech before the Cabinet meeting, would have understood it to advocate responsible government in the technical sense of government by ministers responsible to parliament; moreover Curzon, like Islington, was interested primarily in ensuring that the electoral system would be improved. Islington's speech may have had some influence on Curzon; but, if so, the nature of that influence has been misinterpreted.

The importance of such influence has also been over-estimated. The minute in which Curzon stressed the need for more responsible non-

⁹² Lawrence, Second Marquess of Zetland, *'Essayez'*, London 1956, 82-83; & see the Bengal recommendations on reforms, especially wider representation on legislative councils, 30 Sept. 1917, *H.Poll.* 571, Oct. 1918.

⁹³ See Ronaldshay, *The Life of Curzon III*, London [1928], 162-169; & also Richard Danzig, *op.cit.*, & 'The Announcement of August 20th, 1917', *Journal of Asian Studies* XXVIII, 1 (Nov. 1968).

⁹⁴ Curzon, 'Note on Indian Reforms for War Cabinet', 27 June 1917, *ACP*21/4/21.

⁹⁵ See Islington, 'The Problems of Indian Government', address at Oxford, 8 Aug. 1917, *ACP*15/5/4 & with Islington to Chelmsford, 9 Aug. 1917, *CP*15.

official members had been written in June, several weeks before Islington had delivered his speech. Curzon wrote a second note in July, giving more emphasis to his opposition to major changes. Part of Curzon's formula may be explained by the views contained in these minutes. His priorities were very similar to those of the Government of India, and it is likely that he had noted the views given in Chelmsford's letters to the Secretary of State - he had been sent copies just over a week before he wrote his minute.⁹⁶ Montagu's (and Chamberlain's) expression, 'the development of free institutions', seemed too open-ended. Curzon therefore reverted to phrases - 'the increasing association of Indians in ... the Administration', and 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions' - which clearly owed something to the main lines of advance suggested in 1916 by the Government of India.

The term 'responsible government' had already been introduced by Montagu. In his minute, then before the Cabinet, he had suggested that he would have no difference with Curzon if the latter would agree that some day some Indian states might enjoy 'responsible government'.⁹⁷ It is also known that Curzon 'laid great stress' upon the reservations suggested by Chamberlain in his letter, which Montagu had shown to the Cabinet: 'by the use of the term self-government', Chamberlain had suggested, they should not 'pretend to define the exact form which that development will ultimately take'; all that was certain, in his view, was that the 'growth of power must be accompanied by growth of the sense of responsibility'.⁹⁸ Both the word 'responsible' and doubts about the word 'self-government' had already entered the debate when the Cabinet met.

In the Cabinet the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, whom Chamberlain had reported earlier as seeming to envisage a far more extensive enquiry on India than he had in mind, interrupted Montagu, objected to 'quarrelling about words', and declared that 'self-

⁹⁶ See above, note 94; Curzon, Cabinet minute on Indian self-government, 2 July 1917, ACP21/4/23; Chamberlain (?), Memorandum on the Viceroy's Formula, ACP21/4/25; Curzon to Chamberlain, 15 June 1917, ACP14/1/4a.

⁹⁷ Montagu, Cabinet memorandum, 30 July 1917, ACP15/5/5.

⁹⁸ Chamberlain to Montagu, 8 Aug., ACP15/5/3, & see Montagu to Chamberlain, & Islington to Chamberlain, 9 Aug. 1917, ACP15/5/6-7.

government' meant what Lord Curzon had said it meant in his second note.⁹⁹ In this note, written in July, Curzon had rehearsed, in a more extreme form, Chelmsford's objection to colonial self-government for India. Chelmsford had not been 'prepared to agree at the present moment'; Curzon had suggested that, by self-government for India, the government did not mean that India would ever 'become a single autonomous ... political unit, in which Indians will be universally substituted for British administrators' - the idea that 'the 250 millions of Indian peoples' could 'constitute a self-governing dominion' was, to Curzon, 'the wildest of dreams'. What self-government did mean to Curzon (and it was presumably to this that Lloyd George referred) was that there would come a time, after 'the area in which self-government exists' had been extended 'step by step', when 'Indian opinion, trained and moulded by experience, will have a predominant influence in the administration of the country'.¹⁰⁰ The term 'responsible government' was used in the declaration as an attempt to find a formula which conformed to, or at least did not contradict, this definition of the goal.

A majority of the War Cabinet evidently shared Lloyd George's view that Curzon had described what they meant by self-government; but they were not satisfied that the word necessarily conveyed their meaning. Obviously it was possible that some Indians might suppose it to mean that universal substitution of Indian for British administrators which Curzon so abhorred. Curzon, therefore, in trying to persuade Balfour, intervened to remove an ambiguity. Lloyd George's support for Curzon's definition probably owed something to a minute written in July by his private secretary, Philip Kerr. In reply to Curzon's first memorandum, Kerr had argued against any extension of the Morley-Minto reforms on the grounds that they were a means of consulting public opinion and not a system of representation capable of development: to extend them would be to 'paralyse' the government without training Indians in 'the real business of self-government'. The line of advance, in Kerr's view, was gradually to relinquish power to alternative local authorities responsible to an electorate large and well-educated enough to keep a tolerable government in power. Such an electorate did not exist in India. Kerr advised, therefore, that the British

⁹⁹ See Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 5 July, CP3, & Montagu to Chamberlain, 15 Aug. 1917, ACP15/5/8.

¹⁰⁰ Curzon, Cabinet minute on Indian self-government, 2 July 1917, ACP21/4/23.

Government should not issue a formula as 'a charter of Indian liberties' until practical policies had been decided, but should seek to reassure Indians that there was no intention of preserving 'the rule of the British Bureaucracy for its own sake' - in a general statement (Kerr suggested) the Secretary of State should announce that self-government was not at present a practical policy, but that after the war the Government proposed to take steps that would allow Indians 'an ever-increasing share in the responsibilities of constitutional government in their own country'.¹⁰¹ Kerr was foreshadowing the view which Chamberlain was to put before the Cabinet. Kerr's line of argument and the statement he suggested also bore a strong resemblance both to that part of Curzon's note endorsed by Lloyd George, and to the final form of the declaration approved by the Cabinet. At the least Kerr probably influenced the Prime Minister; at the most he may have played some part in the formulation of Curzon's ideas as well.

What emerges is that Curzon's formula and the words 'responsible government' were not a sudden and unexpected interpolation; they were the outcome of a trend in terminology and argument which may be traced through the writings of Montagu, Chamberlain, Chelmsford, Kerr and Curzon himself. 'Responsible government' obviously involved a parliamentary system with ministers responsible to the legislature: this, in a limited form and in the immensely distant future, Curzon was prepared to consider; he appeared to expect that it would take decades to create and educate suitable electorates in order to guarantee the representative character of the representatives. This concern for representation - usually involving objections to lawyers - was of course an old conservative argument. But Curzon also insisted that the 'Protecting Power' of the British was the one surety for 'the liberties, the rights, and the progressive emancipation of the Indian masses' - to withdraw would be the 'most reactionary, as well as the most culpable, of crimes'.¹⁰² Yet, even as an ultimate goal, Curzon considered 'responsible government' to be 'rather safer and certainly nearer 'to his own point of view than Chamberlain's

¹⁰¹ Kerr to Prime Minister, 7 July, plus Kerr, memorandum on Indian reforms, 7 July 1917, Lothian Papers GD40/17/32.

¹⁰² See above, note 100. For the traditional conservative view, now being challenged, see above, notes 17, 18, 21, 29, 31, & below, notes 116, 117 & also 121. For background to Curzon's belief in the need for the British to stay in India, see Kenneth Rose, Superior Person A Portrait of Curzon and his Circle in late Victorian England, London 1969, 202.

wording.¹⁰³ Responsible government by Indian ministers was an ideal which would not only be long in achievement; it would also allow the maintenance of a protective British paramountcy. The British Cabinet, with Curzon, envisaged self-government to the extent of granting Indians 'a predominant influence in the administration', but did not contemplate the withdrawal of British power: and they called this strange self-government, 'responsible government'. The attraction of this term was that it was thought to provide a ceiling to 'the association of Indians ... in the Administration' and 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions' - government by Indian ministers was set as the limit of the advance. The ministers would remain, perhaps rather in the fashion of Indian princes, under a paternalistic British suzerainty. Curzon had preferred to state a type of government rather than admit to the possibility of future independence. As it happened, however, the undefined admission of the parliamentary principle and not the conservative aim was to leave the greater mark on India.

As the Declaration of 20 August was announced by Montagu, it has been associated with his name. Montagu's energy had made a contribution, as had the past endeavours and continuing support of Chamberlain. But the Declaration was Lord Curzon's. In the discussion of the wording the Government of India had naturally played small part - after the Cabinet meeting they suggested but had not insisted on two small changes: one of these sought with little success to give the Indian Government more credit for their contribution, by admitting that they had 'for some time been pressing for an announcement'; the other (which was accepted) was a clarification replacing the proposed 'under the aegis of the Crown' with 'as an integral part of the British Empire'.¹⁰⁴ In this one change, while the former version contained rather more of Curzon's idea of the 'Protecting Power', it is difficult to see any significant difference, or indeed any less likelihood of the intention being interpreted as Dominion status. But the Declaration owed more than this to the Government of India - and more than to the presumed familiarity of the key members of the Cabinet with the Indian proposals and Chelmsford's letters and telegrams in particular.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Curzon to Chamberlain, 25 Aug. 1917, ACP14/1/5a.

¹⁰⁴ V to S/S, 15 Aug. (2 telegrams), & S/S to V, 16 Aug. (2 telegrams) & 20 Aug. 1917, CP8.

¹⁰⁵ See above, notes 76 & 96.

The Government of India had begun discussions to plan reforms which led to a definite goal; they had called for an announcement loudly enough to move the Cabinet; and they had insisted that the two elements should go together, that the declaration should be linked, as this one was, to some specific action. This last insistence was important for the future. The Declaration was portentous, but there had been portentous declarations before: the test would be the official interpretation of the statement, and the action based upon it.¹⁰⁶

On the reforms proposals, the main effect of the Declaration was to consolidate and continue the change already admitted by Chamberlain. By his suggestion that it was essential to invest Indian representatives with 'some real responsibility for their actions', Chamberlain restricted the manner in which the legislative councils could be reformed, and ruled out most of the current suggestions for advance. G.K. Gokhale, in his 'political testament', recommended an arrangement whereby the Government of India would relinquish much of their control over the provincial governments, which would be re-constructed so as to give a greater voice to the tax-payers: each local government, made up of a Governor, three Europeans and three Indians, would have independent financial powers and complete charge of the province's internal administration; each legislative council,

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The formulation of the Declaration and its importance have been discussed by S.R. Mehrotra, 'The Politics behind the Montagu Declaration of 1917', in C.H. Philips, ed., Politics and Society in India, London 1963. I agree with much of Dr. Mehrotra's assessment; my account differs chiefly in the interpretation of Curzon's role, in not placing emphasis (at this stage) on Round Table intervention, and perhaps also in this suggestion that the Declaration alone did not mark a fundamental change in policy, needing first to be translated into action by the Montagu-Chelmsford Report and the Reforms Bill, and to be accepted in that concrete form. The significance of the Declaration has been discussed recently in Nicholas Mansergh, The Commonwealth Experience, London 1969, 247-268. Professor Mansergh argues that scepticism about a parliamentary system did not disappear with the war (it re-occurred in the Simon Commission Report in 1929), that in the naming of the 'Morley-Minto' and the 'Montagu-Chelmsford' reforms it 'coincided with political reality' for the secretary of state's name to come before the viceroy's, and that the impetus for change came from the House of Commons and the British people and 'emphatically not from the general body of British administrators or soldiers in India' (see pp. 249, 253 & 255). S.R. Wasti (in Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement 1905-1910, Oxford 1964) has cast some doubt on these generalisations as far as Morley and Minto are concerned. With regard to Montagu and Chelmsford, I argue that the parliamentary system was in effect (and irrevocably) conceded between 1917 and 1919, that the viceroy's role has been underestimated, and that in one sense the impetus for the 1919 changes had come, not from the 'general body', but certainly from British administrators in India.

four-fifths elected, would have to pass all legislation including the provincial budget - the Governor would retain a power of veto and reserve legislative powers would be invested in an enlarged 'Legislative Assembly of India' in which the official majority would be retained. But the government would not be responsible to the legislature, so that elected members would have greater powers but still no responsibility - this scheme did not satisfy Chamberlain's criterion. Neither did the 'Nineteen Members' or the Congress-League schemes, which were based on Gokhale's proposals.¹⁰⁷

One of the current suggestions did meet Chamberlain's requirements. It had been evolved by the Round Table group; this body of people, dedicated to studying imperial problems, had turned its attention to India after the Durbar of 1911, with a view to deciding how India could be accommodated in a scheme for imperial federation.¹⁰⁸ In 1915 Lionel Curtis had completed the first two volumes of his study of the 'Imperial Problems' and had begun to draft chapters on the future of India. With the permission of Chamberlain, he had discussions with friends of official experience; a group of these agreed to work out a constitutional scheme. In March 1916, Chelmsford, who had returned to Britain before taking up the viceroyalty, made contact with Curtis and his group through Philip Kerr, who was a Round Table member. At Chelmsford's request the group showed him the results of their discussions. In May, Kerr sent the Viceroy an amplified version of their memorandum which it was proposed to circulate to other Round Table members. At Chelmsford's request, in view of the Government of India discussions, the memorandum was not circulated. Chelmsford, however, presented it to his Council for discussion, and also sent it confidentially to all heads of local governments.¹⁰⁹ The novel aspect of Lionel Curtis' plan was the idea of 'dyarchy', of dividing the administration on the basis of reserved and transferred subjects, the reserved to be administered in the old way, with the legislature having a purely advisory function, and the transferred to be placed under

¹⁰⁷ G.K. Gokhale, 'Memorandum on Political Reforms', with Crocer to Maffey, 6 Aug. 1917 (sent at Chelmsford's request), CP19. See also above, notes 24, 39 & 82.

¹⁰⁸ 'Draft Round Table article on India', [1912], memoranda on Imperial Parliament plan and representation for India, & other papers, Lothian Papers GD40/17/3, 6, 7, 9, 15 & 16.

¹⁰⁹ Chelmsford to Meston, 5 May, CP17, & to Kerr, 1 July, & Kerr to Chelmsford, 19 May 1916, CP15; Curtis to Chelmsford, 8 Sept. 1917, CP19.

direct legislative control. Two governments - two separate types of administration - would then exist side by side. When he first encountered this idea, Chelmsford found it 'singularly fascinating'. But the Government of India did not favour it. Chelmsford claimed: 'I only realised its difficulties when I listened to the scheme being riddled by the criticism of my colleagues'.¹¹⁰

With Chamberlain's dictum, however, the perspective changed. The Indian representatives could be given responsibility as well as power only if their resolutions were made binding on the Government. But it was not thought feasible to grant them such control over the whole spectrum of provincial administration. A half-way position had to be found; and this meant 'dyarchy' or some other form of governmental dualism. During 1917, therefore, the Curtis plan gained support. It already had its advocates, of course, and had influenced Chamberlain's thinking. Sinha, when Chamberlain consulted him in May before making his suggestion, had endorsed the dualist principle by suggesting that certain heads, such as education, public works or forests, should be placed under the control of reorganised provincial councils which would also retain advisory functions in matters reserved to the government as 'vital to the safety of India'. In April Sinha had spent an evening discussing Indian problems with Meston, Bikaner and a Round Table group.¹¹¹ About the same time, Islington had sent Chamberlain a letter which had been written in March by Bhupendranath Basu and which also suggested 'a division of functions' and a partial change-over to ministerial government if a total transfer of the provincial administration were not possible. Basu had not advocated this at the end of 1915. He had been talking to Lionel Curtis in Delhi.¹¹²

Chamberlain's suggestion was, therefore, a hesitant step towards the endorsement of dualism as presented to him by Sinha and Basu. Other people began to consider alternative ways of meeting his conditions. Meston favoured an idea, which was advocated in slightly different forms also by Kerr and Curtis - a true 'dyarchy' whereby some responsibility would be devolved upon new legislatures for areas smaller than the present provinces, with the existing governments and councils:

¹¹⁰ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 26 May 1917, CP3.

¹¹¹ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 8 May 1917, CP3; Kerr to Curtis, 23 April 1917, Lothian Papers GD40/17/33.

¹¹² Basu to Wedderburn, 27 March 1917, ACP21/5/11; Basu to Sir Theodore Morison, 23 Dec. 1915, ACP14/1/9a.

retained for reserved subjects.¹¹³ Lord Islington, his caution leading him in another direction, suggested in his Oxford speech that it might be sufficient to associate the Indian representatives with the government, perhaps by Standing Committees for different departments, and to introduce responsibility in some informal way by the proper choice of two Indians among a total of four Executive Councillors, and by placing the onus upon the legislature for any policy change made in deference to its wishes.¹¹⁴ This sort of thinking, once it had to be translated into a specific proposal, could only lead nearer to the suggestions of Sinha and Basu.

Arguments for the partial delegation of powers met with a response also in the Government of India. Chelmsford had admitted that the Round Table proposals, although opposed by his Council, did reach the 'kernel' of the problem as presented by Chamberlain.¹¹⁵ Moreover, as early as June 1917, Sir Claude Hill, who from the first had advocated some transfer of power over the budgets and the inclusion of one elected member in the provincial Executive Councils, had recommended giving 'certain real powers of control, in some of the provinces, to responsible Ministers selected from among the elected representatives' as the persons most likely to command a following. He did not approve of dyarchy proper, the suggestion of the Round Table that the government itself should be divided, the ministers taking responsibility only for transferred subjects: Hill felt that the executive council would have to act collectively and that a minister, although put in control of certain departments, would have to resign if he could not support government policy in regard to any department. Hill proposed that the budget would be voted on by the legislature, subject to a power of veto and to the maintenance of appropriations for essential services. He suggested that an additional safeguard might be provided by the establishment in the advanced provinces (where the changes were proposed) of second chambers, one third nominated and two-thirds elected, enjoying the same rights as the legislative councils except for budgetary control, and providing a formula for aristocratic and conservative interests otherwise under-

¹¹³ Minute by Meston, [26 Oct. 1917], H. Public (C) 572, Oct. 1918; Kerr to Curtis, 9 & [12?] July & 2 Oct., & Curtis to Kerr, 28 Aug. 1917, Lothian Papers GD40/17/33.

¹¹⁴ See above, note 95.

¹¹⁵ See above, note 110.

represented in terms of their importance.¹¹⁶ It might have been argued that such chambers would also have reassured the landed classes and their friends among the officials - as Chelmsford reported in August 1917, zamindari associations in Madras, the United Provinces and Sind had passed resolutions which reflected the fear that they were about to be handed over to Vakil raj.¹¹⁷

Undoubtedly, and quite apart from Chamberlain's dictum, the Government of India by the second half of 1917 were ready to contemplate further advances, not necessarily as suggested by Hill, but certainly in the direction of further concessions to the legislative councils. In May Chelmsford reported his colleagues steadfast in the view of the 1916 reforms despatch, that the sphere of advance should be in local self-government and the public services.¹¹⁸ Early in August he wrote to Montagu that 'what would have satisfied six months ago will not give satisfaction now, and similarly what will suffice now will be useless six months hence': the reason, he claimed, was the situation created by political agitators.¹¹⁹ In that month a majority at a conference of forty-three Congress delegates, foreshadowing Gandhi, voted in favour of the immediate adoption of passive resistance - the withdrawal of all non-official Indians from all forms of public work connected with the government.¹²⁰

There were of course objections to the sort of advance that was being contemplated. These were of two types, one conservative, the other practical. Both were to be ignored. Thus Sir Michael O'Dwyer complained in May that there seemed to be a danger that the reforms would be based on the expediency of satisfying politicians, and would disregard 'the views and needs of the solid masses'. But Meston, in a minute written in October 1917, explained: 'We must have a profound belief that the placid pathatic [sic] contentment of the

¹¹⁶ Hill to Chelmsford, 26 June 1917 (plus a note on the reforms), CP16.

¹¹⁷ Chelmsford to Montagu, 7 Aug. 1917, CP3.

¹¹⁸ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 26 & 31 May 1917, CP3.

¹¹⁹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 7 Aug., & see also 28 Aug. 1917, CP3.

¹²⁰ See Ronaldshay to Chelmsford, 13 Aug. 1917, CP19. The minority (13) succeeded in having the question referred to the Provincial Congress Committees; the next Congress gave it no support. See Robertson to Chelmsford, 8 Sept. 1917, CP19. Jagdish Saran Sharma, Indian National Congress: A Descriptive Bibliography of India's Struggle for Freedom, Delhi, Jullundur, Lucknow 1959, 449, gives (in the Chronology) a slightly different account: passive resistance was approved by the Madras Provincial Congress Committee on 14 August 1917, deferred by them 'having regard to the altered circumstances' on 28 September, and finally dropped at the joint Congress-Muslim League session at Allahabad on 6 October. In this case the release of Annie Besant also would have helped.

masses is not the soil in which Indian nationhood will grow, and that in disturbing it we are working for India's ultimate good'. On the other hand, Meston, in this same minute, argued that it was impossible as yet to advance in the Councils and made his suggestion for total self-government at a level below the provincial one. There was, he claimed, no half-way position between executive and popular control, for in any mixed system one side would have to give way when conflict arose - if it was to be the legislature then the concessions were a sham; if it was to be the government then home rule had already been attained. Meston opposed the various schemes which suggested partial devolution to the councils. He asserted: 'An independent legislature and an irremovable executive are utterly incompatible.' It was impossible, in his view, to have (or in these schemes to avoid) an executive responsible to the Secretary of State and a legislature responsible to the electorate; it was equally impossible to have (or avoid) 'a distribution of power which enables the legislature to paralyse the executive, but never to remove it'.¹²¹ To this logical and practical objection, Hill's and all such dualistic proposals had no answer.

Yet, as Meston had also insisted on an earlier occasion, it was impossible to stand still. The Government had to respond to the changing political situation. After the August Declaration, the immediate danger of passive resistance passed - the proposal was not endorsed by the Nagpur Congress. But Indian demands were unabated: the Government had to go some way towards meeting them. Indeed the demands were increasing: all the time the Government had to go further. Even Meston's scheme of local parliaments was to be a casualty - in its refusal to change the provincial councils it had too much of the appearance of standing still. The Declaration, therefore, found the Government of India ready to contemplate an increase in the powers of the legislative councils, an advance which they had condemned as premature and inappropriate. Chelmsford still insisted that they 'must not be oblivious of considerations of safety'.¹²² But his recognition that 'the world has moved' and his implicit admission that the British proposals must remain within reaching distance of Indian demands, were enough to ensure that as time went on his position would also move and

¹²¹ See above, note 113, & O'Dwyer to Chelmsford, 27 May 1917, CP3.

¹²² Chelmsford to Montagu, 28 Aug. 1917, CP3.

he would be prepared to recommend larger concessions. Meston argued, in a private letter to Chelmsford, 'a year ago, the enlargement and popularisation of the Legislative Councils ... seemed as much as we could hope to accomplish and as much as thinking India would expect. But the position had greatly changed since then, both inside and outside India; and power without responsibility has been pushed into the region of the impossible'.¹²³ In September Chelmsford admitted that with the developments in the situation it was now possible that they would have to consider some transfer of power.¹²⁴

The Declaration had laid down the direction of the advance. Chelmsford concluded (not altogether wrongly as we have seen) that the use of the term 'responsible government' was an endorsement of the consideration put forward by Chamberlain: the Declaration had ruled out 'power without responsibility'. The Government of India's reaction was to reopen the question with the local governments. They circulated various reforms schemes - the proposals of Curtis, Gokhale, the Nineteen Members, the Congress and League, and other suggestions by Jinnah and the Aga Khan. Sir Claude Hill's note (slightly altered and re-dated 7 September) was also sent out for comment, although it had not been discussed in the Viceroy's Council. Hill added to his note an assessment of the August Declaration: he had claimed that the Government in their despatch of November 1916 had 'definitely abandoned the position that legislative Councils are not to develop into Parliamentary institutions'; the Declaration, he now added, had made a final decision on this issue, and thus all proposals for reform had to suggest machinery suitable, or capable of being developed, for a parliamentary system.¹²⁵

The long-delayed reply to the despatch of 1916 bore out this interpretation of the Declaration. At the end of September, the report of a second special India Office committee, under Sir William Duke, had complained of the failure of the existing constitution to provide for responsibility or administrative experience in the legislatures,

¹²³ Meston to Chelmsford, 10 Oct. 1917, CP19.

¹²⁴ Chelmsford to Meston, & to Robertson, 13 Sept. 1917, CP19.

¹²⁵ H.Public(C) 567-575, Oct. 1918 (G/India circular, 6 Sept. 1917, with replies); Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 Sept. (plus Hill, 'Suggestions for change in the Constitution of, and Powers exercised by, Provincial Legislative Councils', 7 Sept.) 1917, CP3. See also Chelmsford to Curzon, 17 Nov. 1917, CP15.

and had recommended by a majority that, while as yet no form of responsibility of the executive to the legislature should be applied, the provincial councils should be allowed 'a definite measure of influence, leading up to eventual control' over portions of the budget and over such subjects as roads, minor irrigation, public health, local self-government, elementary education and excise.¹²⁶ The India Office despatch of 19 October 1917, replying to that of the Government of India almost a year before, in the main approved of the advances proposed in local self-government and the public services, but rejected the suggestions for the legislative councils: the scheme of 1916 gave 'weapons of opposition and offence' but no responsibility in matters of finance and administration. The Secretary of State asked how political training was to be achieved without such responsibility, and stated that one of the principles of the Declaration was that progress must take place 'by the progressive development of self-governing institutions'.¹²⁷

Chelmsford was later to claim privately that Montagu had entered the reforms discussions 'at a moment when the policy was more or less cut and dried: it only wanted to be developed in detail'.¹²⁸ It is easy to see how he came to this conclusion: the central feature of the reforms was the acceptance of the idea of dualism; from Chelmsford's viewpoint this must have seemed to have come at the end of the line of development which had begun when his Council first tried to relate their proposals to the goal of self-government; which had been greatly extended by Chamberlain's endorsement of the objections to power without responsibility and through the rapid changes in the political situation; and which had only culminated and been confirmed in the Declaration of 1917 and the Secretary of State's despatch. In fact of course no decision had been taken before Montagu's arrival in India; but the main criteria for that decision had been established, the main objections had been canvassed, and the main alternatives presented.

¹²⁶ 'Report of Second Special India Office Committee on Indian Reforms' (under Sir William Duke), 30 Sept. 1917, ACP21/4/27.

¹²⁷ S/S despatch, 19 Oct. 1917, H.Poll. 337, March 1918, & ACP21/4/28.

¹²⁸ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 20 Sept. 1918, ACP18/3/15.

Chapter 8. The First Steps

On 10 November 1917 Montagu arrived in Bombay. After spending some weeks in Delhi, he and the Viceroy began a series of formal hearings of local opinion in Calcutta, Madras and Bengal. These were followed by consultations with the local governments and the Government of India in Delhi early in the new year.¹ In the Indian press the Declaration had been received generally favourably, if without enthusiasm.² The Government of India had consolidated this reaction by the release of Annie Besant and the rebuke of Sir Michael O'Dwyer for his speech in the imperial legislature.³ The Secretary of State's visit itself was also intended and arranged as a public relations gesture. Montagu suggested, and Chelmsford agreed, that they should receive deputations formally in public and in some cases follow this with private discussions in camera. The desire for full consultation was stressed in the Government's communique calling for deputations.⁴ Chelmsford sent a circular to heads of provinces urging that 'It is all-important that the interests of every class ... should be represented' - local governments were to point out the need for action to any important group that was not alive to the needs of the situation.⁵ The Home Department also stressed that local governments, while keeping numbers to a manageable size, should take a liberal view in allowing representations.⁶ Montagu was at first distressed by the brevity and formality of the meetings with deputations, and even suspected that the Government of India were trying to hurry him out of the country. But, unlike the Secretary of State, the Government of India had realised that the interviews must be dealt with quickly: as it was, Montagu as well as Chelmsford 'almost danced for joy' when the

¹ See Edwin S. Montagu, An Indian Diary, London 1930.

² V to S/S, 29 Aug. 1917, CP8. The Bengal revolutionaries, however, had condemned it; see Sedition Committee Report 1918, Appendices, p.xxix (Proclamation of the Indian Revolutionary Committee), IOR L/Parl 444.

³ See above, pp. 75-84.

⁴ S/S to V, 24 & 30 Aug. & 21 Sept., & V to S/S, 28 Aug. & 21 Sept. 1917, CP8.

⁵ Chelmsford to heads of provinces, 27 Sept. 1917, CP19.

⁶ HD circular, 14 Sept. 1917, H.Public 453, & see also 451-495, May 1918.

meetings were finally over, and Montagu was later to try to resist Chelmsford's repeated urgings that he should not set a time limit for his departure but should stay until their work was finished.⁷

Opinion in England also had to be cared for, and Montagu wished to associate representatives of conservative and liberal opinion with his mission. Thus, he was accompanied by Lord Donoughmore and Charles Roberts, M.P., in addition to Sir F.W. Duke and M.C. Seton of the India Office, and, at Chelmsford's suggestion, Bhupendranath Basu, newly appointed to the Secretary of State's Council.⁸ In a different way, Chelmsford too sought to take care of important opinion in Britain - he wrote to Curzon, Chamberlain and Lord Selborne, warning that dyarchy was inevitable but, to Curzon, predicting that changes would not be too far reaching.⁹

The idea of an extensive report was, according to Chelmsford, his own. He had, he claimed, 'sketched in broad outline' to W.S. Marris, the draftsman, his idea of 'what shape the Report should take', before Montagu arrived: Chelmsford wanted something weighty to support their proposals.¹⁰ The Montagu-Chelmsford Report, therefore, devoted the first of two parts to a critical survey of earlier constitutional developments; here the central and repeated theme was the inadequacy of the Morley-Minto reforms.¹¹ The conclusion, shorn of the diplomatic language of the Report, was foreshadowed in Chelmsford's letter to Curzon in November 1917: 'The truth is,' Chelmsford wrote, 'the millstone of the Morley-Minto reforms is round our necks. If it were in

⁷ See Montagu, Diary, 7-8, 33-35, 64, 163, 283, 285, 287-288, & 310.

⁸ S/S to V, 24 & 29 Aug. 1917, CP8.

⁹ See Chelmsford to Curzon, 17 Nov. (with a collection of reforms schemes and departmental papers) & 1 Dec., to Chamberlain, 14 Dec. 1917, & to Selborne, 3 Jan. 1919, & see also Chelmsford to Dawson, 17 May 1918, CP15.

¹⁰ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 20 Sept., & to Dawson, 17 May 1918, CP15. (Montagu's Indian Diary does not contradict this assertion.)

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See Montagu to Chelmsford, Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 22 April 1918, Chapters 1 to 6. (The Report may be consulted in several collections, including Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 9109. I have used the signed copy, CP42.) On the drafting, see Montagu, Diary, 338-346, 355, 362 & 358-359. See also the local government reports on the working of the Morley-Minto reforms, H.Public 600-606, May 1918.

the region of practical politics to abandon the present line of advance, I doubt whether there would be a single individual who would say no'.¹² Montagu and Chelmsford had considered possibilities of 'wiping out' the Morley-Minto reforms and 'making a new start', but they felt that they had no alternative, for practical and political reasons, but to follow the path already set out.¹³ The grounds for the Report's rejection of the Morley-Minto reforms were strongly influenced by what might be called the United Provinces' attitude - at several points Marris's drafting reflected or quoted Meston's minute of October 1917, which analysed the political situation and the reasons for and the line of advance in terms similar to those of the Report. Indeed in one key passage the Report echoed Meston's minute without acknowledging it - the Report stated, almost in Meston's words, 'We believe profoundly that ... the placid, pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which ... Indian nationhood will grow, and that in deliberately disturbing it, we are working for her highest good'.¹⁴

Chamberlain's letters and the August Declaration convinced Chelmsford that some sort of dualism would be needed in the provinces.¹⁵ The method by which this was to be achieved was also substantially formulated, in spite of the impression given by Montagu's Indian Diary, by the India Office committee set up by Montagu under Sir William Duke before the Secretary of State left England. Duke's report was notable, as we have seen, for the important suggestion that some subjects - sanitation, local communications, local self-government, health, elementary education, and excise - might be transferred to the control of legislatures with small elected majorities, and that the legislatures should vote the provincial budgets subject to powers for restoring or maintaining expenditure for reserved subjects.¹⁶ All the

¹² Chelmsford to Curzon, 17 November 1917, CP15.

¹³ See Chelmsford to Selborne, 3 Jan. 1919, & to Guest, 8 April 1918, CP15.

¹⁴ Montagu & Chelmsford, Report, 71 & see 52; minute by Meston, H.Public(C) 572, Oct. 1918, quoted above, p p.243-244(qv.).

¹⁵ See above, pp.240-245; & Chelmsford to Selborne, 3 Jan. 1919, CP15.

¹⁶ See Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 14 Dec. 1917, CP15; Report of Second Special Committee on Indian Reforms (Sir Wm. Duke) 30 Sept. 1917, ACP21/4/27; & S/S to V, 16 Oct. 1917, CP8. Montagu thought Duke was probably the inventor of 'dyarchy'; see Montagu, Diary, 377.

schemes seriously considered in India were variants of this idea. By the time he was ready to start discussions in Delhi in November Montagu had decided that the elected majorities would have to be substantial and suggested that the future modifications to the reserved and transferred lists should be effected by 'enabling bills' in the Government of India, subject to seven-yearly statutory enquiries.¹⁷

Various means of partially transferring responsibility were canvassed. Two variants of one - suggesting divisional or sub-provincial councils dealing with transferred subjects, and advocated chiefly by Lionel Curtis and the United Provinces under Meston - were discussed and ruled out in the Report, as politically inadequate and confusing controversial geographical adjustments with constitutional upheaval.¹⁸ The other possibilities were to transfer powers either to a separate body at the provincial level - a lower house, or an assembly beside the existing councils - or to a modified single legislature which would also retain advisory functions in relation to reserved subjects. The Report favoured the latter: the legislature as a whole was to vote on the transferred subjects and on the budget, subject to the government's restorative powers for reserved allotments, but legislation for reserved subjects, if the government were to certify it as essential to law and order or the proper discharge of its duty, was to be dealt with by an advisory grand committee drawn from the legislature but retaining a bare majority for the government.¹⁹ The legislative councils were also to be made more representative by the establishment of direct election on the

¹⁷ See ibid., 12-14 (10 Nov. 1917); & Addendum to Duke Memorandum, in Montagu to Chelmsford, 26 Nov. 1917, CP3.

¹⁸ See Montagu & Chelmsford, Report, 116-119; Montagu, Diary, 11-12 & 54; Meston, Memorandum on Reforms Scheme, 20 Jan. 1918, H.Public(C) 590, Oct. 1918; Report of an informal committee appointed to consider the most suitable line of advance towards responsible government, Allahabad, 24 Oct. 1917, & Joint Memorandum from Europeans and Indians (of Bengal), ibid. 579.

¹⁹ See Montagu to Chelmsford, 26 Nov. 1917 (with enclosures), CP3; Montagu, Diary, especially pp. 49, 102-103, 141-142, 147 & 223-224; Montagu & Chelmsford, Report, 106-108, 123-124 & 119-123. The recommendations of the Report, with paragraph references, are summarised in an appendix to that Report; descriptions are widely available, and no attempt is made here to give a comprehensive survey of the proposals.

basis of territorial constituencies, except (reluctantly) for Muslims and Sikhs where they were in a minority. The details of the franchise as well as of the transferred list were to be referred to separate committees of enquiry.²⁰ In all provinces (the Report recommended) government was to be conducted by an Executive Council of one service and one Indian member, and by a Minister or Ministers appointed from the legislature - it was to be government in two halves, one for reserved and one for transferred subjects, but the halves were to associate and deliberate as a whole, only the voting being separate according to subject. The whole government was to decide on the budget, the Governor adjudicating in any difference of opinion.²¹ Originally Montagu had been prepared to delay the transfer of executive powers to ministers until the third legislative council after the reforms (after six years) when the presumption would have been that all subjects would have been transferred in the provinces unless cause was shown why some should be reserved. Meston and others had preferred the immediate transfer of a more limited number (as originally suggested by Duke's committee), and the Viceroy's Council, divided on this issue, had preferred to leave the question until local governments and public opinion had shown their preferences: in the end it was decided to give less sooner.²²

This dualism in the provincial governments was the distinctive feature of the reforms: there are several points worthy of emphasis. It is right to stress that the idea of dualism was not new, but that it was a logical outcome of Chelmsford's questions and Chamberlain's ideas. Progressively larger and larger concessions were proposed as the next step even after Montagu's arrival in India, but after 1916 the line of advance had been seen consistently (if at first imperfectly) as the development of responsible institutions. Moreover if this had not been the case, it is doubtful if the August Declaration would have been interpreted as it was by the reformers - Chelmsford, the Government of India, Duke, Meston, Montagu. On the

²⁰ Montagu & Chelmsford, Report, 110-113 & 114-115.

²¹ Ibid. 106-109.

²² See Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 Jan. 1918, CP4; Montagu Diary, 179-183, 186-187.

other hand, it is also true that the August Declaration needed to be translated into action, and that the interpretation at this time was itself important. Later, officials and observers professed to interpret the Declaration in ways which excluded dyarchy or any transfer of responsibility; the promise of the Declaration was preserved because Montagu and Chelmsford chose not to interpret it in this negative way.

It has been generally assumed that the engineer of the dualist interpretation was Montagu; but it is probable that this idea is false. There were two factors influencing Montagu and Chelmsford: the historical consideration of Chamberlain's and the Round Table's tentative steps towards dyarchy; and the logical consideration that the progressive realisation of responsible government could only be achieved by partial transfers of power. But if we look more closely at the form of the transfer we may see that it corresponds closely to Chelmsford's definition of 'responsible government'; namely, government in which Indians should be able to say, and be known to have said, 'yes' or 'no' on specific policies, and not government in which formal responsibility of ministers to the legislature obtained - for the Indian ministers were at first to be guaranteed their appointments for the life of each council (their salaries were to be a reserved subject).²³ The Government of India were very early convinced that dyarchy could not be avoided. They endorsed the idea in a circular letter to the local governments on 11 December 1917 - they put forward various methods of obtaining some dualism and sought advice not on the principle but on the scheme which produced fewest problems.²⁴ Montagu's Indian Diary, if read carelessly, might give the impression that he was campaigning for the acceptance of dyarchy, not his preferred means of achieving it. In fact there was no argument among the reformers about dyarchy itself: Montagu was its advocate but had no need to be its defender. As for his way of achieving it, the Diary records that in December 1917 Montagu found Chelmsford 'a much more eager convert' than

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See Chelmsford to Guest, 8 April, CP15, & to Ronaldshay, 30 May 1918, CP20, & V(HD) to S/S, 25 April 1919, CP10; Montagu & Chelmsford, Report, paragraph 218.

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H.Public(C) 579, Oct. 1918; & see Chelmsford to Curson, 1 Dec., to Chamberlain, 14 Dec., CP15, & to Islington, 30 Dec. 1917, CP3.

he was himself: 'I am doubtful about it,' Montagu noted, 'because some people really feel they are not ready for any responsibility.'²⁵

The concomitant of progressive transfer of power was progressive devolution to the provinces. This subject too was hardly a new one, and two main rival schemes for financial devolution were in existence before Montagu and Chelmsford began their investigations. Both of these sought to do away with heads of revenue which were divided between the central and the provincial governments, in order that the budgets at each level could be quite independent. The scheme formulated by W.S. Meyer and H.F. Howard envisaged a complicated system of transfers of formerly divided heads, with fixed proportions of income tax and revenue payable to the central government, and subsequent provincial adjustments. Its rival, devised by J.B. Brunyate, proposed that all divided revenue should become provincial, though collected at standard rates fixed by the Government of India, and that fixed cash contributions should be made to the central government. The problem with any scheme was that very different patterns of expenditure and sources of revenue (notably the permanent settlement in Bengal and Bihar) were found in different provinces, so that any standardised system worked to the disadvantage of one province or another. Chelmsford had asked Montagu to consider, before he arrived in India, how this difficulty could be overcome, and also what corresponding relaxations would be possible in the Secretary of State's control over the Government of India. In January 1918 the finance question was placed before a sub-committee of Duke, Meston and Meyer; the Report adopted a modified version of the Brunyate scheme.²⁶

On the wider issues of financial supervision the Government of India had in effect adopted the general principles of a note prepared by Sir L. Abrahams after discussions in the India Office - these amounted to allowing the provinces a certain limited increase in financial independence.²⁷ Again, on the broad question of

²⁵ Montagu, Diary, 149, & see 65, 157 & 176-177.

²⁶ Ibid., 19 & 110; Montagu & Chelmsford, Report, 101-103; Chelmsford to Montagu, 8 Sept. 1917, CP3; Joint memorandum by Sir W. Meyer & Mr. Howard (13 Oct. 1917) & Memorandum by Mr. J.B. Brunyate (30 Sept. 1917), with HD circular, 11 Dec. 1917, H.Public(C) 579, Oct. 1918.

²⁷ Memorandum by Sir L. Abrahams, ibid.; & see another copy of the same, & notes by T.W. Holderness, L. Currie & Sir L. Abrahams, ACP21/2/29-32.

legislative and administrative control, the Government of India had begun investigations among their departments on the possibility for a general relaxation (following conclusions in the Viceroy's Council that this was desirable) - the Government circulated an office memorandum on 12 November 1917, the day after Montagu's consultations first began in Delhi.²⁸ Chelmsford favoured the retention of all the statutory powers of intervention enjoyed by the central government, with relaxations to be introduced by convention; Montagu wanted statutory changes to limit the central authority. The Report adopted Chelmsford's view: Montagu had decided he was ill-equipped to argue the question with lawyers like Chelmsford and Lowndes, and it was agreed that Lowndes should draft the relevant paragraph (212) in the Report.²⁹ Thus, for devolution as for dyarchy, the reforms discussions in India led to results within principles discussed earlier, and in accordance with the preferences of the Government of India.

The agreement in general on the provincial measures did not extend to the question of the Government of India and the Imperial Legislative Council. In December 1917 the Viceroy's Council refused to accept a paragraph introduced by Montagu, Duke and Seton into the Home Department's circular on reforms. The Government claimed that their objection was to committing themselves before they had considered Montagu's proposed changes; but the disagreement soon proved to be more substantial: the Government of India considered that no extensive changes were needed in the central government at this stage. Montagu persuaded them that they must agree to some revision. The Report envisaged, therefore, that the Legislative Council would be replaced by a Legislative Assembly of 100 members with a large, preferably directly elected majority, and a Council of State with a membership of 21 elected members, 4 nominated non-officials and not more than 25 nominated officials, excluding the Governor-General as President. Both chambers were to have full legislative powers, disputes to be resolved by joint sessions, except that the government would retain the power to reserve bills or amendments for decision in the Council of State in matters certified as essential to the interests of peace and order or good government. The budget was not to be voted, but, as in the provinces (though in this case with more limited functions),

²⁸ H.Public 155-171, Sept. 1919.

²⁹ Montagu, Diary, 306-308; Montagu & Chelmsford, Report, 105; Chelmsford to Curtis, 16 July 1918, CP15.

standing committees were to be associated with some government departments. Chelmsford and his Council had fought Montagu at every stage. They were eager that the imperial legislature should be made more representative, but unwilling for it to have wider powers. Gradually they conceded the bicameral principle, with an elected majority in the Assembly; Montagu agreed not to insist on an elected majority in the upper house, and it was decided that official and non-official members should be equal in number. As late as 20 February, however, Chelmsford was still trying to persuade Montagu not to include the central changes as an essential part of their proposals, and not until 6 March was the scheme of the Report accepted by the Government of India.³⁰

On 15 March Montagu tried to reopen the question with an onslaught on compulsory voting by officials, and a proposal that the reserve powers of the Government of India should be vested, not in the official bloc of the Council of State, but in restorative powers for the Viceroy alone. Chelmsford had already allowed officials to vote on occasions as they pleased, and proposed to extend this in practice after the reforms to cover all but essential matters. But neither the Viceroy nor his Council would countenance the complete abolition of official voting. Montagu's 'adlati' refused to support him on this issue, which developed into a 'great row' with Chelmsford, and the Secretary of State withdrew. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report recommended the proposal suggested by the Viceroy.³¹ Thus, although they had had to agree to changes at the centre, the Government of India had not been forced to abandon any principle. The Report stated as general criteria that the earlier steps towards responsible government should be in the provinces, and that the Government of India must remain wholly responsible to Parliament, with its authority in essential matters indisputable.³² These principles would not have seemed out of place in the Government of India's despatch of November 1916.

³⁰ See Montagu, Diary, 48, 85, 90-93, 105, 116-117, 124, 165, 176-177, 194-197, 202, 271, 308-310, 312; Montagu to Chelmsford, Report, 129-135.

³¹ Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 March, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 16 March 1918, CP4; Montagu, Diary, 326-327 & 330; Montagu & Chelmsford, Report, 134, & see also 113 (on the provincial official bloc) & 44-46 (on the defects of the bloc).

³² Ibid., 93-94.

The assessment of the relative contributions of Montagu and Chelmsford to the reforms has been prejudiced by the publication of Montagu's Indian Diary. In several respects this is an unsatisfactory source. Its subject is the preparation and writing of the Report: it omits the role of Chelmsford in beginning discussions on the goal or in urging reforms (although at one point, recording a discussion with a journalist who attributed all to the Secretary of State, Montagu stressed Chelmsford's early contributions).³³ It also makes no attempt to deal with the crucial decisions of the period before Montagu's arrival in India. Moreover, not only is the Diary the impressions of one man; it is also more than usually distorted by circumstances: Montagu was writing or dictating hurriedly at the end of long tiring days, often in bad health, with a fever particularly bad in the evenings, and his opinions were deliberately immediate and not considered. Thus the impression given by the Diary is often intemperate and sometimes contradictory - for example Montagu strongly condemned Chelmsford's formality with deputations on one day, and on another recorded his tactful handling of Annie Besant.³⁴ Finally the Diary is concerned chiefly with recording Montagu's impressions and proposals: it mentions Chelmsford's disagreements, but rarely gives a positive indication of the Viceroy's position.

Montagu praised Chelmsford for keeping the peace between them: the rarity of their quarrels he attributed entirely to Chelmsford's personality, patience, self-control and receptiveness. Chelmsford too found the degree of accord rather than the few disagreements remarkable.³⁵ At the same time and on other occasions, Montagu criticised Chelmsford's lack of constructiveness: soon after his arrival in India, Montagu complained that Chelmsford never expressed an opinion without consulting his Council.³⁶ When, a month later, he made this criticism to Chelmsford himself, the Viceroy replied that he was not, like Montagu, independent: he had colleagues and he was

³³ Montagu, Diary, 96-97.

³⁴ Ibid., 16-17 & 59-60.

³⁵ Ibid., 363 & 369; Chelmsford to Curtis, 16 July 1918, CP15, & see also Chelmsford to Islington, 30 Dec. 1917, CP3.

³⁶ Montagu, Diary, 41 & 363, & see also 16-17, 72, 248, 259-260, 264, 338-346, 356-357 & 359.

right to try to carry them with him if he could.³⁷ Chelmsford interpreted his role later, in a letter to Chamberlain: '... I had the responsibility of keeping the peace and bringing the jarring elements together. Though the Report is his [Montagu's] and mine, its proposals are, I may say, practically the accepted proposals of my colleagues and his'.³⁸ There is no indication of this in the Diary, other than Montagu's final tribute. The original opposition and final agreement of Chelmsford's colleagues are recorded without any indication of attempts by the Viceroy to secure unanimity. Indeed, Montagu had some criticisms of Chelmsford's handling of his Council - on two occasions he felt Chelmsford had been unhelpful through his failure to prepare the members by giving them full details: he had not made it clear to them that in his first scheme Montagu intended the presumption to be that all subjects would be transferred in the provinces after the end of the third council unless the government could show cause for reservation; and he did not inform them of Montagu's designs on the Government of India and his idea for a Council of State. It is difficult not to assume that these omissions were a deliberate tactic, especially as Montagu admitted that the Viceroy had outmanoeuvred him on the first of these occasions, and also earlier by becoming a firm advocate of the revised provincial scheme about which Montagu had come to have some doubts.³⁹ On one occasion Montagu complained that he had to spend his time lobbying Chelmsford's colleagues, 'a task he ought to do himself'. It is fair to assume that Montagu was lobbying for his own scheme; that would have been Chelmsford's 'task' if he had approved of it. But Montagu made this complaint at a time when Chelmsford had expressed his opposition to several features of Montagu's proposals.⁴⁰

While the draft Report was being revised by Montagu, Chelmsford, Duke, Lowndes, Roberts and Marris, the Viceroy set himself up as a judge, making few positive suggestions but adjudicating between the often warring elements of Secretary of State and draftsman.⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid., 110-111.

³⁸ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 17 May 1918, ACP18/3/11.

³⁹ Montagu, Diary, 179-180 & 194-195.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 276. On this occasion Montagu was lobbying Nair. For Chelmsford's disagreement see pp. 269-271 & 274.

⁴¹ Ibid., 338-346.

This summed up Chelmsford's role - from the first Montagu had complained, with reference to the formulation of proposals, 'It is I that have got to do this thing ...'.⁴² It was thus valid and understandable for Montagu to criticise Chelmsford's lack of imagination in regard to details and expedients. We must recognise that this was partly a question of personality and aptitude. But we must also recognise that Chelmsford could not have acted both as a protagonist for particular schemes and as an impartial judge; and that it was by choosing or pretending to be 'impartial' - which meant working as the representative of a Government, not as an individual - that Chelmsford made sure of getting the reforms he wanted.

A comparison between the Home Department circular of 11 December 1917 and the Montagu-Chelmsford Report reveals a large degree of parity between the two. This is no measure of relative influence because of course Montagu was consulted on the circular. What the circular does represent is the level of advance which the Government of India were prepared formally to recommend; and its parity with the Report is in this sense significant. Nothing came of many of Montagu's ideas. We have seen that on no issue of importance did the Report go beyond what the Government of India were prepared to concede. Noteworthy also is Montagu's reaction when the consultations were concluded - before he was reconciled by the satisfaction of being involved in drafting what is a most persuasive and elegantly expressed Report. He complained (my emphasis): 'I have come to an agreement with the Government of India which nobody accepts where I fear that my own proposals may have been spoiled is in my desperate endeavour to find compromises at every stage.'⁴³

This is not to deny that Montagu's pressure moved the Government further than they might otherwise have gone: rather it is to point out that the Government of India effectively set the limits for the Report's proposals. This was the product of Chelmsford's interpretation of his role, his standpoint as a 'constitutional' governor. Its future importance was that it provided weighty endorsement for the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme, endorsement that was to prove invaluable for combatting an intractable opposition among the local governors. Thus there were two distinct roles in the framing of the Report: that of Montagu, with his flair for hitting upon expedients

⁴² Ibid., 10.

⁴³ Ibid., 248.

to carry out agreed changes, and that of Chelmsford, with his more 'prosaic' ability to keep the peace and secure agreement.⁴⁴ And, although Chelmsford may not have made many positive contributions to the details of the scheme, he was not without influence on the proposals; moreover, his strategy was to be of great importance in ensuring that the reforms were accepted.

The picture given by the Indian Diary is thus misleading: Montagu did not wage war when he was in India, making a series of successful forays against the collective enemy - Chelmsford, the Government of India especially Meyer, the local governors, Marris, Vincent. Rather he put forward expedients for achieving agreed ends, which were scrutinised by the experts, led by Chelmsford, and approved or rejected. In positive details, in fertility of mind, Montagu's achievement was very great. In determining the level of advance, the largeness of the concession, Chelmsford and the Government of India had matters very much their own way. This is not to minimise either contribution: it is to describe them.

Montagu's first move, on returning to London, was to secure the support of the Council of India, and (on 29 May) to ask the Cabinet to agree to the immediate publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. For the time the Cabinet were too occupied with war matters.⁴⁵ The Government of India, too, considered the Report. Their despatch recorded that the proposals, although the responsibility of the Report's signatories, had been 'framed after prolonged discussion' with the Viceroy's Council - there were, they admitted, no doubt detailed recommendations on which some of them had divergent views, but they wished to convey 'cordial support to the general policy' of the Report.⁴⁶ Montagu was disappointed with this despatch, but Chelmsford explained that his problem had been to get a consensus between Vincent and Nair - Vincent, in Chelmsford's view, had been difficult because

44 Chelmsford to Montagu, 24 April 1918, CP4, & see Montagu, Diary, 374. See also below, note 108.

45 Montagu to Chelmsford, 31 May 1918, CP4.

46 V to S/S, 15 & 24 May 1918, CP9; & Cmd. 176.

he felt slighted by the rejection of a chapter he had drafted for the Report, because he was strained and overworked, and because he was asked to agree to a cordial despatch just after the Delhi War Conference 'at which he had behaved foolishly' and knew it.⁴⁷

Montagu, about the same time, began to have his own troubles with Lord Curzon. Curzon had 'little complimentary to say about the Report', which he thought 'a confused document' - an attitude which Montagu dismissed as 'only the manner of the grand Mogul'. Curzon, although he generally agreed to publication, had suggested that some of the Report might first have to be omitted.⁴⁸ In the Cabinet, when Montagu managed to secure a discussion, Curzon pointed out the dangers of publication and opposed allowing Montagu and Chelmsford to defend their Report in public. Montagu replied that he and Chelmsford were responsible 'up to the neck', and that he declined to stay in office unless he could conduct a vigorous defence on his own account (while stressing that the Cabinet had not accepted the recommendations). The Cabinet accepted his arguments. They were impressed by the endorsement of the Report by both Montagu's and Chelmsford's Councils; Chamberlain had vigorously supported the Secretary of State; Montagu had discussed the question privately with the other members before the Cabinet meeting: the Cabinet agreed to publish the Report in full without committing themselves to actual proposals.⁴⁹

Chamberlain had hoped that the Government would accept the broad principles set down in the Report - namely that the Government of India must remain capable of imposing its will in essential matters, and that no complete responsibility could be transferred anywhere - and would also agree to the division of subjects and some transfer of responsibility according to the level of advance in each province and with corresponding devolution of central authority and relaxation of parliamentary responsibility: this would fix the limits of the advance, but make sure that there would be no going back on the policy of the Declaration.⁵⁰ Chamberlain had wanted to rule extremists (on both

⁴⁷ Montagu to Chelmsford, 16 May, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 30 May & 27 June, CP4, & S/S to V, 15 May 1918, CP9.

⁴⁸ Montagu to Chelmsford, 16 & 31 May 1918, CP4.

⁴⁹ S/S to V, 29 May & 7 June, CP9, & Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 June 1918, CP4.

⁵⁰ Chamberlain, Cabinet note: 'Mr. Montagu's Report', 6 June 1918, ACP21/6/44.

sides) out of court by making it clear that the Cabinet invited suggestions only in the restricted field within the principles they had approved - they would also have made clear the limits beyond which no agitation would drive them. But the Cabinet were afraid of committing themselves. Chamberlain concluded, 'I think that in this they have made a mistake, and that as a result they are in danger of being carried further than they have any intention of going'.⁵¹

After this defeat Chamberlain tried to achieve the same end by different means. Montagu and Chelmsford had recommended the appointment of two committees to consider the details of the questions of franchise and division of subjects. In June 1918, Chamberlain prepared a memorandum which argued in support of Montagu that the Cabinet should give an earnest of their good intentions by the immediate appointment of these committees - the dangers of delay, as he saw them, were exasperation in India (as reforms had been whittled down in the past) and the chance that these reforms would fail to satisfy by the time they were passed. He had consulted (in addition to Montagu) Sir James Meston and Sir Thomas Holderness. Meston saw no disadvantage in going ahead, as he considered that 'the Cabinet is, by the mere publication of the report, committing itself to the main principles'; Holderness, although he agreed that to appoint the committees would reassure Indian reformers, could not see how they could do their work until the Cabinet had decided what sort of constitution they should plan for, and he also suggested that the appointment of the committees would go a long way towards committing the Government to accept the Report. Chamberlain, agreeing with Meston that it was rather late for such scruples, circulated his memorandum to the Cabinet, inserting a sentence to explain, 'in my view simple publication without note or comment does in fact commit us very deeply'.⁵²

Throughout July Montagu and Chamberlain tried to persuade the Cabinet to appoint the committees. The main obstacle was Curzon, who refused to agree to any steps until he had had time to make up

⁵¹ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 20 June, CP15 & ACP18/3/13, & to Ronaldshay, 7 June 1918, ACP21/5/70.

⁵² Chamberlain, 'The Situation in India' (two drafts), notes by Meston & Holderness, 21 June, Chamberlain to Montagu, 20 & 26 June, & Montagu to Chamberlain, 25 June, & see also extract from Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 17 May 1918, ACP21/5/36-43.

his mind on the Report.⁵³ Montagu suggested in addition to Chamberlain's proposal, that the Government should appoint the third committee suggested by the Report, one to consider the functions and powers of the India Office and the India Council, and that they should prepare a draft bill which could be submitted to a Royal Commission composed of members of both houses of Parliament - thus Montagu hoped to make as much progress as possible without formally committing the Government, as he would have had to do to draft a bill and introduce it in Parliament for a second reading and committee stages in the normal way.

Chamberlain, however, privately secured Curzon's agreement to the appointment of the two committees on the understanding that the Government would not be committed to more than the principle of a division of subjects or to any particular framework and constitution for the councils: and, as Curzon was opposed to the appointment of the India Office committee or to any other step, Montagu reluctantly agreed not to press his case - Curzon had 'rather put it' to Chamberlain that he was making concessions and they should too. Montagu also wanted to press ahead with an interim measure of indianisation, to which Curzon objected as likely to cause controversy; Chamberlain had suggested to Sinha (and repeated to Montagu) that it would be unwise to prejudice the question of the reforms by insisting on isolated or premature actions; but Montagu argued that what he wanted was a separate matter, not requiring legislation but merely a parliamentary statement so that he could approve the Government of India's own proposal to appoint fifty Indians in order to relieve an acute shortage of staff.

Towards the end of July, Chamberlain took up with Curzon another proposal of Montagu's, modified from his original suggestion for submitting a draft bill to a Royal Commission. Taking as his cue a motion by Lord Sydenham in the Lords, calling for a discussion of the Report, Chamberlain tried to convince Curzon that the Government should issue a statement that, although they could not now perfect a bill, as soon as possible they would introduce one and submit it to a joint committee. Curzon disagreed. He did not think Sydenham's motion likely to come up, or, if it did, that Sydenham would expect a government pronouncement or more than an opportunity to express his own (unfavourable) views on the Report's proposals. But Curzon was

⁵³ Montagu to Chelmsford, 3 & 26 July 1918, CP4.

not unfriendly to the idea of a Joint Committee and suggested that the Report itself might be submitted to one; Chamberlain wondered if this might be a way of making progress at a time when the Cabinet was preoccupied. Montagu opposed this - it would mean committee on committee, and would have a bad effect on Indian opinion. Chamberlain concluded that in this case the best policy was not to press Curzon - he had probably already 'gone rather further than he likes'; he was 'uneasy, nervous, and in consequence a little irritable', and it might 'be well to give him a rest'.⁵⁴

The appointment of the two committees was approved by the Cabinet early in August, and little further was done until the beginning of September.⁵⁵ At this time Montagu began to urge the appointment of a Cabinet committee to draft a bill on the assumption that the Government accepted the four basic principles of the Report, namely popular control and independence for local bodies, the first stages for advance in the provinces, the continued responsibility of the Government of India to Parliament, and the relaxation of parliamentary control over the Government of India and the provincial governments. This bill would be submitted to a Joint Committee after a second reading.⁵⁶ In October the Government successfully warded off an attempt in the Lords to have the Report referred to a Joint Committee; in November the Prime Minister gave explicit assurances that he intended to carry through the reforms programme; and later that month Montagu secured the appointment of the India Office committee, under the chairmanship (in spite of Curzon's objections)

⁵⁴ Chamberlain to Curzon, 6 July, & to Montagu, 6, 15, 26 & 29 July, & Montagu to Chamberlain, 6, 12 & 18 July 1918, ACP21/5/48-57; Chamberlain to Curzon, 25 July, & Curzon to Chamberlain, 26 July 1918, ACP21/5/5-6.

⁵⁵ Montagu to Chelmsford, 7 August 1918, CP4. Lionel Curtis later assured Chelmsford that he (Curtis) had secured the appointment of the committees. He had urged Lord Sinha to concentrate, when seeing the Prime Minister, on the need for the appointment 'to place the good faith of the Government beyond question'. See Curtis to Chelmsford, 2 Sept. 1918, CP15; & Curtis to Sinha, 19 July, & also to Neville Chamberlain, 18 July 1918, Lothian Papers GD40/17/33. Curtis had also suggested that Montagu should give in over the submission of the Report to a select committee and concentrate on securing satisfactory membership - but Montagu remained opposed to this procedure. See Curtis to Montagu, 3 Aug. 1918, ibid.

⁵⁶ Montagu to Chelmsford, 5 Sept. 1918, CP4.

of Lord Crewe.⁵⁷ Further progress was halted by the parliamentary recess and election, and by the need to wait for the reports of the three reforms committees.

That so much had been achieved, fairly quickly, in spite of the Cabinet's preoccupations and Curzon's reluctance, was due partly to skilled lobbying and partly to principle. The key figure in the lobbying was Chamberlain. Montagu had found himself a Liberal in a coalition that had become almost wholly Conservative - he admitted that if it had not been for the reforms he would have considered resigning.⁵⁸ But this exceptional situation was turned to advantage, because of the dexterity of Chamberlain who had re-entered the Cabinet as Chancellor. Montagu was able to put forward the steps which he wanted the Cabinet to take; Chamberlain would then support him in some of these, privately persuade Curzon to agree and then encourage Montagu to reduce his immediate demands. After a short time Montagu would suggest again the further stages he had wanted, and Chamberlain would repeat his manoeuvres. In this way, they carried Curzon in stages from acquiescence in the publication of the Report to approval of the appointment of the Cabinet committee: at each stage Curzon had been reluctant to commit himself before he had had time to consider the proposals but had allowed himself to be persuaded to agree to Chamberlain's compromises - so that the reformers could turn his own agreement against him, and take him a stage further by pointing out that he and the Cabinet were already committed by the stages they had approved. Thus Curzon was placed in a position, once he had read the Report and decided he objected to it, of being unable to make a stand without repudiating his own actions.

The principle which assisted Montagu was the need to adhere to the August Declaration. When the Cabinet first discussed publication of the Report, Chamberlain suggested that although the Report was a revolution, it was revolution already made by the Declaration, and that Curzon's objections were really to the Declaration.⁵⁹ This of

⁵⁷ Montagu to Chelmsford, 22 Oct., 7 & 28 Nov. 1918, CP4; Montagu to Chamberlain, 30 Oct. 1918, ACP21/5/64; Parliamentary Debates (Lords) 31, No. 71, 832-876 (24 Oct. 1918). For the terms of reference of the India Office committee, see S/S to V, 9 & 22 Jan., & V to S/S, 25 & 29 Jan. 1919, CP10.

⁵⁸ Montagu to Chelmsford, 7 Nov. 1918, CP4. On his isolation, see also Trevor Wilson, ed., The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, 1911-1928. London 1970, 307.

⁵⁹ Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 June 1918, CP4; Chamberlain, Cabinet note, 6 June 1918, ACP21/6/44.

course could not be countenanced. Curzon himself admitted, in the House of Lords, that 'the Declaration did commit his Majesty's Government' and 'Parliament and the nation as well'.⁶⁰ The reformers claimed that the Report was based on the Declaration, as no other scheme was, and that the level of advance promised by the Report (if not its precise methods) represented the minimum now practicable.⁶¹ Chelmsford commented to Montagu that people acclaimed the Declaration because they were 'too stupid or too lazy' to work out what it meant, and then, when someone tried to translate it into fact, they objected - he used to say 'that this was the attitude of the I.C.S. towards Reform'.⁶² It was an attitude which could not survive: every step taken by the Cabinet, every committee appointed, every day without a hostile decision by Government or Parliament, made it more probable that there would be reforms substantially like those recommended in the Report. As with the Declaration, the British Government had committed themselves to a policy they had yet to approve formally.⁶³

In these negotiations, as in the corresponding stage before the Declaration, the Government of India had to remain a spectator. They could only have influence obliquely, as when their despatch supported the Report, or when one of Chelmsford's letters happened to be included in a Cabinet memorandum, or when Meston was consulted (because he was in London). With the appointment of the reforms committees, however, the initiative returned to India. The Secretary of State had proposed one committee under Lord Southborough to consider the questions of franchise and division of subjects. Chelmsford urged separate personnel and reports, in the interests of efficiency, with joint meetings to be arranged if necessary. Montagu agreed, but decided (against Chelmsford's advice) to retain Southborough as a common chairman for the two committees. In the

⁶⁰ Parliamentary Debates (Lords) 31, No. 71, 865 (24 Oct. 1918).

⁶¹ See, for example, speeches by Lords Crewe and Donoughmore, ibid., 832-835 & 850-863; & by Montagu, Parliamentary Debates (Commons) 116, No. 68, 343 (22 May 1919).

⁶² Chelmsford to Montagu, 31 Aug. 1918, CP4. See also Chelmsford to Selborne, 3 Jan. 1919, CP15.

⁶³ An account of the negotiations with Curzon, consisting almost entirely of quotations from correspondence, may be found in S.D. Waley, Edwin Montagu, London 1964, 163-181. See also Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, III, London [1928], 169-176.

event Southborough made himself responsible mainly for the franchise committee, and R. Feetham, the Deputy Chairman, dealt with the subjects committee. The proposed terms of reference - broadly to devise schemes bearing in mind the recommendations of the Report - were not disputed by the Government of India, except for one substantive point: Montagu had suggested empowering the franchise committee to plan for direct election where possible, except for considering special provisions for representing 'illiterate classes'; Chelmsford pointed out that prejudging the issue of communal representation by this narrow provision would be resented in India, and Montagu widened the authority accordingly. A further change made it clear that there could be no going back on dyarchy: Montagu had first suggested requiring the subjects committee to take into consideration the principles and the illustrative list given in the Report (paragraphs 212-213 and 238-240, and Appendix II); but in the final version this formula was strengthened and the committee were obliged to take into consideration the illustrative list and to be 'guided by' the principles (of a division of subjects).⁶⁴

Southborough's committees were to work through a round of provincial hearings and discussions, and the Government of India took on the role of general overseer. They had asked the provinces to prepare schemes, and urged on them the need for haste: as they explained, in a telegram to several local governments in mid-October, they were having 'great difficulty in preparing a programme ... owing to [the] unpreparedness of some provinces in spite of the fact, that they were asked more than 3 months ago to prepare the requisite material and they must impress on the local Government the necessity of expediting this work to the utmost possible extent'. Chelmsford informed Lord Southborough that he was unwilling to press too hard lest the local governments should give inadequate attention to complex problems; but at the same time he explained privately to Willingdon that it was imperative to carry through the reforms and that even temporary setbacks would jeopardise support: despite provincial

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S/S to V, 22 Aug., 2 & 14 Sept., & 2 & 8 Oct., & V to S/S, 23, 30 & 31 Aug., & 9, 12 & 16 Sept., CP9, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Oct. & 6 Nov. 1918, CP4. The work of the Committees may be followed up in their Reports, Cmd. 141 (Franchise) & Cmd. 103 (Functions), and in the two despatches presenting the Government of India's views, Cmd. 176 & Cmd. 123. See IOR L/PARL409.

difficulties, therefore, the effort must be made.⁶⁵ Chelmsford was also concerned to preserve the principles of the Report. Southborough consulted him over an attempt to circumvent dyarchy, when Sir B. Robertson, Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, wrote: 'I have frankly declared for a preliminary period of training with no divided heads'. Chelmsford replied that this was, as Southborough thought, outside the committee's terms of reference, and that Robertson should be told so 'politely but firmly'.⁶⁶ Similarly Chelmsford sharply informed Lord Pentland and the Madras Government that he 'would be obliged' if they would 'immediately' prepare a scheme for the division of subjects, even though (as would be noted in Southborough's report) they disapproved of dyarchy.⁶⁷

The public reactions to the Report in India were almost uniformly unenthusiastic. The Viceroy sent home an early summary of newspaper verdicts: some were disappointed, some reserved judgment, some condemned outright, but only the Times of India, the Civil and Military Gazette, the Rangoon Gazette, and two United Provinces papers (the Pioneer and the Indian Daily Telegraph) applauded the scheme.⁶⁸ Individual Indian commentators generally deplored the arrangements for the Government of India as insufficiently progressive; but recognised 'moderates' such as Banerjea, Sastri, Sapru and Wacha otherwise gave their support. Only Patel and Ayyangar opposed an Imperial Legislative

⁶⁵ H.Public 1-130 & 153-167, Sept. 1919; PSV to Vincent, 17 Oct., V to G/Bombay, 16 Oct., Chelmsford to Willingdon, 18 Oct., & PSV to Resident, Aden (for Southborough), 24 Oct. 1918, CP21.

⁶⁶ Robertson to Southborough, 11 Nov., Southborough to Chelmsford, 20 Nov. 1918, CP21; & see Harcourt Butler to Chamberlain, 12 Feb. 1919, ACP21/5/4.

⁶⁷ Chelmsford to Pentland, 5 Jan. 1919, with Chelmsford to Montagu, 15 Jan. 1919, CP5.

⁶⁸ V to S/S, 12 July 1918, CP9. Of other notable papers, the Bombay Chronicle, Kesari and New India found the Report unacceptable; the Lahore Tribune was disappointed; the Madras Justice deplored the lack of non-Brahmin representation, and the Bengali European papers the lack of European; the Advocate of India and two other Bombay papers (the Karachi Daily Gazette and Samachar) gave qualified approval. Thirty-two papers were cited. See also, for details of Bengal newspapers as noted by the government, Ronaldshay to Montagu, 24 July 1918, MP29.

Council resolution calling the Report a definite advance, although there were some abstentions, including Sarma, and Jinnah, Malaviya and Khaparde had also opposed the motion in debate.⁶⁹ Tilak's initial reaction was that the proposals were cheese-paring and entirely unacceptable; Gandhi, on the other hand, admitted that he preferred the scheme 'as a framework' to that put forward by the Congress and League.⁷⁰ At their special session in Bombay in 1918, the Congress declared the Report's scheme unacceptable unless it were amended to allow full responsibility in the provinces and partial responsibility in the central government; this conclusion was endorsed at the Delhi session later in the year, and thus rejection of the final scheme in 1919 was inevitable - as was the breach with the 'moderates', now combined under their own banner, that of the all-India Moderates' Conference (later the National Liberal Federation). Annie Besant was the only prominent leader of the 'advanced' wing to defect from the Congress on this issue. With her Home Rule League reconstituted for the purpose, she was to conduct a vigorous campaign during 1920 against Gandhi and the Congress and in favour of the reforms, which she then hailed as a 'death-blow' to the autocracy.⁷¹ Both moderates and extremists, however, agreed that the Government of India arrangements should be made more liberal. Montagu's reaction, in October 1918, was to begin to wonder what would be acceptable to both the moderates and Chelmsford.⁷² He did not propose to raise the matter at this stage - it would have been bad tactics to have suggested any further advance before the fate of the reforms scheme was more assured - but to Chelmsford this suggestion must have seemed like an early warning that his and the Secretary of State's paths were likely to diverge as discussions progressed.

⁶⁹ V to S/S, 8 Sept. 1918, CP9. The voting was 48 to 2. See also Wacha to Chelmsford, 12 July, & Bikaner to Chelmsford, 17 July 1918, CP21; & Ronaldshay to Montagu, 1 Sept. 1918, MP29.

⁷⁰ V to S/S, 12 July, CP9, & Gandhi to Chelmsford, 12 July 1918, CP21. Nevertheless Tilak and his specially founded Congress Democratic Party were later to advocate working the reforms, in opposition to Gandhi's non-cooperation; see, for example, Stanley A. Wolpert, Tilak and Gokhale, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1962, 287-295.

⁷¹ See Annie Besant, 'National Home Rule League', Madras 1919, & 'Wounded to Death', 'The Coming Congress', 'The Parting of the Ways', 'The Reform Act ...', 'Patriotism and Cooperation with the new Governments', 'Our Ministers', 'Organization for Freedom', 'Responsibility of the Press', 'The Joint Report - what we have gained' & 'The First Reform Conference', National Home Rule League pamphlets, Nos. 4-13 & 17, Madras 1920; see also G.S. Arundale, 'To the Youth of India', Madras 1924, V.G. Kale, 'The Reforms', Poona 1921, & V(HD) to S/S, 25 Feb. 1920, CP12.

In England the press was divided in its reactions: the Daily Telegraph, the Morning Post, the Spectator and the Saturday Review attacked the Report; but it was applauded by The Times, the Manchester Guardian, the Daily News, the Daily Chronicle, the Daily Express, New Statesman, India and Nation. Montagu professed himself disappointed at the Daily Telegraph over which he had taken 'some trouble'; but he claimed he had 'got the Times quite easily', and had also convinced J.L. Garvin of the Observer. He also interviewed Sir V. Chirol who was writing for The Times and favoured Curtis's 'two governments' plan. The people with key influence in London were probably Austen Chamberlain, Philip Kerr and Lord Curzon. Chamberlain proved himself 'a tower of strength' on Montagu's side. Kerr, unlike many Round Table members, was a convert to the Report, and thus brought to bear his very considerable influence on the Prime Minister in favour of the scheme - when he resigned in 1921, Kerr was told by Montagu that he did not know how his Indian work, in so far as it impinged on Downing Street, could continue to prosper: Kerr had given such helpful advice and assistance. Curzon, as we have seen, was an enigma; Montagu wrote: he 'amuses me, interests me, irritates me'.⁷³ Montagu suspected that Curzon had been influenced by the main opponent of the scheme, the former Governor of Bombay, Lord Sydenham, who, backed by the Morning Post, presided over a campaign centred on the Anglo-British Association⁷⁴ but reaching even to India. Pamphlets hostile to the reforms were issued by the Association; Sydenham sent circulars to firms and Chambers of Commerce warning that trade would be harmed. Montagu sought to counter such activities by meeting groups (including Sydenham's) and by setting up a propaganda committee in the India Office. Lord Donoughmore, who had been with Montagu in India, had early had a 'very satisfactory' meeting with selected members of the Conservative Party.⁷⁴ As early as August, however, Montagu decided that Sydenham's

⁷² Montagu to Chelmsford, 10 Oct. 1918, CP4.

⁷³ Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 June, 8 & 26 July, CP4, & S/S to V, 6 & 15 July 1918, CP19; & Montagu to Kerr, 6 May 1921, Lothian Papers G.D.C./17/216.

⁷⁴ See Montagu to Chelmsford, 15 June, 3 & 8 July, 10 Oct. & 7 Nov. 1918, CP4; & Indo-British Association pamphlets, 'The Montagu-Chelmsford Report', another of the same title (extracts from Bombay criticism), 'Indian constitutional reforms' (speeches by Lansdowne, Macdonnell, Selborne, Sydenham & Curzon), London 1918, & 'Indian opposition to home rule' & '... the progress of political agitation in India, 1916-19', London 1919.

group was becoming more and more isolated. At the same time he concluded -- correctly as we have seen -- that Curzon, in spite of his opposition to dyarchy and parliamentary concessions in the provinces, would be 'driven by the general attitude in the country to adherence in the main'.⁷⁵

The reactions of the local governors in India seemed likely to create greater difficulties. Chelmsford had tried to carry them with him on the reforms, at first by keeping them informed, and then, at Montagu's suggestion, by involving them in the reforms discussions in Delhi in January 1918.⁷⁶ But opposition to dyarchy had early become apparent. In October 1917 local government replies had made it clear that, except in Bengal, dyarchy would be rejected, and that thinking was, on the whole, very conservative -- elected majorities, limited budgetary control, and standing committees were about the limits of the advance suggested for the councils. In January 1918 the governments, faced with the Government of India's advocacy of the dualist principle (in their circular of 11 November 1917), openly argued against dyarchy, although some -- the Governments of Madras (with Pentland dissenting), Bihar and Orissa, and the United Provinces -- favoured forms of sub-provincial transfers of power. Bombay, rejecting all dyarchies, put forward a scheme of their own whereby the legislature would gain budgetary control and the right, except for reserved subjects, to introduce legislation without the Governor's consent, while executive authority remained undivided.⁷⁷ At the 1918 governors' conference a compromise was arranged, suggested by Meston, whereby dyarchy would be started earlier in some provinces than in others and a power of recalling transferred subjects would be safeguarded. The division of opinion had been immediately apparent and, although Chelmsford had made what Montagu called a 'short and very admirable speech' and Montagu had

⁷⁵ Montagu to Chelmsford, 7 Aug. 1918, CP4; see also Montagu to Chelmsford, 22 Aug. & 22 Oct. 1918, CP4, & Curtis, 2 Sept., & Dawson, 5 Nov. 1918, to Chelmsford, CP15.

⁷⁶ Chelmsford to Pentland, 8 Sept., to Meston, O'Dwyer, Gait, Robertson & Earle, 6 Oct., & to Willingdon, 11 Nov., & to all heads of Provinces except Burma, Assam and the United Provinces, 30 Nov. 1917, CP19. See also ACP22/1. The Madras Government had also protested against the form of the 1917 Declaration; see G/Madras to V, 19 Aug., & Pentland to Chelmsford, 31 Aug. 1917, CP19.

⁷⁷ H.Public(C) 568-591, Oct. 1918; H.Poll. 279, July 1917; H.Public 449-495A, May 1918 (450 is the HD circular, 8 Sept. 1917).

rounded on Vincent (who had sided with the dissenters), no agreement had seemed possible, even when the local governors went into session amongst themselves under the chairmanship of Pentland as the senior governor. Chelmsford had then suggested that he and Montagu should chair a further meeting, as Pentland was 'impossible', and under their influence Meston's compromise had been accepted. Montagu thought none of the governors believed in it.⁷⁸ Willingdon described it as uneasy and unworkable - and to prove this he very soon repudiated it and returned to his former position.⁷⁹ In the early formative stages, Chelmsford had suggested, when Willingdon, Meston and Robertson were engaging in preliminary confabulations on the reforms, that he wanted the best minds at work on the problem and not agreement for the sake of it; but as the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme became finalised he had become more eager that there should be general acceptance at least of the principles on which it was based.

After the Report was published, Ronaldshay agreed heartily with nearly all the recommendations; Willingdon was irreconcilable to what he called Montagu's 'rotten "dyarchy" idea'; Harcourt Butler thought it unworkable; Craddock made it clear that he thought it went beyond what was necessary (although he conceded that if it had a conciliatory effect on all but the most extreme Indians it would have been a 'most brilliant piece of statesmanship').⁸¹ Chelmsford's reply to the criticisms, as expressed to Willingdon in July 1918, was that he defied anyone to give 'progressive realisation of responsible government' except by dyarchy, and that any transitional scheme was open to criticism: but the critics should suggest an alternative which was not equally objectionable.⁸² Before the end of 1918, however,

⁷⁸ Montagu, Diary, 206-224.

⁷⁹ See Willingdon to Chelmsford, 31 Jan. & 14 Feb. 1918, CP20.

⁸⁰ LG/United Provinces to V, 11 Sept., Robertson to Chelmsford, 2 Oct., Meston to Chelmsford, 10 Oct., & Chelmsford to Willingdon, 12 Sept. 1917, CP19.

⁸¹ Ronaldshay to Montagu, 10 June, (& to Chelmsford, 26 April) 1918, MP24; Willingdon to Montagu, 5 Sept. & 23 Nov. 1918, MP18, & 29 March & 2 Sept. 1919, MP19, & to Chelmsford, 30 June 1918, CP20; Butler to Chamberlain, 26 Aug., & see Chamberlain to Butler, 17 Dec. 1918, ACP21/5/2-3; Craddock to Chelmsford, 9 July 1918, CP21.

⁸² Chelmsford to Willingdon, 4 July 1918, CP21.

Chelmsford continued to try to circumvent the opposition by arguments and discussions. Claude Hill spent two nights in Bombay arguing with Willingdon who later told Chelmsford that he would not try to stop his scheme if it proved the only liberal advance possible; but Willingdon declined to abandon his own Government's plan for unitary government, which relying as it did on Indian cooperation and the governor's veto was suitable to his abilities. Hill concluded that the soundest thinker in Bombay was Rahimtoola who dissented from the local scheme on the grounds that it did not fulfil the August Declaration. Willingdon's successor, Sir George Lloyd, discussed the issue with Meston, at Chelmsford's special request, but decided that, although he did not favour the Bombay scheme, he was not happy about dyarchy either.⁸³

As persuasion had not been successful, Chelmsford presented the governors, at their conference in January 1919, with the challenge he had first suggested to Willingdon and which Lloyd had also put forward as a good tactic to adopt: the Viceroy asked the dissenters to formulate their own scheme, no doubt hoping that this would reveal the disagreements among them and at the same time show them the difficulties.⁸⁴ O'Dwyer, Butler, Craddock, Beatson-Bell and Robertson agreed on a proposal whereby Indians would be associated with but not responsible for government. Willingdon, now in Madras, continued to support his own proposal. Ronaldshay and Gait had approved the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme. Lloyd had been absent, dealing with a serious mill-strike in Bombay. The breach with all but three governors was now complete, and the Viceroy concentrated his efforts on trying to counter the effect of this in London.

His response was to refer to the Declaration of 1917. He admitted that the governors' opposition was formidable but insisted that it should be made quite clear to the British Government that they would have to decide whether or not they intended to implement their announced policy: if they did, then the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme was the only possibility - the five governors' proposals, like all schemes of unitary government, made no provision for the gradual transfer of responsibility. Moreover, in Chelmsford's view the

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Hill to Chelmsford, 19 Nov., & Willingdon to Chelmsford, 12 Dec. 1918, CP21; Meston to Chelmsford, 19 Dec., CP21, & Lloyd to Montagu, 26 Dec. 1918, MP24.

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Chelmsford to heads of provinces, 29 Dec. 1918, CP21; Montagu to Ronaldshay, 4 March 1919, MP27.

proposals would not work: the 'best chance' was to have 'a frank dualism'. Finally, however, Chelmsford admitted that the first need was to have something soon - he would have accepted an unsound scheme rather than have nothing.⁸⁵ He had tried to persuade Lloyd to argue on his behalf, that he could not see how the five governors' scheme complied with 'the principle of August 20th'; but Lloyd had preferred to concentrate his advocacy on the one point that further delay must be avoided.⁸⁶ Chelmsford quoted Lloyd's view for the benefit of the home Government.

Montagu was at once more alarmed and more conciliatory. He agreed that the five governors' scheme was unsound, but suggested that it might be possible to counter both Indian and official opposition to dyarchy by liberal concessions - for Indians presumably over the Government of India, and for the governors by one of two alternative proposals in the provinces: the executive councils could be half official and half non-official and appointed by the governor (not the Crown), or the government could consist of the governor and ministers only, with the reserved subjects administered by the governor with the help of official advisers who would not be members of the government.⁸⁷ Chelmsford disagreed: it was necessary to emphasise the division of subjects so that Indian responsibility might clearly be seen, and to emphasise separation so that friction might be minimised.⁸⁸ Other disagreements were also appearing. Montagu had been unhappy at some of the suggestions in the despatch which gave the Government of India's views on the reforms; Chelmsford had insisted that his aim was to protect the principles of the Report, particularly in his adoption of the idea of maintaining a separate purse for transferred subjects (which the Report had not favoured), in his disapproval of the transfer of higher education, and in his strong opposition to any further concessions at this stage in the Government of India.⁸⁹ The Governors'

⁸⁵ Chelmsford to Montagu, 15 Jan., 12, 19 & 26 Feb., & 5 March 1919, CP5.

⁸⁶ V to G/Bombay, 8 Feb., & Lloyd to Chelmsford, 18 Feb. 1919, CP22.

⁸⁷ S/S to V, 15 & 22 Feb. 1919, CP10, & Montagu to Chelmsford, 22 Jan., 4 & 18 Feb. & 4 March 1919, CP5.

⁸⁸ V to S/S, 27 Feb. 1919, CP10.

⁸⁹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Feb., 5 March, 3 April, 25 Sept. & 18 Oct., & Montagu to Chelmsford, 31 March & 1 May, CP5, & S/S to V(HD), 22 Feb. 1919, CP10. See G/I despatch, 5 March 1919, Cmd. 123.

dissent had made it imperative, of course, that the Government should remain united, and the despatch had pleased all Chelmsford's Councillors except Sankaran Nair (who thought it too conservative).

On 14 May Montagu gained Cabinet approval for introducing his reforms bill, which he had drawn up with a Cabinet committee comprising Sinha, Milner, Fisher and Chamberlain.⁹⁰ The bill met with little opposition in Parliament and was quickly referred to a joint committee.⁹¹ It was at this stage that the effect of the governors' dissent was likely to be most dangerous, and the chances of a rift between Montagu and Chelmsford were also increased. They had differed in their response to the governors - Chelmsford taking a hard line, insisting on dyarchy; Montagu toying with ideas that would have blurred or avoided separation. They had differed over the separate purse, the transfer of higher education, and further liberalisation in the central government; and in addition Chelmsford had also been alarmed at some of the recommendations of Lord Crewe's committee on the India Office, particularly the proposed abolition of the Secretary of State's Council.⁹² Accordingly the Government of India decided not to entrust the presentation of their case to the Secretary of State, and succeeded in deputing Meston as their special representative before the joint committee.⁹³ This extraordinary procedure was to have equally extraordinary results. It was usual for the Government of India's influence to diminish or disappear in such situations, as in the formulation of the 1917 Declaration or in the Cabinet reaction to the Report. But for the joint committee the Government of India virtually abandoned the fiction of working through the Secretary of State, and introduced their own representative as an independent force. In 1918 the Government's special sub-committee on reforms had been replaced by Meston, who had been appointed as a special officer to coordinate the work on the reforms - to prepare the Government of India's case, to provide close ~~and~~ informal liaison with the

⁹⁰ Montagu to Chelmsford, 18 Feb. & 1 May (postscript, 14 May) 1919, CP5.

⁹¹ Montagu to Chelmsford, 28 May, 11 June & 17 July 1919, CP5.

⁹² S/S to V(HD), 14 & 17 June, CP10, & Chelmsford to Montagu, 31 July 1919, CP5.

⁹³ Chelmsford to Montagu, 4 June & 18 July 1919, CP5.

Southborough committees and the local governments.⁹⁴ In continuation of this role, and on the excuse of bringing his special expertise to bear, Meston joined the consultations in London.

Meston has provided, in a series of remarkable letters to Chelmsford, a detailed account of his manoeuvres, his cooperation and disagreements with Montagu, and his success in swaying the joint committee. From these letters, allowing for Meston's point of view, we may obtain a picture of the Government of India's involvement in this penultimate stage of the reforms discussions. Meston's first reports were not optimistic. He found dyarchy in the balance before the joint committee, and Montagu opposing the reservation of higher education, and the separate purse. The Secretary of State was also advocating three Indians (instead of two) on the Viceroy's Council, and claiming the support of five or six members of the joint committee for this idea. Meston began by meeting members of the joint committee individually and also lobbied members of Parliament generally, but was chiefly concerned to bolster up Montagu's morale: he reported having to dispel 'periodic glooms' and saw his role as one of detaching Montagu from the influence of Basu, Sastri and Chintamani. Early in August Meston put himself rather out of favour by an argument with Montagu over his being closetted with these moderates and failing to inform the Government of India of his designs for changing the central government.⁹⁵

At first Meston encountered some reluctance among joint committee members to talk with him, as they were not supposed to have private discussions with witnesses and regarded Meston as one. But he succeeded in meeting individuals, and was soon able to report that he had secured many of the amendments Chelmsford wanted in the proposals for the India Office; he regarded most other matters as hopeless. By mid-August he was able to report that the committee members were no longer aloof; rather he was taken into consultation by groups of them, and he expected to be allowed to attend some of the sessions later. By now he thought dyarchy safe - the five governors' scheme was known but had few friends. But he was not confident on the

⁹⁴ Meston to V, 26 Oct., & to Maffey, 5 Dec., & Maffey to Meston, 3 Dec. 1918, CP21. Meston himself had suggested that there should be such an appointment.

⁹⁵ Meston to Chelmsford, 24 July, & 1 & 12 Aug. 1919, CP15.

separate purse and higher education, and was particularly apprehensive about a probable confrontation over changes in the central government, favoured by Montagu and opposed on the joint committee by Lord Midleton in particular.⁹⁶ Meston began to play off the Government of India against the Secretary of State by calling for timely interventions by telegram from India. In August he had already suggested that Chelmsford should telegraph - province by province - his objections to the Southborough recommendations on the franchise, not in order to have his own proposals included in the reforms bill, but in order to prevent the joint committee from laying down any general canons or particular rules, so that the Government of India could, as they wished, make the arrangements themselves after the reforms were passed. In September Meston tried to telegraph to urge on Chelmsford the need to compromise on the central government in order to concentrate energies on essential points. He suggested that the Government should make a strong representation against any weakening of the central executive but agree to what Meston thought inevitable, namely a Council of State which would have full revising powers and not be an instrument of securing essential legislation; he also advised that they should give the imperial legislature binding powers on the budget subject to restorative powers for the Governor General. These attempts to arrange tactics aroused Montagu's opposition - he already, in Meston's view, regarded Meston as Chelmsford's intelligence officer and withheld information from him. Holderness asked Meston to moderate his telegram asking for intervention. Chelmsford, thus unaware of Meston's tactical considerations, continued to oppose the voting of the budget and also having three Indian executive councillors, although he agreed to accept the revising second chamber.⁹⁷ In this last respect, therefore, Montagu had achieved what he had wanted in Delhi - but he now wanted much more which the Government of India continued to contest.

In October Meston followed up his idea of strategic compromise. He suggested that the Government of India should argue

⁹⁶ Meston to Chelmsford, 12 & 23 Aug. 1919, CP15. These views were borne out by Meyer (to Chelmsford, 5 Sept. 1919, CP15). On 18 Sept., Meston reported that Montagu was again trying to secure in the local governments greater apparent unity, or even a unified executive with compartmentalised duties - but these efforts gained no support.

⁹⁷ Meston to Chelmsford, 28 Aug. & 13, 16 & 18 Sept., & Chelmsford to Meston, 30 Sept. 1919, CP15.

strongly against having, at the centre, any dyarchy, more than two Indian councillors or voting on the budget. They should agree to standing committees and parliamentary under-secretaries except for the Army and Political Departments, and to an upper chamber with revising powers and a nominated (later an elected) majority, affirmative legislation to be possible, when essential, by ordinance. Meston argued that the joint committee seemed determined to abandon the Report's position on the Government of India, and that, of the members, only Sydenham was disposed to go backwards. Meston had little hope of avoiding three Indian members of the Viceroy's Council, but was busy lobbying to prevent the legislature having the power to vote on the budget. He hoped to see all the members individually - it was useless to write to them as they were now impatient of essays - but no longer expected to be able to attend the committee's private deliberations.⁹⁸ Meston decided to prepare a memorandum setting out the Government of India's views: and this decision at last precipitated from Montagu the outburst that had been brewing for some time. Montagu read Meston's draft and was appalled at its tone, but also objected in principle: he would have to attack the Government publicly if the memorandum went in, and he could not see how the Government could carry out an alternative policy (if their proposals were rejected) once they had placed their opposition on record. Meston realised that he could have gone to Lord Selbourne, the chairman of the joint committee, and had him insist (as he would have insisted) on hearing everything Chelmsford had to say - but this would not have helped matters with Montagu. Thus Meston was conciliatory. He agreed to alter the tone of his draft (which was his responsibility), but argued that the Government of India had a right to be heard. He insisted on being allowed to consult Chelmsford.⁹⁹

The Viceroy seems to have taken the point of Meston's manoeuvres. The Government responded to the draft with a straightforward official telegram endorsing or strengthening all Meston's points, but Chelmsford had earlier sent a private telegram in which he admitted the possibility of concessions on some points which were not considered vital. A comparison of these three sources - Meston's draft and the two telegrams - gives a clear indication of the important objectives of the Government of India before the joint committee.

⁹⁸ Meston to Chelmsford, 2 Oct. 1919, CP15.

⁹⁹ Meston to Chelmsford, 10 Oct. 1919, CP15.

Four main elements may be discerned. They wanted the Crewe proposals for the India Office to be changed so that the Council of India and the Secretary of State's statutory powers over the Government of India would be retained - Chelmsford was prepared to see a convention evolve whereby the Secretary of State would not interfere with the will of the legislature in matters not essential to peace and good government. Secondly, the Government wanted British authority unimpaired in the central arrangements: they were unwilling to have more than two Indian members, or any dyarchy, or any voting of the budget, and they insisted on the positive legislative power through ordinances if the Council of State were to be a full revising chamber. Thirdly, they wanted the details of franchise and functions to be left to rules to be drawn up by them, not included in the Act. Finally, they wanted dyarchy in the provinces, but worked in such a way that efficiency would not be impaired in essentials and the separation of the two halves would be obvious: they wanted a separate purse for transferred subjects and were unwilling for the budget to be voted especially for reserved subjects; they wanted to give the local governor power to appoint the president of the legislature and to make sure he was experienced in parliamentary procedure; they also wished to reserve the subjects of higher education and the development of industries.¹⁰⁰

There were several principles behind these preferences. In the first two areas, the Government of India were insisting that the Secretary of State's (and also the Government of India's) statutory authority had to be maintained as long as full sovereignty and responsibility had not passed from Parliament to the Indian electorate; and that the Government of India's powers had to be unimpaired to reassure British interests and preserve British supremacy during the transitional period - the transfer of budgetary control, for example,

¹⁰⁰ Meston to Chelmsford, 10 Oct., CP15; S/S (for Meston) to V, 10 Oct., V to S/S (for Meston) 15 Oct., & V(HD) to S/S, 2 Nov. 1919, CP11. The education controversy was characterised by Meston as a choice between quality before quantity, and quantity before quality; see Lord Meston, India at the Crossways, Cambridge 1920, 36-38. Perhaps Montagu's attitude may be discerned in his earlier reluctance when agreeing to leave compulsory education to local option; he had stressed that Indian intellectuals regarded illiteracy (because it was cited as an objection to liberal reform) as a stigma which had to be vigorously attacked. (See Montagu to Chelmsford, 21 Aug. 1917, CP3) Presumably then it was a necessary token of good faith to transfer all education - to place the main instrument of Indian advance firmly in Indian hands.

would have given the Indian majorities in the imperial legislatures effective power to shape policy, whereas the further concession on the Council of State, although it meant that British supremacy had to be vested in what the Government considered the less satisfactory instrument of the ordinance, did not alter in the last resort the distribution of power. In the third element, the omission of detailed rules in the reforms bill, the Government again demonstrated their belief that arrangements within general principles should remain the responsibility of the authorities in India, and should not be pronounced upon by Parliament. Finally, in the provinces, the Government wanted friction between the two halves of the government and the two roles of the legislature to be at a minimum - they were unwilling to make concessions over the budget and the separate purse because they wished to avoid the prospect of disagreements over transferred and reserved allocations, and the hypocrisy and bitterness if the government were forced to employ restorative powers for essential but unpopular supplies. The objections to the transfer of higher education and industries had different motives - the Government were ready to transfer primary education (where the possible advances would tend towards making education free and compulsory, changes best introduced by Indians), but were not pleased to relinquish their paternalistic control over the universities and over industrial expansion, areas in which local and communal loyalties were thought likely to prove obstacles and in which an era of improvement was promised by the advent of two major commissions of enquiry (the Sadler on Calcutta University, and the Indian Industries') instituted under Chelmsford.¹⁰¹ Montagu opposed the Government of India on most of these points: he wished to do away with the need for the Secretary of State's sanction on non-essential matters, to have a third Indian member in the central executive, to have both imperial and provincial budgets voted by the legislatures, and to have a joint purse and the transfer of higher education in the provinces.¹⁰²

The joint committee rounded off its discussions by voting on a series of resolutions set out by Lord Selborne. Meston was not supposed to know of these but in fact had discussed them with Selborne in advance. The resolutions supported the Government of India on most points - the Secretary of State's responsibility was to remain unimpaired, the Governor General was to have a power of ordinance, the

101 See above, p. 21.

102 Meston to Chelmsford, 11 Oct. 1919, CP15.

bill was to include only the total strength and official ratio (and no details of franchises) for the legislative assemblies, there were to be separate purses by agreement, and the provincial legislatures were to have only advisory powers on reserved legislation. Montagu tried to reach a concordat with Selborne whereby he agreed to most of the propositions but sought support for changes in the Secretary of State's responsibility, and, in the central government, for the voting of the budget, three Indian members and parliamentary under-secretaries (which Chelmsford disapproved of but did not oppose as a vital point). Meston found himself having 'a horribly strenuous time' between Montagu and Selborne - Montagu trying to persuade him to abandon his advocacy of the Government of India case and work on Selborne's resolutions to see how they could be applied in practice.¹⁰³

The joint committee began its consideration of the resolutions in camera, and Montagu had much his own way. On the second day, however, Meston was shown the committee's conclusions on financial arrangements and sent in a strong message saying they were meaningless and impractical. He was promptly invited to attend future sessions. There is no evidence that the financial questions were reconsidered - Meston's objections may perhaps be assumed to have been to that combination of the joint and divided purse schemes recommended in the Joint Committee Report when discussing Part one, clause 1 of the Bill. The incident's significance thus lay in the future. After October Meston was able to report that he had recovered a lot of ground that he had hardly hoped to see again. He had been accepted as a regular member of the committee, and was called upon to repeat the Government of India's views, without hostile cross-examination, whenever they differed from Montagu's. The most serious difference of opinion, as Meston had predicted, occurred over Montagu's insistence on changes in the Report's proposals for the Government of India. In the committee session, he suggested doing away with the Secretary of State's sanction when there was accord between the government and the legislature, introducing certain subjects where the Governor General would accept the will of the legislature, and allowing the legislature to vote the budget. Lord Midleton attacked these proposals as 'irresponsible', and the committee adjourned for luncheon after a heated discussion. That afternoon Meston attended a conference between Midleton and Montagu - Midleton pointed out the dangers of a divided joint committee

¹⁰³ Meston to Chelmsford, 18 Oct. 1919, CP15.

report and Montagu proved conciliatory. He abandoned his position on dyarchy in the central legislature, modified his demand for budgetary control and agreed that the changes in the Secretary of State's role should be included in the committee's report but not the bill.¹⁰⁴

The report of the joint committee was therefore not too unpalatable to the Government of India. They lost out on the third Indian members for the central executive - which Meston thought the only disastrous decision - and on the transfer of higher education. But they had their way over leaving the detailed rules out of the Act, and in retaining the statutory responsibility of the Secretary of State - indeed on Meston's advice it was provided that any relaxation of his powers should be subject to the prior approval of both houses of Parliament. In the Government of India there was to be no dyarchy, no parliamentary under-secretaries and only limited legislative control over the budget - military, political & other subjects were not to be voted upon. In a number of points - the selection of experienced presidents for the legislatures, the power of positive ordinance, and the rejection of Montagu's idea for a quinquennial review of functions (as opposed to a ten year consideration of the reforms as a whole) - the Government of India's view was upheld. In other respects, where their preferences were not complied with, attempts were made to meet their objections: thus provincial budgets were to be voted, but the government was to have 'real' powers to enforce supplies for the reserved subjects; there was to be a joint purse initially but the government was to be able to allocate a definite proportion of revenue for each of the two halves of the government should friction develop.¹⁰⁵ In these provincial arrangements, of course, Montagu too had little reason for dissatisfaction, but most of his designs for the Government of India, as developed in 1919, were either defeated or rendered harmless.

Meston's involvement had not diminished: in the final stages Montagu and Midleton refused to meet one another and Meston 'had to run about between them, and forget the mutual asperities of their language!' Selborne drafted his report; Meston was summoned within an hour by an angry and gloomy Montagu and informed that the

¹⁰⁴ Meston to Chelmsford, 24 & 31 Oct. 1919, CP15. There is a copy of the Joint Committee Report in the Moral and Material Progress Report of 1919 (financial arrangements at p.220).

¹⁰⁵ S/S to V(ED), 19 Nov. 1919, CP11.

draft was unthinkable: 'Not one line would he accept, not one comma. So far as he was concerned, the Bill was dead; and his resignation would be in the Prime Minister's hands next morning'. Meston was instructed to write another report, which he did, trying (as he informed Chelmsford) 'to use as much of Lord Selborne's excellent material as possible'. Montagu retired to Norfolk.¹⁰⁶ Meston was called upon for more lobbying before the bill was introduced for the third time; he reported to Chelmsford: 'One day Montagu would hear that Carson had determined to smash the Bill; and I would be dispatched in hot haste to reason with Carson, whom I found as mild as a dove'. Montagu was also alarmed at the dangers in the Lords - he was fearful of Curzon and expected Sinha to collapse. Sinha himself predicted he would be on his death-bed before the third reading. But all went well. There was very little opposition in either house. Meston admired Montagu's skill in introducing the bill, and Curzon made no trouble in the Lords.¹⁰⁷

The reforms had been approved at last - probably earlier, thanks to Montagu and Chamberlain, than once seemed likely, and nearer, thanks largely to Meston, to what the Government of India had wanted. Chelmsford's role, however, had been forgotten. Sir George Lowndes wrote to him: 'What you have initiated, and have worked for during more than three and a half years, ... will be for all time a great landmark of courageous leadership For the moment Mr. Montagu rather fills the stage at home, but the honour is yours, and we all know it here'. Chelmsford replied that he was touched - this was 'the only recognition' he had received, and, although the main thing was that the reforms were through, it seemed that they must 'congratulate themselves'. Chelmsford's role and also his dedication and commitment had been underestimated. Yet Stanley Reed recalled that 'Chelmsford was four with the report; he could think of little else the moment current business was put aside'. Chelmsford's irony in reply to Lowndes was both an echo of that enthusiasm and a foretaste

¹⁰⁶ Meston to Chelmsford, 8 Nov. 1919, CP15.

¹⁰⁷ Meston to Chelmsford, 26 Sept. & 6 Dec. 1919, CP15. For the Government of India Act (9 & 10 Geo.V, c.101; 23 Dec. 1919), see C.H. Philips (ed.), Select Documents ..., 273-282, or Moral and Material Progress Report, 1919. Explaining the reform movement, R. Danzig, 'The Many-Layered Cake ...', Modern Asian Studies 3 (1969), claims consensus on similar proposals for different motives. I prefer to emphasise momentum consequent on partial or tangential commitments: accepting one step implied others, as with 'responsibility' added to Chelmsford's 'goal'; and key decisions were taken unwittingly as with the Cabinet on both Declaration and Report.

of the disappointments to come.¹⁰⁸

W.S. Marris was now appointed Commissioner of a new Reforms Office in the Government of India, to replace Meston and supervise the introduction of the reforms.¹⁰⁹ The bill had left details to be decided in India in two main matters of the electorates and the constitution of the executive councils. There was some opposition, on grounds of expense and lack of work, to the idea of having equal numbers of Europeans and Indians on the executive councils (in addition of course to the Indian ministers) if it meant, as Chelmsford suggested, that the provinces must decide to have a council of four (two European officials and two Indian non-officials) or possibly three (one European official and one Indian and one European non-official) or, for the smaller provinces, two (European and Indian, possibly both officials). In Madras Willingdon argued for two European officials and one Indian, the Europeans to leaven the inexperience already introduced by the Indian ministers: 'The nearer I get to it,' he explained, 'the more, honestly, I feel that we must not go too fast'.¹¹⁰ The provinces did not agree on what should be done. Bombay argued against four councillors but was uncertain what would be better. In Bengal Ronaldshay and all three of his Councillors favoured retaining the existing arrangement of two officials and one Indian non-official. Maclagan in the Panjab wanted one official European and one official Indian (because a suitable official Indian was available), whereas Sir Frank Sly in the United Provinces preferred (also on grounds of availability) an official European and a non-official Indian. Chelmsford explained that several of these suggestions were precluded by the joint committee's recommendations, and Madras, Bengal and Bombay then expressed their preference for three councillors, one official European and two non-officials, European and Indian; but Montagu ruled this out as well, interpreting the joint committee's recommendations as requiring either two or four members. He also objected to the Panjab idea for an official Indian member. Chelmsford stressed

¹⁰⁸ See Lowndes to Chelmsford, 24 Dec., & Chelmsford to Lowndes, 28 Dec. 1919, CP23; & Sir Stanley Reed, The India I Knew 1897-1947, London 1952, 189.

¹⁰⁹ V(FD) to S/S, 7 Jan. 1920, CP12.

¹¹⁰ Willingdon to Montagu, 29 March 1920, MP20.

to the local governors that sufficiency of the European element was a 'vital point' and must be allowed to outweigh considerations of extravagance. Madras, Bengal and finally Bombay agreed to ask for four councillors; the remainder were to have two. Parity between European officials and Indian non-officials was to be maintained throughout.¹¹¹ A curious situation had thus arisen out of the division of the functions of government. Part of the government had been transferred to Indian control, but for the remainder, subjects in which Indians had not hitherto had effective influence, it was argued that Indian non-official involvement should not be allowed to fall below the level which had previously obtained in an undivided government. This arrangement obscured a real advance in Indian influence over the reserved subjects.

Electoral arrangements had to be made at both imperial and provincial levels. The Reforms Office prepared a scheme for an Imperial Legislative Assembly of 100 members, elected by general, landlord, Muslim, European and Indian commerce constituencies. They referred the scheme to an advisory committee which gave approval subject to slight modifications increasing the membership to 103. The Government of India later decided to allow an extra seat to the Central Provinces. Electorates for the Imperial Assembly ranged from under 20,000 in Assam to more than 180,000 in Bengal.¹¹² The Council of State, it was decided, should also be formed by direct election, except for Executive Councillors entitled to sit in both chambers, though to be voting members only in one, and for a certain number of nominated

111 V to G/Bengal, Bombay, Madras, LG/Bihar & Orissa, United Provinces, CC/Central Provinces, 13 July, Chelmsford to Maclagan, 14 July, G/Bombay to V, 15 July, Ronaldshay, Maclagan, Sly, to Chelmsford, 16 July, V to G/Madras, Bengal, Bombay, 10 Aug., Chelmsford to Maclagan, 12 Aug., & V to G/Bombay, 10 Sept. 1920, CP25; & Ronaldshay to Montagu, 17 & 21 July 1920, MP31.

112 V(RO) to S/S, 9 Jan., 25 Feb., CP12, & 9 Nov. 1920, CP13. The allocation of seats was as follows (by constituency and province):

	Ma.	Bo.	Be.	UP	Pa.	BO	CP	As.	Bu.	Total
General	10	7	6	8	3	8	4	2	3	51
Muslim	3	4	6	6	6	3	1	1	-	30
Landholder	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	7
European	1	2	3	1	-	-	-	1	1	9
Ind.commerce	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Sikh	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Total	16	16	17	16	12	12	6	4	4	103

non-officials. The Reforms Office again suggested a scheme with general and Muslim seats according to the proportions of the Lucknow pact, and with electorates of about 2000 in major provinces or less in minor. Again the advisory committee substantially approved the proposals, the Government resisting suggestions for the representation of Indian commerce and of non-Brahmins, but abandoning the idea of any limit on the size of the constituencies provided that the electors were persons with administrative experience or professional eminence, or representatives of industry, commerce and landed interests - the electorates totalled about 3000 in the United Provinces, but only about 1000 in the Central Provinces.¹¹³

Provincial arrangements were largely decided at the heads of provinces' conference in January 1920 and involved electorates ranging between rather under $1\frac{1}{2}$ million in the United Provinces and about 140,000 in the Central Provinces - the provincial councils in Madras and Bengal were elected by about one million voters, and in Bombay and the Panjab by about 500,000. In all cases these figures represented substantial increases not only in terms of the actual electors in the former system of indirect election, but also in terms of the constituencies which had elected the electors.¹¹⁴ The only

¹¹³ V(RO) to S/S, 9 Jan., 4 Feb., 13 & 21 March, CP12, & 9 Nov. 1920, CP13. The revised numbers were as follows (by constituency and provinces):

	Ma.	Bo.	Be.	UP	Pa.	BO	CP	As.	Bu.	Total
General	4	3	3	3	1	$2\frac{1}{2}$	2	$\frac{1}{2}$	2	21
Muslim	1	2	2	2	$1\frac{1}{2}$	1	-	$\frac{1}{2}$	-	10
Sikh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	5	5	5	5	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$	2	1	2	32

(Note: Halves indicate seats at alternate elections)

¹¹⁴ V to S/S, 26 Jan., CP12, & V(RO) to S/S, 9 Nov. 1920, CP13. Comparative figures under the Morley-Minto constitution were just over 1,700 electors who were themselves elected in Madras, less than 1,500 in the United Provinces, less than 1,400 in Bengal, less than 900 in the Central Provinces, less than 700 in the Panjab, and about 570 in Bombay. These electors were themselves elected by associations or local body constituencies totalling about 170,000 in Madras, rather more than 130,000 in the United Provinces, rather more than 600,000 in Bengal, about 130,000 in the Central Provinces, about 300,000 in the Panjab, and under 17,000 in Bombay. These numbers are exaggerated in that they include members of trade associations and universities, and also elected members who were in a minority to nominated members on the bodies entitled to vote for Council members. See H.Public 174-183, June 1918.

significant step after the provincial conference was the campaign waged by Willingdon against non-Brahmin representation in Madras. Willingdon was strongly opposed to communal representation, which he thought would increase bitterness, and argued that it could not be justified for non-Brahmins when they were in a majority of eight to one in the Madras electorate. But the Government under Pentland had agreed in principle, and both Southborough and the Government of India had endorsed his agreement, so that some concessions had to be made: Willingdon offered to reserve half the general seats for the non-Brahmins, in addition to the nineteen nominated places, all for non-Brahmins (five Indian Christians, eight zamindars, and six members of depressed classes), and the thirteen Muslim seats. He put this suggestion to a conference of Brahmin and non-Brahmin leaders, and, when it was rejected by the latter, gained agreement that Meston should arbitrate in the dispute. Under Meston's award the non-Brahmins received 28 (or less than half the 65 seats); in the elections, however, as if to vindicate Willingdon's view, the non-Brahmins won 50 seats, and all three ministers were therefore non-Brahmin - Willingdon had to bring two Brahmins into his Executive Council in order to make use of their abilities.¹¹⁵

Thus the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were introduced. Elections were held; Assemblies opened. Indian legislators took part in government not only as advisers but for the first time as decision-makers. But the Indian National Congress had accepted the logic of their position and decided to boycott the elections. The moderates such as Sastri and Banerjea in the National Liberal League, and a sufficient number of other Indians, decided to cooperate with the reforms and some of them entered the Assemblies. The reforms had offered partnership. India's oldest political organisation had declined the offer. It had been taken up by splinter groups. Chelmsford recognised that this placed the reforms under a severe disability - that in so far as influential politicians were not represented in the new Assemblies the reforms were a failure. But it has been suggested, on the contrary, that exclusion of the extremists was, from the British point-of-view, the greatest success of the reforms - that the reformers had hoped for

¹¹⁵ Willingdon to Montagu, 20 May, 1 June, 4 Aug. 1919, MP19, 30 Jan., 8 & 26 Feb., 3 & 20 March, 7 June, 14 Aug., 27 Nov. & 9, 20 & 27 Dec. 1920, MP20.

nothing less than the disintegration of Indian political movements, and that by separating the moderates in the Assemblies from the extremists in the Congress they had achieved their aim.¹¹⁶ This suggestion is wrong.

During the reforms discussions the government had taken measures calculated to conciliate interests which they considered 'extreme'. In 1917 a furore arose over a letter written by Lionel Curtis to James Meston. Chamberlain called the letter indiscreet and dogmatic; its publication created alarm among Indians at the prospect it suggested of the government of India passing into the hands of the colonies. In the letter Curtis had claimed, inaccurately, that his views had been approved by influential officials including Meston himself - some had read drafts of the letter but none had expressed support. Curtis also claimed, disingenuously, that the letter was 'private'; he had undermined this claim by having had five hundred copies printed. The Government of India intervened in the controversy. Chelmsford asked Meston to let him see the draft of a statement he proposed to make on the subject, and strengthened the draft to include a statement that officials were to be forbidden to take Round Table membership. Some of the Viceroy's Council had wanted a complete ban on Curtis and his organisation. Chelmsford did not think this necessary - he believed the Round Table (with which he himself had contacts) was a worthwhile movement. But equally he refused to lift the ban on official membership, in spite of suffering a 'painful' interview with Curtis. Yet this ban had been imposed to please 'extremists' - the Home Department explained that they had acted because Curtis's letter had given rise to apprehension and to 'definite charges ... that Government servants in this country are combining with Mr. Curtis, and the "Round Table" to give prominence to political views which are unpalatable to advanced Indian political sentiment...'. The Home Department admitted that they considered these fears and charges to be unfounded.¹¹⁷

The reforms themselves were also a response to educated Indians' demands and aspirations. Chelmsford explained that he had considered it necessary to see that they gave satisfaction, and

¹¹⁶ See V to S/S, 23 Nov. 1918, CP9.

¹¹⁷ See Chelmsford to Curtis, 13 Jan., to Meston, 26 Jan., CP18, & to Chamberlain, 15 & 20 April & 16 March 1917, CP3, & H.Poll. 132, June 1917. See also Lionel Curtis, Dyarchy, Oxford 1920.

'probably wiser to give a little too much than too little'. He made a comparison between the Irish priesthood and the Indian intellectuals, both a small minority with influence out of proportion to their numbers. The Irish priests had become estranged from the British; Chelmsford wanted the Indians to be treated better - the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was saying to them, he believed, 'Come along and help us. We will guide you There are many difficulties in your path and you will realise them as you begin to face responsibility'.¹¹⁸ Austen Chamberlain too had argued that the British had to show their good intentions to the nationalists: only by leading the movement for reform could they control it. Montagu had argued that any scheme must command public support in India.¹¹⁹ The Indian Diary is contradictory on this point: Montagu was often despondent at the prospects of persuading the Government of India to accept anything which would be popular with the 'advanced' politicians, and he was aware that expectations were running very high; but nonetheless he had secured important promises or indications of support - from Annie Besant, Jinnah, Sankaran Nair, Setalvad, Chandavarka, Rahimtoola, Ramaswami Aiyar (then Secretary of the Congress) - and, by the time the proposals were finalised, he had concluded that the Congress would accept them with a rider insisting on certain amendments.¹²⁰

In short, the reforms were directed at all those Indians who believed in the advance to self-government. It is true that the official response, when it was obvious that the moderates would be outvoted in the Congress, was to hope that they would combine in a separate organisation. From this period comes most of the evidence which has been used to suggest that the reforms were directed solely at the moderates. Lord Willingdon went so far as to welcome a breach within the nationalist ranks. He wrote to Montagu that his difficulty was to persuade the moderates to act as politicians: 'They have got Tilak & Mrs B. & Co. committed to an entire non-possumus as regards yr. scheme. I want the moderates to keep them there & to bring out their own policy & in a sense to "go to the country on it". But all these Indians love a compromise & I am desperately afraid that in order

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Chelmsford to Bryce, 3 June 1919, CP16, & to Chamberlain, 20 Sept. 1918, CP15.

119 Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 20 June 1918, ACP18/3/13, & Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 Jan. 1918, CP4.

120 Montagu, Diary, 55, 107, 118-119, 144, 163, 177, 311, 320 & 337. Montagu had also expressed himself as more and more anxious about the reforms because he thought events, such as the ban on Tilak's deputation

to save a row they may come to some compromise with Tilak & Co.'. ¹²¹
 Willingdon had conversations with moderates, and soon became optimistic at the prospects for a moderate party. Moderates had held a separate congress in Bombay; and Willingdon felt certain that there would be an immense effect from this banding together in opposition to the 'frothing demagogues'. The extremists, he believed, were already chastened. ¹²²

Montagu at this time also expressed the hope that 'moderates' would break away from the Congress if they were defeated on the reforms issue. Rather overstating his point, as was his custom, he avowed to Ronaldshay that his 'whole aim in life' was 'to work with the moderates and to regard the extremists as the opposition'. With Willingdon, he hoped for a 'Government party, Indian, courageous and strong', in the new councils. ¹²³ Chelmsford hoped, more modestly, that there would be in the Assemblies some members who would support government policies on their merits. His Government had organised propaganda to accompany the publication of the Report. The first edition and newspapers which featured it were sold out almost at once; Rushbrook Williams prepared a pamphlet; Stanley Reed and K.C. Roy surreptitiously circulated articles in support of the proposals. But this publicity was not directed at 'extremists'. Chelmsford too had been influenced by their reaction to the Report - this had convinced him that opposition was their raison d'être and that they could not be expected to give it up. ¹²⁴

But these reactions after the Report was published must be distinguished from the motives of Montagu and Chelmsford in deciding on their proposals. Montagu claimed that he had 'never expected to have extremists' with him over the reforms; he discovered this only when they had proved to be against him. ¹²⁵ Indeed, far from never

to England, and Willingdon's rupture with Home Rulers at the Bombay War Conference, were going to create 'an important hostile section'; see Montagu to Chamberlain, 2 July 1918, ACP21/5/44.

¹²¹ Willingdon to Montagu, 31 July 1918, MP18.

¹²² Willingdon to Montagu, 11 & 30 July, 11 & 24 Aug., 5 & 17 Sept. & 8 Nov. 1918, MP18.

¹²³ Montagu to Ronaldshay, 13 Aug., 25 Sept., 24 Oct. & 29 Nov. 1918, & 17 Feb., 4 March & 22 Aug. 1919, MP27.

¹²⁴ Chelmsford to Montagu, 13 & 27 July, 16 Aug. & 17 Sept. 1918, CP4.

¹²⁵ See Montagu to Willingdon, 13 Aug., MP16, & to Ronaldshay, 13 Aug. & 24 Oct. 1918, MP27.

expecting extremist support, Montagu remained optimistic longer than most. He even suggested that Chelmsford meet with extremists politicians in an attempt to avoid a hostile decision by the Congress. Chelmsford refused on the grounds that the bitterness of these people could not be allayed: their opposition would have to be accepted.¹²⁶ Chelmsford was appealing to realism, not to doctrine - in him, as in Montagu, the rejection of the 'extremists' was a reaction to their rejection of the reforms.

Moreover, if turning to the moderates was a new development, it was also an incomplete one. Firstly, the Government of India did not share Willingdon's enthusiasm for actively promoting a moderate party. This was a unilateral move on Willingdon's part - even Sir Stanley Reed told him he was backing the wrong horse. Thus Chelmsford refused not only to cajole extremists, but also to meet and encourage moderates. He believed this would discredit them. He did no more than interview members of the Imperial Legislative Council; he believed a 'constitutional' party was possible, but, unlike Willingdon and Montagu, did not think it wise to try to create it. Moderates were valuable only in so far as they seemed independent of the government. In the same way, when Montagu suggested supporting the reforms through a government newspaper, provincial durbars, and what amounted to a campaign by local officers, Chelmsford explained that he was satisfied with progress, and deprecated measures in which the hand of government was too obvious. He evidently took a pessimistic view of the government's standing. It is also significant that his reservations about moderates were made considering the viewpoint of those hostile to British rule, of the committed not the uncommitted, of extremists not moderates. And of course it was precisely this consideration which in the event made the new Assemblies unsatisfactory - Chelmsford gained members who would not oppose him on principle, but, because of the extremist boycott, these members were no longer felt to be quite independent and their support was thereby less valuable.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Chelmsford to Montagu, 27 July, CP4, & V to S/S, 3 & 19 July, & S/S to V, 2 & 24 July 1918, CP9.

¹²⁷ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 13 & 27 July, 16 Aug. & 17 Sept., CP4, & V to S/S, 3 & 19 July & 7 Aug., & S/S to V, 2, 15 & 24 July, & 1 & 7 Aug. 1918, CP9. Chelmsford passed on Montagu's propaganda suggestions to local governments but, while calling for every effort to ensure the reforms were properly understood, he stressed the need for delicacy and circumspection and did not give the suggestions his personal support; see Chelmsford to Pentland, Willingdon, Ronaldshay, Butler, O'Dwyer, Gait, Robertson, Bell and Beadon, 18 Aug., & also V to G/Madras, 4 & 12 Aug. 1918, CP21. But he did urge Pentland to call a meeting of his legislature to discuss the reforms scheme; see Chelmsford to Pentland, 16 Sept 1918, CP21.

Secondly, even Montagu soon bemoaned the moderates' 'lack of drive or energy'. George Lloyd, finding that moderates would not repeat in public what they had said in private, concluded that as a force in Indian politics they were practically useless.¹²⁸ Reginald Craddock pointed out that the moderates were subject to social persecution and newspaper abuse if they supported the government.¹²⁹ In Madras, where he had sought a non-communal moderate alliance, even Willingdon became disillusioned. The extremists, he recognised, had a simple demand, 'Home Rule now', and a press at their command; the moderates lacked leadership and organisation, and a positive purpose - they did not 'do anything'.¹³⁰

Thus there had been some flirtation with the idea of a moderate party. But it had come only when extremist opposition was inevitable; moreover no-one believed for long that a moderate alternative was reliable or promising. The Government of India (like the Indian people) were looking more and more towards the extremists: it was already clear that they were the voice of the future. It had been clear to many when the reforms were being written; thus they had not been conceived primarily as a sop to government supporters, an attempt to divide them from their fellow nationalists. Subsequent events - the extremist boycott, the moderate acceptance, the government reaction - were an obscuring of the government's intentions, not their natural outcome.

Two factors have compounded this confusion. The first is semantic. Of course the reforms were intended to encourage cooperation with the British, and in this sense were aimed at encouraging 'moderates' (those prepared to cooperate) and discouraging 'extremists' (those who refused). But this precise distinction between different politicians was itself a product of the debate on the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Hitherto the government had applied the labels more loosely. Only after the reforms was it obvious that 'extremists' were those who disapproved of the proposals and turned them down, and 'moderates' those who disapproved but agreed to accept the scheme as a sizeable

¹²⁸ Lloyd to Chelmsford, 6 May 1919, CP22; Montagu to Ronaldshay, 17 Feb. 1919, MP27.

¹²⁹ Craddock to Chelmsford, 6 May 1919, CP22.

¹³⁰ See Willingdon to Montagu, 28 Oct., 6, 14 & 19 Nov. & 16 & 24 Dec. 1919, MP19, but also, 7 Jan. 1920, MP20.

step forward. The difference was not in the changes each group wanted, but in whether they would accept the reforms if the changes were not made.¹³¹ Thus it must be understood that Montagu and Chelmsford did not direct their reforms at the moderates. They were not seeking to bolster up one group of people at the expense of another; they were trying to encourage one type of attitude wherever it might be found. And, in the pre-Gandhian situation, this type of attitude, a willingness to share the government with the British, included a wide political spectrum, from a politician like Malaviya, regarded as an extremist in the old sense, to some conservative and much honoured representative of an aristocratic family. Thus the reforms were aimed at all; but some people excluded themselves - namely the new type of extremist, the non-cooperator, who emerged and was identified through his rejection of the proposals after they had been made.

In the second place, it is true that the reforms were not expected to give complete satisfaction to extremists (in the old sense of the word). Montagu and Chelmsford had had to consider many factors in deciding how much could be conceded. Chelmsford was influenced by the calculation that the Congress were asking for much more than they expected.¹³² It was also necessary to convince European opinion in India - in passing any India bill in Parliament, this opinion, as Chamberlain pointed out to Chelmsford, carried disproportionate weight.¹³³ Chelmsford introduced this argument when Montagu wanted to extend the reforms to the structure of the central Government; he had argued, 'We have to convince people at home and Europeans out here' that the central authority was indisputable 'in fact'.¹³⁴ But to say that different interests had to be balanced in this way, and that 'extremists'

¹³¹ See Central Provinces Moderate Party leaders to Times of India, 4 Oct., with Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Oct. 1918, CP4; & Report of committee of non-official ILC members on the Report, with V to S/S, 31 Oct. 1918, CP9; & B.L. Mitter, quoted in V. Chirol, India Old and New, London 1921, 160-161. See also above, note 71; & for an earlier comment on Malaviya ('the young men ... have run away from him, and he is afraid to follow'), Meston to Chelmsford, 4 Sept. 1916, CP2. My account differs from others in which the tendency has been to exaggerate the breach between 'moderates' and 'extremists' - see for example Ray T. Smith, 'The Role of India's "Liberals" in the Nationalist Movement, 1915-1947', Asian Survey Vol. VIII, No. 7 (July 1968), 607-624. Montagu thought even moderates wanted more than was possible; see Montagu to Ronaldshay, 29 Nov. 1918, MP27.

¹³² Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 19 Jan. 1917, CP3.

¹³³ Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 28 Nov. 1917, CP15.

¹³⁴ Chelmsford to Montagu, 16 March 1918, CP4.

were not going to achieve everything they wanted, is quite different from saying that the government disregarded extremists' views, or that they expected their dissatisfaction to take the form of a boycott. It was not obvious in 1917, or even before the end of 1918, that there would be politicians who would reject the proposals out of hand. To anyone versed in parliamentary procedure, it seemed that the government had made a large concession which, if skilfully exploited, could lead in a short time to a complete transfer of power. Administrators alarmed at this prospect, and perhaps a little surprised at their own daring, at first did not imagine that Indian politicians could mistake or afford to decline the opportunity.¹³⁵ Indeed the boycott, when it came, owed more to other events - the Rowlatt bill, the Panjab atrocities, the rise of Gandhi - than to precise criticisms of the reforms: the proposals were so new when they were rejected by the Congress that few had had the opportunity to study them in detail.

Chelmsford had argued that the whole of the educated classes had to be considered. Changes were necessary, he held, because Indians had to be allowed to take responsibility and make mistakes; the alternative was to leave them discontented until everyone went 'over the precipice together'. He had also stood up against what was being described as a 'white rebellion'.¹³⁶ After the reforms proposals were published, he wrote to the heads of provinces stressing that a general protest would be most improper and would strain racial relations - the heads were to discuss the situation privately and without publicity with prominent members of the various services, in order to reassure them.¹³⁷ Thus the reforms were not

¹³⁵ See above, note 70. Tilak told the Congress in 1918: 'We had asked for eight annas of Self-government and are offered only one ... the entire literary skill of the report lies in making us believe that one anna ... was worth more than eight' - yet Tilak wanted to work the reforms. See D.V. Tahmankar, Lokamanya Tilak, London 1956, 298, & S.L. Karandikar, Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Poona [1957?], 515. Even V.D. Savarkar, interned in the Andamans for his part in a Bombay political murder, responded to the reforms as an 'honourable truce'; see D. Keer, Veer Savarkar, Bombay 1966 (2nd ed.), 153. The typical attitude thus could reasonably have been expected to be that something was better than nothing, a philosophy embraced by A. Rangaswami Aiyangar, an opponent of dyarchy, in 'The "Coming Reforms" in India', Hindustan Review Vol. XXXVIII, No.227 (July 1918). But Tilak had predicted to Gandhi, 'When you get your fingers burnt, I am sure you will go ahead of me'. He did. See Karandikar, op.cit., 504.

¹³⁶ Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 17 May 1918, CP15.

¹³⁷ Chelmsford to heads of provinces, 11 Feb. 1919, CP22.

intended to divide the nationalists, but, between the two opposing interests of politicians and bureaucrats, they were unlikely wholly to commend themselves to the more advanced Indian leaders. The government hoped they would be accepted nevertheless; at this point they miscalculated. We have seen why.

And yet it may be that what had happened was more fundamental than this account suggests. As Chelmsford saw, the situation in India was changing rapidly and Indian demands were growing all the time. Montagu and Chelmsford had proposed reforms which led deliberately towards self-government within the Empire. But neither of them looked further ahead than that. Both of them envisaged at least some vestigial British presence in India. The Commonwealth itself was still in process of evolution, and many people in Britain were less clear than the Dominion governments about the degree of independence now enjoyed in the former colonies. Montagu and Chelmsford had looked forward to Dominion status for India, but they had not foreseen that this was going to require the complete handing over to Indians of all things Indian - including the princely states - and the complete withdrawal of British sovereignty and suzerainty as well as of day-to-day control.

On the other hand, there were Indians now in the Congress who were seeing that far ahead, not systematically but emotionally. Their aim was formally swaraj; their demand was beginning to be for complete independence. In the event the Commonwealth changed, independent status was explicitly recognised, so that Indians were eventually to be satisfied with something which did not look so very different in kind from what they had wanted before 1918. But there had been a change. There had developed an urge not only for the substance but also for the form of self-government. It was the product of impatience with and alienation from the British and their 'satanic' rule.¹³⁸ No reforms

¹³⁸ For 'satanic' see The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. XIX (Nov. 1920-April 1921), Ahmedabad 1966, 15, 28, 43, 49, 412 & 418 (for example! - the word was one of Gandhi's slogans), & also below, p.311. It may be that the word reflected Gandhi's emphasis on the 'moral authority' of the state in the sovereignty of the people (which has also been taken to explain his belief in swaraj 'when we learn to rule ourselves'); see Indira Rothermund, 'The Individual and Society in Gandhiji's Political Thought', Journal of Asian Studies Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 (Feb. 1969), 313-320. In this connection one commentator suggests that Gandhi implied a moral rather than a political creed by the term swaraj - see P.D. Kaushik, The Congress Ideology and Programme 1920-1947, Bombay etc. 1964, 80ff. I am not sure this is a meaningful distinction, and suggest that 'satanic' illustrates the unity and interdependence of Gandhi's thought. On the other hand, as Kaushik admits (pp.54-56), the Congress commitment was rather different from Gandhi's, to the end of self-government rather than the means of purity and truth, and to non-cooperation as an instrument not a duty.

scheme could have satisfied this drive. Reforms implied concessions within an existing system, when the 'extremists' wanted that system to end. Perhaps the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, in being so explicitly directed towards a goal, invited Indians to assess that goal. If so they contributed to a further change in the British attitude. For the British they provided an opportunity and a model. For the Indians they showed for the first time precisely what self-government meant to their rulers, and particularly the areas of reserve which still existed.

The reforms, conceived and introduced within one viceroyalty, had introduced changes both quantitative and qualitative. In executive councils, legislatures, electorates and local boards many more Indians were to be associated with the government. They were bound to influence policies, and change attitudes. Moreover, because the reforms had been deliberately designed to lead to self-government, some Indians were not only to be associated with government, they were to be involved in it - they were being asked to administer and not just to advise the administrators. In all spheres this was to make even their advice more persuasive. Thus the British may not have decided in 1920 that they were to leave India - the form of self-government was uncertain - but the process which was to lead to independence had in fact begun in earnest. The position of the Indian princes was perhaps a gauge for this process. It is true that in 1920 there was probably no-one who had worked out what Indian self-government would mean to the princes.¹³⁹ The Montagu-Chelmsford proposals might even be seen as an attempt to remove them from democratic contamination - relations with the princes were a reserved subject and were being transferred where possible to

¹³⁹ Congress policy was ambiguous. Using the states as a yardstick, it might be argued that Congress in 1920 showed limited vision in promising full recognition and accepting princely independence under an independent India. P.D. Kaushik, *op.cit.*, 100-104, argues that their position did not change until the late 1920s, and cites Jawaharlal Nehru putting forward a new policy 'as early as' 1929: Nehru stated that the 'Indian States cannot live apart from the rest of India'. If this was radical in 1929, then it is curious to mark its similarity with Chelmsford's views 'as early as' 1921 (see below, note 140). I am unconvinced that there was any change of attitude in 1929 - Nehru still stressed that only the States' rulers and peoples could decide their future, Congress had for some time taken an interest in States' affairs, and Gandhi's opposition to active interference (expressed earlier in the 1920s) was provisional and based on an unwillingness to dissipate Congress resources. I would prefer to suggest that no-one had really thought the question through in Chelmsford's time, but that the implications were gradually recognised as the movement to self-government progressed.

the Government of India. Yet, if the British were to leave India, the princes were going to have to come to terms with new rulers. In this case, as in others, Chelmsford's attempt to coordinate policy towards his limited goal of ultimate self-government within the Empire, was to lead to far-reaching and unforeseen consequences. A process of assimilating the princes had already begun. In the first place relations with the British were being standardised, a desirable end no doubt but also a necessary step towards the future change of status. In the second place, the princes had been invited to join their own Council for regular and formal conference with the Government of India. This too was in one sense an attempt to rationalise the situation and somehow relate the princes to the constitution of British India. And finally, Chelmsford had told the princes, '... your States also must move with the times' - demands for freedom from restraint would not be confined to British India; the princes too would have to create not a beautiful facade but a building men could work.¹⁴⁰ Thus, with the princes and much more with the policies within British India, the statement of a goal and attempts to move towards it had pushed the British firmly in the direction of the future, even though the goal was limited and the first steps hesitant, even though neither had commended themselves to the more demanding of the Indian nationalists. In another sense from the one Chelmsford intended, the reforms mapped out the way to go.

¹⁴⁰ See Montagu to Chelmsford, Report, chapter X; & Speeches II, 148-165 & 268-281. Chiefs' conferences were held in Feb. 1918, & Jan. & Nov. 1919, to inaugurate the system. See also Montagu, Diary, 116-117 & 124: Montagu suggested an upper chamber designed for future development, in the Government of India, and wanted to associate the princes with it; Chelmsford, presumably seeing the practical difficulties rather than the future necessities, objected, and Montagu did not insist.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 9. Coherence

Three lines of approach may be distinguished in the political policy of Lord Chelmsford's government. The first was a positive policy of response to Indian opinion, seeking to influence it and, as far as possible, to meet or forestall its demands. The second was a neutral policy which sought to counter agitation by tactical non-interference. The third policy was negative - the repression of agitation. These different approaches coexisted in the same administration. In general the first two were applied to peaceful and constitutional movements; the last was directed against violent or 'revolutionary' outbreaks.

Positive reforms, including the changes in the constitution, were pursued both in response to Indian protest and in recognition of genuine needs. In a few cases, notably measures for the welfare of soldiers, the Government sought to reward Indian services during the war. Montagu and Chelmsford were also attempting to find answers to larger questions than the solution of immediate problems or the avoidance of pending agitation: Chelmsford began his viceroyalty by asking what was the 'goal' of British presence in India; he ended it in the belief that he and Montagu had ensured that the goal would be to transfer power to responsible Indian legislatures.

Before September 1917, the Government had accepted in dealing with agitation that once an illegality had been established to local satisfaction punishment would follow. They had defended against provincial attacks their principle of allowing constitutional agitation; but they had been uncertain about how their policy should apply to the Home Rule Leagues, and had acquiesced in contradictory local approaches. After the August Declaration, however, they realised that the main need was for calm. They believed this could be secured only by conciliatory methods. They began to accept that the normal reason for acting against agitators should be considerations of tactics and expediency. They saw, and insisted that local governments consider, the possible repercussions of provincial decisions. They argued that calm depended on avoiding the repression of those popular agitators who were known nationally.

In response to a new form of agitation the Government had extended the principle of non-interference with political movements to cover popular agitation, rejecting the use of repression as an automatic reaction in this sphere; at the same time they conceived the idea of using this principle as a political tactic. Faced with

a national movement, a national policy had evolved. This, a re-furbishment of a traditional approach, remained Chelmsford's and Vincent's habitual method for coping with such agitation. The lesson learnt in 1917 with Annie Besant, repeated with horrible emphasis with Gandhi in 1919, was applied for the remainder of the viceroyalty; it encouraged the Government to be tenacious in advocating the same approach in 1920 and 1921; it was left as a legacy for Lord Reading.

It is important to note that the two elements in the approach - expediency and principle - had become distinct. The same principle was in theory applied to local figures as to national, but in practice the interpretation varied. In April 1919, for example, K.N. Roy, editor of the Lahore Tribune, was arrested on a charge of sedition. In June he was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. Indian opinion was surprised and alarmed. Concerned enquiries were received from influential sources, including Lord Sinha and Rabindranath Tagore. C.F. Andrews telegraphed in protest to Edwin Montagu, stressing that Roy's Tribune was a 'strictly moderate' newspaper - an opinion borne out by its opposition to violence during the 1919 disturbances.¹ The Government of India agreed that Roy's sentence had been severe, and reduced it to three months. But, in reply to Montagu, they stressed that Roy, although sometimes moderate or even helpful, had been attacking the government at a time of grave unrest and having an effect on Panjabi readers which he would not have had on Bengalis accustomed to 'journalistic vehemence'. The Secretary of State accepted this view. But he wondered if it would not be wise, for reasons of policy, to make a distinction in treatment between political and criminal prisoners. The Government of India opposed this, arguing that nearly all revolutionary crime had a political element, and refusing to believe that 'the organisers and preachers of violence' were 'less criminal than their misguided dupes'. They could not see how they could distinguish between direct inticement and 'inflammatory speech leading to crime'.²

¹ See Tribune, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 April, Punjab Press Abstracts, 5 & 12 April 1919 (Vol. XXXII, 14 & 15); Andrews to Montagu, 11 June, & note by Lord Sinha, 11 June 1919, IOR J&P1594 (4799/19).

² See G/I telegrams, 30 June & 31 July 1919, loc.cit. This file also contains subsequent enquiries and notes, including an India Office despatch, Government of India and local government replies. The proposal was finally refused by the Government in a despatch of 31 March 1921, but continued to be discussed at least until 1924.

This contention was unsound: however much one talks of 'misguided dupes', it is simply not true that the offence of speaking or writing violently is strictly comparable with or in practice indistinguishable from the offence of planning a specific crime to be carried out by others or of actually throwing a bomb or stabbing a policeman during a riot. Moreover, it was if anything more difficult in practice to distinguish between different political activities according to probable results than between political crime and 'criminal' crime. The Government were really defending the local action against Roy. Their arguments were an attempt to assimilate it into their own scheme of things. Their arguments are explicable only with reference to their principle of not interfering with constitutional agitation - the theoretical line had to be drawn not between political and criminal motives, but on a question of results, between ordinary politics and politics likely to lead to crime. The Government firmly believed that they must suppress crime not politics, and therefore had to persuade themselves that the politics to be suppressed were not only technically illegal but also criminal in the same way as theft or murder.

The principle, therefore, was flexible. But the tactic was not - it was never acceptable to brand Gandhi as a criminal without choosing a suitable moment. For lesser figures, such as K.N. Roy, the moment was less important. The result was that the lines of government policy were blurred in the public eye. The inevitable outcome was a suspicion that the intention was to suppress politics, even though the pretence was of suppressing crime. The confusion of violence with the political activity which was thought to lead to it, resulted in the discrediting of repressive measures which some Indians had otherwise been willing to accept. The Rowlatt Act was one casualty of this hardening of attitude. The Press Act was another. More than this, the confusion undermined the positive effect which non-interference might have been expected to have. It also clarified the nature of that policy. It showed it to be a central policy, in one way independent of the principle on which it was based. The vital feature of the approach was the emphasis on expediency. Non-interference, although it conformed to a principle, was strictly tactical.

Thus non-interference could also be seen always as interference held in abeyance. It was recognised that prosecution would be unavoidable or even desirable in certain circumstances. It is fair to say that by the end of 1920 the policy was intended to manoeuvre Gandhi into a position in which it would be safe to arrest him. For this reason it is necessary to be cautious in interpreting

subsequent policies in terms of Chelmsford's method. The final arrest of Gandhi in 1922, for example, has been described as a coup for Reading and the policy of non-interference.³ But Sir George Lloyd, writing heatedly to Chamberlain, gave a different account. According to this, Reading, vacillating between the advice of his Governors and that of his colleague, Tej Bahadur Sapru, agreed to the arrest only after Lloyd and Willingdon had visited Simla, Lloyd threatening to resign if Gandhi remained at large. Thus the arrest may have resulted not so much from deliberate policy as from a fortuitous balance of the forces influencing the Viceroy: there are grounds for speculation at least on whether more emphasis might be given to Lloyd's version, whether Lloyd rather than Reading was the true exponent of tactical non-interference in 1922, and whether we have not been given too flattering an account of Reading's conduct. Lloyd had argued for the arrest, at first gaining Reading's consent, in December 1921 when Gandhi openly and defiantly repeated an offence for which the Ali brothers had been arrested - certainly Chelmsford's policy would have envisaged the arrest at this point.⁴

It might be thought that tactical non-interference, whose advocates at their most optimistic hoped that agitation would disappear if ignored, bore a family resemblance to Curzon's policy of officially disregarding the Congress while allowing some measure of appeasement. To maintain this would be to miss the point. Curzon believed his autocracy to be permanent and saw no reason to come to terms with Indian politicians; thus he refrained from attending to their aspirations. Chelmsford refrained from repression - because he envisaged a transfer of power and saw every reason for conciliation.

His persistence, as we have seen, was not the result of enthusiastic support. There were a few voices favouring the policy. Percival Landon, whom the Prime Minister had asked to write to him on his tours in the East, was doubtful whether they should draw tight the noose, even if Gandhi ran his head into it.⁵ Ben Spoor, Labour

³ See D.A. Low, 'The Government of India and the First Non-cooperation Movement - 1920-1922', Journal of Asian Studies XXIV (1965-6).

⁴ See Lloyd to Chamberlain, 24 March & 11 April 1922, ACP18/1/25 & 27; & also V to S/S, 14 Feb. 1922, ACP14/1/57. Lloyd's attitude had begun earlier, taking a harder line than Chelmsford; see above, pp.87 & 200-201, & Chamberlain to Lloyd, 31 Dec. 1920, ACP18/1/16.

⁵ Landon to Kerr, 23 Feb. 1921, Lothian Papers GD14/17/213.

Member of Parliament, reported to Montagu that nobody in India thought it would be wise to touch Gandhi.⁶ But the rarity of such support demonstrates the novelty of the Government's approach; it may indicate that non-interference was not the wisest course. It is possible that Montagu and Lloyd, or even Ronaldshay and Willingdon, were right to have doubts, and that the task would have been easier if Gandhi had been stopped sooner or outlawed from the first. It is an open question whether Chelmsford's Government, by using repression, could have retarded Indian political advance. It can only be established that they did not try to do so. Rather their policy had been passivity tempered with legal action, even with regard to popular agitation, and a deliberate attempt to meet public opinion and further political progress.

Moreover, if the aim of British rule was the peaceful devolution of power to the Indians, then what is certain is that tactical non-interference, like the non-violent nature of Gandhi's opposition, made a large contribution to this end. It is probable that, had repression gained the ascendancy, had no lesson been learnt from Annie Besant, had Gandhi been imprisoned before his leadership was secure, then the Indian response might also have been different, and Chelmsford's legacy might have been a growing commitment to autocracy in the face of nationalist violence. Motilal Nehru told the Amritsar Congress in December 1919: 'violence cannot avail us. That is the special weapon of the West and we cannot hope to win freedom by armed force. But even if we could do so it would be a barren victory, a victory which would degrade and coarsen us ...'.⁷ The brutal reprisals in the Panjab had offered Nehru his stance of moral superiority; but, paradoxically, it had been partly the nature of his enemy - not least Chelmsford's Government - which had made it appropriate for such men as he to be the leaders of their countrymen.

The non-cooperation campaign forced the Government to place added reliance and emphasis upon prosecution of minor figures, as an accompaniment to the continuation of non-interference at the centre.

⁶ See Montagu to Willingdon, 16 Feb. 1921, MP17 (& also to Chelmsford, same date, CP6).

⁷ Motilal Nehru, The Voice of Freedom, London 1961, 16-17.

But it would be wrong to think that the advocates of conciliation were in any sense in retreat or disarray by the end of Chelmsford's viceroyalty. On the contrary non-interference was applied to or confirmed for wider and wider categories of activity as time went on. Industrial unrest was growing, and there was a prospect of political involvement. But the government blamed strikes mainly on the disparity between price and wage increases, suspicions about profiteering and the capitalists' profits, the shortage of labour (accentuated by the influenza epidemic), and the reluctance of employers, especially in the Bombay mills, to grant concessions until strikes had occurred. Strikes were not yet accepted as a permanent public concern, but they were seen to be no longer a private matter. Chelmsford evolved an attitude very similar to his general policy towards agitation. His Government worked out rules restricting the use of troops in strikes, but encouraged diplomatic involvement by the local authorities as long as it was not obvious or compromising. Chelmsford's slogan was 'caution and watchfulness'.⁸

In the sphere of 'revolutionary' crime, too, conciliation gained ground, partly of course as a result of the end of the war, but also influenced by the new emphasis in policy. In 1919 restrictions were removed from the Ali brothers, accused of seditious conspiracy. In 1920 very large numbers of political prisoners - all who had not been convicted for crimes of violence - were released under amnesty.⁹ Similarly the Government abandoned the second Rowlatt Bill, embodying permanent changes in the law. The Legislative Department claimed that they had heeded 'official and unofficial opinions received'. But virtually all the official opinion, European and Indian, had favoured the bill, as did a significant minority of the non-official opinion. Objections came almost exclusively from those non-officials who were politically active - from Bar Associations, District and Municipal Boards, and members of Legislative Councils - the very people who had been ignored in the passage of the first Rowlatt Bill. Only Robertson and the Chief Commissioner of Assam,

⁸ See H.Poll. 242, 244, 246, 247, 249, March 1919, & 366-372, Feb. 1920; H.Police 359-360, June 1921; G/Bombay to V, 11 Jan., & Chelmsford to Lloyd, 14, 16 & 28 Jan. 1919, CP22; V to S/S, 23 April 1919, CP13; Willingdon to Montagu, 23 April 1919, MP19, & 23 & 28 May 1920, MP20; Lloyd to Barnes, 25 Jan., & to Montagu, 25 & 31 Jan. & 14 Feb. 1920, MP25; & Montagu to Ronaldshay, 9 Nov. 1920, MP27.

⁹ See above, pp.120-121 & 143.

Sir N. D. Beatson Bell, had expressed doubts about the wisdom of going ahead with the second bill. The Government of India clearly shared these doubts. They may have been influenced also by Gandhi's offer to suspend civil disobedience indefinitely if the bill were abandoned.¹⁰

Most important, the introduction of the reforms in late 1920 was marked by confirmations of the conciliatory policy. To some extent these were inevitable reflections of the greater participation of Indians in the central government. But Chelmsford was also making concessions in a deliberate attempt to show that the 'extremist' boycott had been misguided. He wanted to prove that even in the much criticised Government of India the Indian representatives had an effective role. The first real test came in January 1921 when the Government, despite the dissent of the Commander-in-Chief, decided that they must agree to reductions in the army budget if they were to be able to pass the estimates in the reformed legislature. The only way of reducing the allocation, it was decided, was to reduce army strength in India. Chelmsford argued that, although the reduction would have to be forced on the military authorities, he had to have something to offer the new legislature. He was prepared to contemplate a reduction in the number and proportion of British personnel in the army. The Secretary of State protested; the King himself expressed his concern. Chelmsford warned that if his policy were thwarted, members of his Government might claim the privilege of stating in the legislature that they were voting under orders - if that happened they would never pass the budget, and Chelmsford would have to use extraordinary powers. Legislative members might then absent themselves from the Assembly or even join the 'extremists'. The Secretary of State nevertheless insisted on referring the question to a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence in London, and no decision was reached during Chelmsford's viceroyalty.¹¹

More productively, following the same general principle, the Government accepted a resolution of B.S. Kamat on 24 February 1921, which directed the Government to take steps, as far as practicable,

¹⁰ H.Poll. 376, 379, 381, 382-383 (= 377-378?), April 1920.

¹¹ See V to S/S, 20 & 25 Jan., & V(FD) to S/S, 30 Jan. & 17 Feb., & V(AD) to S/S, 22 Jan. & 10 March, & S/S to V, 24 Jan. & 11 & 19 Feb. 1921, CP14; Chelmsford to Montagu, 26 Jan. & 16 March 1921, CP6; & Appendix (4 Oct. 1917) to Meyer & Howard, memorandum, H.Public(G) 579, Oct. 1918. See also above, chapter 2, note 77.

'to ensure that no action ... be taken on reports of commissions or committees ... until an opportunity has been given ... to the Indian legislature to express its opinion thereon'.¹² This statement reflected a wider intention of consulting the legislature. In February 1921, to the Calcutta Club, an audience of Indians and Europeans, Chelmsford suggested - and repeated his remarks to Montagu - that the reformed councils would be included in taking any measures necessary against extremists.¹³ The logic of this was that methods not approved by the Assembly could no longer be adopted, and that in general executive powers, unless reaffirmed by the legislature, were suspect. This attitude was reflected in the Government's policy towards the press.

The policy had been gradually changing. In March 1917 Chelmsford gave an 'uncompromising' reply to a deputation seeking abolition of the Press Act of 1910, but in August he suggested a liberalisation of the Act after the war. In September 1918 the Government refused a Legislative Council resolution for an enquiry and in October an unofficial suggestion from Montagu that they completely substitute judicial for executive controls. In December 1919 Montagu suggested a total amnesty for the press; the Government of India disagreed, and varying numbers were freed in different provinces. In January 1920 the Secretary of State officially asked the Government to consider transferring to the courts the power of forfeiture (though not imposition) of security. Judging from the comparative rarity of forfeitures and the use of the demand for security as a weapon to prevent small concerns from operating, it was the imposition of security which was most effective in controlling the tone of the press. Thus, in July, the Government of India strongly advocated the change to the local governments, as a partial answer to Indian demands. The replies, received in December, mostly agreed.¹⁴ At this time, however, Chelmsford telegraphed to Montagu

¹² H.Public 40-41, March 1921.

¹³ Speeches II, 576-577.

¹⁴ See ibid., 249-281; H.Poll. 253-254, May 1917, 111-152, July, & 423, 458 & 464-465, May 1920; IOR J&P1589 (4468/19); V to S/S, 8 Oct. 1918, CP9, & 2 June 1920, CP12; Montagu to Chelmsford, 10 Oct., & Chelmsford to Montagu, 19 Nov. 1918, CP4, & to Chamberlain, 1 March 1917, CP3, & to Heads of Governments, 29 Aug. 1917, CP19; & Gait, 12 Sept., Butler, 15 Sept., Ramsey, 19 Sept., Roos-Keppel, 22 Sept., Pentland, 13 Oct., Ronaldshay, 20 Oct., Robertson, 24 Oct., Earle, 7 Nov., Willingdon, 12 Nov., Meston, 16 Nov. 1917, CP19, & O'Dwyer, 20 Feb., & Hailey, 14 March 1918, to Chelmsford, CP20; Willingdon to

that his present idea was to have Vincent move in the Legislative Assembly for the appointment of a committee to investigate the press law and suggest modifications. He was also, he claimed, prepared to allow an enquiry into the whole range of repressive legislation including the 'Rowlatt' Act.¹⁵

The Government moved for the press committee on 22 February 1921, and gave undertakings making it clear that they envisaged a mainly non-official enquiry covering the whole question of press restrictions and free to recommend abolition of the Press Act. A committee under Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Law Member, was duly appointed on 10 March, and given the Secretary of State's despatch to consider. Vincent was the only official member apart from the Chairman; of the other seven members, several were committed opponents of the Act. It was obvious that this committee would recommend that the powers be abandoned or greatly reduced, and thus commit Reading's Government to a change of policy. In due course the committee advised that some provisions of the Press Act should be included in other legislation, but that the Act itself should be repealed; Lord Reading accepted this advice.¹⁶

Chelmsford had been concerned to avoid changing the law so late in his term of office. Thus to bind his successor would not, he believed, be good policy - if Reading wished to abandon the powers, then he should do so and gain the good will. Chelmsford was refusing to prejudice his successor's position; he was not merely trying to delay or avoid the decision. By appointing the committee his Government had shown that they were prepared to face the possibility of abandoning the Press Act. There would still be control, but the simple and direct influence over the press represented by securities and their forfeiture was unlikely to be endorsed by any legislative committee.

Chelmsford, 2 & 8 July, G/Madras to V, 4 July, & V to G/Madras, 3 & 9 July 1919, CP23; & Montagu to Lloyd, 6 Nov., MP22, & Lloyd to Montagu, 7 Oct. & 20 & 30 Dec. 1919, MP24; & Willingdon to Montagu, 7 & 13 July 1919, MP19, & 30 Jan. & 3 March 1920, MP20. On the use of the Press Act, see also H.Poll. 373-368, Nov. 1916, 446-463, April 1917, 103, Feb. 1918, & 274 & 278, July 1920.

¹⁵ See G/I circular, 1 July 1920, & Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Assembly 22 Feb. 1921, p. 341, IOR J&P1589 (4468/19); & V to S/S, 16 Dec. 1920, CP13.

¹⁶ See V(HD) to S/S, 10 March & 5 July 1921, Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Assembly 22 Feb. 1921, & Gazette of India 21 March 1921, IOR J&P1589 (4468/19).

This decision was taken in a period of growing and alarming activity by the nationalist agitators. It was accompanied by a debate on the Panjab disturbances, and followed the declaration made by the Duke of Connaught promising an 'incomparably greater' involvement of the legislature in the formulation of policy.¹⁷ In moving for the press committee, S.P. O'Donnell, Secretary to the Government, had promised that future policy would be 'very largely influenced and guided by non-official Indian opinion', and admitted that, as members generally disapproved of wide executive powers over the press, the retention of such powers would be 'inconsistent with the spirit of the new era' and with the Government's desire to meet legitimate Indian demands. Eardley Norton, a non-official European member of the Assembly, responding to these remarks, said that he hoped that in future the Government would take the Assembly into their confidence and not stand 'upon remote pillars in inaccessible altitudes'. The appointment of the press committee was, he said, a 'happy augury of those more intimate relations which will exist between the two sides of this House'.¹⁸ Chelmsford and his Government hoped that Indians, both inside and outside the Assembly, would draw the same conclusion. As late as April 1920 Chelmsford had claimed that on matters of law and order the only policy could be the 'indisputable supremacy of the British raj';¹⁹ less than a year later, in an attempt to work the reforms faithfully and give prestige to the new legislature, he was apparently willing to surrender one of the main weapons of that supremacy. Chelmsford wanted to leave the credit for any abolition of the press restrictions to Lord Reading; but for his Government he wanted the credit of consulting the new Assembly in a responsible and constructive manner. He was not primarily interested in repressive laws or agitators; he was committed to the constitutional experiment. The effect of this concern, however, was that in the arena of politics the method of conciliation was firmly entrenched. The policy of tactical non-interference was supreme.

In March 1921, Chelmsford recorded his appreciation of his legislature. It has, he wrote to Harcourt Butler, 'fulfilled my highest hopes; ... it has shown a sense of balance and responsibility

¹⁷ See above, p.197.

¹⁸ Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Assembly 22 Feb. 1921, pp. 242-243, IOR J&P1589 (4468/19).

¹⁹ Chelmsford to Montagu, 28 April 1920, CP6.

which could scarcely be surpassed. "Well begun is half done" and in leaving I feel happy that the great adventure, notwithstanding all the threatening storm clouds ..., has started under the fairest auspices'.²⁰ The Congress (it might be argued) had thus made a mistake in rejecting the reforms. It is certainly true that the reforms made very great concessions in terms of what was envisaged as normal procedure, and that astute legislators could have made it difficult for abnormal procedures to be used. One observer considered that no Indian understood what had been conceded and that 'any Dominion which got the powers that India now has would have won everything it wanted in five years'.²¹ In the Government of India deliberate policy encouraged adherence to the will of the legislature; and Chelmsford's constitutional methods ensured that his three Indian colleagues would have an impact upon policy.

Nevertheless it is open to debate how far the reforms marked a substantive change in British attitudes. In Assam an Indian was placed in charge of police, judiciary and prisons;²² but in Bombay Lloyd refused to give the Law and Order portfolio to an Indian - his excuse was Indian inexperience, and yet one of the councillors considered for the post was a new member and presumably less experienced than the then senior councillor, Sir I. Rahimtoola. Lord Sinha was appointed the first Governor of Bihar and Orissa under the reforms; but Lloyd, in spite of Chelmsford's categorical advice, was reluctant to see Rahimtoola appointed Vice-President of his Council (and hence Acting Governor when necessary) - and the Secretary of State shared some of Lloyd's doubts.²³ Later criticisms of the reforms included cases of lack of cooperation between the two halves of the government or between civil servants and Indian ministers. Clearly there was

²⁰ Chelmsford to Butler, 25 March 1921, CP26.

²¹ J.H. O'Idham to Kerr (?), 31 Dec. 1921, Lothian Papers GD40/17/19. See also S/S to V, 24 Jan. 1920, CP12: Montagu noted that the Reform Act was being misrepresented in the Indian press and that the 'great powers it gives are not understood'.

²² Beatson-Bell to Chelmsford, 17 Dec. 1920, CP25.

²³ Lloyd to Chelmsford, 24 Dec. 1920, CP25, & 13 March, & G/Bombay to V, 19 March, & V to G/Bombay, 24 March 1921, CP26; & S/S to V, 2 March 1921, CP14. Compare Willingdon's and Chelmsford's willingness to appoint Chaubal Vice-President in Bombay in 1916: Willingdon to Chelmsford, 20 April, & Chelmsford to Willingdon, 23 April 1916, CP17. On the other hand, Montagu refused to interfere, on constitutional grounds, when Harkishen Lal, convicted in 1919, was appointed a minister in the Panjab, and this was criticised in the House of Commons; see S/S to V, 24 Feb., & S/S to V(RO), 20 Jan., 8 & 11 Feb. 1921, CP14.

a deep residue of habits of racial superiority.²⁴ Nothing of course, as we have seen, convinced the Congress of this fact more than the actions, evidence and subsequent treatment of General Dyer.

In Bengal, in the only instance of real friction in the brief post-reforms period under Chelmsford, the new legislature was, according to Ronaldshay, 'seized with a fit of mad irresponsibility' expressed chiefly by reducing the police grant by 23 lakhs. Ronaldshay calculated that he would have to restore the grant by extraordinary powers or reduce numbers in an already short-handed force. Thus British supremacy - and their judgement of what was responsible conduct - stood undisturbed in the last resort, and on these grounds, as well as for the suspicion of the continuance of old attitudes, the Congress abstention was understandable. It is true that the dispute on the Bengal budget was resolved not by executive action but by a skilfully stage-managed debate in which the practical consequences of the budget changes were brought home to the legislature, which in due course and by an over-whelming majority approved supplementary grants to save the situation: the conclusion here must be that Ronaldshay, like Chelmsford, was showing extreme reluctance to go against the will of the new assembly.²⁵ Presumably then the 'extremists' might have used the reforms, as Motilal Nehru was later to try to do, to manoeuvre the effective power away from the government. And yet the questions remain whether the pressure would have been more effective inside than it was outside the assemblies, whether the consolidation of Congress power through the attempts at controlled mass agitation were not a necessary stage of political evolution, and indeed whether the nationalist cause could have survived a period of cooperation at this time, in the prevailing atmosphere of suspicion, grievance and mistrust.

It might also be argued that the Government of India's success in limiting the changes at the centre precipitated the Congress boycott. The simple answer is almost certainly that this was not the case. Objections that the reforms were inadequate were probably unavoidable with any concession short of immediate home rule, and the fact that these objections hardened into rejection of the reforms

²⁴ See Majority Report, Reforms Enquiry Committee 1925, Cmd. 2360. Governors may also have undermined ministers' influence by consulting them individually; see R.C., with A.K. Majumdar, op.cit., 278-279.

²⁵ See Ronaldshay to Montagu, 17 Feb., 24 & 31 March, 8 & 28 April 1921, MP32; Chelmsford to Ronaldshay, 27 March 1921, CP26.

as a whole was due to factors external to the proposals themselves: these factors were notably the aftermath of the Panjab disturbances and a general lack of appreciation of how far reaching the reforms were. It became fashionable to deride them; but what strikes one, in comparison with British attitudes prevailing even in 1916 or even with Indian expectations as in Sinha's Congress address of 1915, is how extensive the reforms were. In 1918 one commentator proposed to end the Indian problem by promising a plebiscite after fifty years, to decide on British withdrawal - or, if 'sedition' continued in the interim, after a maximum of a hundred years.²⁶ The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms set British and Indians together on a path which was to lead to complete provincial transfer in a little more than fifteen years and final withdrawal in less than thirty. The 1919 reforms did not decide this timetable, but they made the direction and the outcome inevitable. In this sense their immediate practicality and the revealed short-comings were irrelevant - indeed were expected of a transitional arrangement.²⁷

Chelmsford's role in these reforms, as in all the problems of government with which we have been concerned, is obscured by his insistence on consultation and 'constitutional' governorship. A special tribute was paid to him by Lord Sinha, both publicly and privately - on the latter occasion talking of India's 'rank ingratitude'. Meston hoped history would be just to Chelmsford for his leadership of a great campaign. Bhupendranath Basu believed Chelmsford had 'saved the situation'; to Annie Besant he was the Viceroy who would stand out as having pursued a 'deliberate line of action, which has opened India's way to Freedom'.²⁸ Yet his personal unpopularity was striking. Calcutta was reported to have given him 'a very fair reception' on his last visit; but in Bombay Lloyd could not get farewell addresses for him from any Indian body, not even

²⁶ H. Gordon Milburn, England and India, London 1918, 72-73.

²⁷ See Montagu & Chelmsford, Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 22 April 1918, CP42, pp. 142-126; & also above, note 24.

²⁸ See V(HD) to S/S, 20 Jan. 1920 (reporting Sinha's speech), CP12; Sinha, 26 Jan., Meston, 31 Jan., Basu, 15 & 31 Jan., & Besant, 9 Feb. 1921, to Chelmsford, CP26. See also V. Chirol, India Old and New, London 1921, 151 & 301; &, for a contrary view, disapproving of the Report, Sir Reginald Craddock, The Dilemma in India, London 1929.

the municipality.²⁹ He had reported to Chamberlain late in 1920 that he thought Chelmsford would feel only 'genuine relief' upon his departure in April.³⁰

The Rowlett Bill and the alienation of Gandhi had overshadowed the successes - and perhaps rightly so, for these failures were crucial. Chelmsford saw the need to be political. But, faced with a tradition of secret government and a burden of accidents and atrocities, he did not have the sort of ability which would have been able to recover this ground. In an important speech to the Calcutta Club in February 1921, he noted that he and his Government were being called 'satanic' - 'I am glad to think I still have a sense of humour, he remarked. 'I have had many epithets applied to myself in my time, but the epithet of "Satanic" has broken entirely new ground.' Few rulers can have suffered such a campaign of vituperation as was undergone by Chelmsford at the end of his term. In 1921, Willingdon wrote - an epitaph for the viceroyalty - 'The mere fact of Chelmsford's departure has done good.'³¹

This view cannot be left unqualified. Firstly, the fault was in Chelmsford's manner and not in lack of sympathy. His Calcutta Club speech stated the difficulty:

No man who takes up the great post of Viceroy can have any but one desire: To magnify India in the Councils of the Empire; to espouse the cause of Indians within the Empire; to champion the aspirations of Indians so far as in him lies. But a Viceroy...must choose his own methods. The flamboyant speech, however much it may tickle the ear at the time, seldom if ever really achieves results. More can be done by quiet, unostentatious pressure: by arguments pruned of every epithet. I would say then: Trust your Viceroy and leave him to choose his own methods of working. He cannot be other than your champion.³²

The Viceroy he spoke of was Reading; but the details referred to himself. Perhaps the achievements of Chelmsford's 'quiet pressure' are in retrospect impressive; but 'flamboyant speeches' might have popularised his policies and lessened the disasters. It is quite possible he was thinking of Hardinge when he expressed his distrust

²⁹ See Ronaldshay to Montagu, 1 March, MP32, & Lloyd to Montagu, 18 March 1921, MP26.

³⁰ Lloyd to Chamberlain, 15 Oct. 1920, ACP18/1/15.

³¹ Willingdon to Montagu, 24 April 1921, MF21.

³² Speeches II, 576 & 588.

of ostentatious methods - a similar tone creeps into his references to his predecessor.³³ But he must have reflected on what an asset Hardinge's personal popularity would have been to him.

Secondly, one of the factors contributing to Chelmsford's unpopularity was undoubtedly the peculiar relationship with the India Office. The stigma of the Mesopotamia Commission should have been removed by Chelmsford's administration; but suspicion and abuse of the Government of India remained. Perhaps Montagu's enthusiasm for new projects obscured what had already been done. Holderness, in a note seeking to correct the errors of the Government, suggested in 1917 that minor decisions should be taken departmentally and that Council members should be kept informed. He showed that the Government of India was underrated even at the India Office.³⁴ Chelmsford in turn showed that he was not pleased to be instructed in practices he had already put into operation. In time there developed a feeling that the India Office was not really giving proper support. Craddock complained to Chelmsford that Montagu interviewed Indians who visited London, heard their grievances, and then promised to look into them - assuming that his officers were in the wrong.³⁵ Chelmsford's certainty of Montagu's support in 1918 was gradually replaced by cynicism at Montagu's 'extraordinary' sensitivity to questions in the Commons.³⁶ The Secretary of State was not thought altogether reliable. The Government of India had decided to send Meston to represent them before the Select Committee on constitutional reforms. Meston reported that Montagu's attack on the Panjab administration had become the general line for those who wished to cause trouble.³⁷ Later Montagu failed to prevent unfavourable peace terms for Turkey. In 1920 there was a disagreement over Chelmsford's conciliatory policy towards the Afghans - J.L. Maffey claimed that Montagu had been terrorised by

³³ See above, p. 21 ff.; & also Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 Sept. 1917, CP3: 'We must both remember that the day of honeyed phrases is past' - 'some portion of these promises' now had to be redeemed.

³⁴ Holderness, note, 11 Aug. 1917, in Montagu to Chelmsford, 21 Sept. 1917, CP3.

³⁵ Craddock to Chelmsford, 15 March 1920, CP24.

³⁶ See Chelmsford to Montagu, 22 April 1918, CP4, & to Lloyd, 1 May 1920, CP24, & also to Willingdon, 17 Sept. 1918, CP21.

³⁷ Meston to Chelmsford, 2 Oct. 1919, CP15.

Curzon.³⁸ Roos Keppel (who favoured a strong policy) told him that Curzon was 'amazed at the invincible ignorance and optimism of the Government of India'; Maffey retorted, 'The Government of India are amazed at the invincible self-satisfaction and arrogance of Curzon.'³⁹ There were rumours that Montagu was unpopular in the House and with the Prime Minister - his reforms had not pacified India as he had promised; his fighting speech on the Panjab disturbances had antagonised the Commons and put into jeopardy the vote supporting the condemnation of General Dyer. The Government of India's confidence had been eroded. In addition, there were attacks from all sides following the constitutional reforms and the Hunter Committee - most of these rebounded on the central Government. The Government's credit in India, as Maffey pointed out, was deeply affected by the credit given in England. There was not much being given - and Montagu did not seem to be providing the outspoken support that was needed to redress the balance.

Montagu was still popular with Indian politicians - and this too did not help Chelmsford. There had been some opposition to Montagu's visit in 1917 on the grounds that the presence in India of the Secretary of State would undermine the position and prestige of the Viceroy. The fears may have had some justification. Certainly Montagu received credit for most that was thought good, and Chelmsford blame for most that was not. He told his legislature in September 1918 that there were two schools of thought on the constitutional reforms - one thought the Secretary of State was the villain and the Viceroy his unhappy victim, signing against his better judgment; the other (the Indian politicians) thought that 'a sympathetic Secretary of State' had been 'enmeshed in the net of the cold hard bureaucracy'.⁴⁰ Neither view was flattering to Chelmsford in the eyes of those who wanted political advance. In a sense each denigration of the Government compounded all the others: the Government's unpopularity with politicians influenced the assessment by the local governments, and their distrust - with its hints of disagreements - added in turn to

³⁸ Maffey to Chelmsford, 17 May 1920, CP16. For an insight into Curzon's attitude, see Kenneth Rose, Superior Person, A Portrait of Curzon and his circle in late Victorian England, London 1969, 201.

³⁹ Maffey to Chelmsford, 27-28 April 1920, CP16.

⁴⁰ Speeches II, 94-95 (4 Sept. 1918).

the suspicions of the politicians. The difficulties with the India Office, the hostility real and rumoured, were the most potent element in this cycle. The reputation of Chelmsford and his Government was not likely to survive the belief that there was a more liberal attitude and consequently disapproval in London.

Chelmsford's unpopularity but also his achievements are therefore traceable to his methods of government, which reflected both the strengths and the shortcomings of his personality. Inevitably his insistence on consultation and joint responsibility was misread as subservience. Traditional and paternalist autocrats, like Lord Willingdon, could not understand the method - Willingdon's verdict was simply that Chelmsford was a man 'who would never use his personal authority'.⁴¹ In 1918 that other autocrat, Lord Curzon, wrote implying that the Foreign Department dictated Chelmsford's policy on Persia. Chelmsford replied sharply: 'This is not so. I am not so presumptuous as to think I can rule India without the advice of my Department..., but equally on broad questions of policy my Departments do not run me.'⁴² He claimed, however, to be indifferent to imputations of weakness. Montagu once advised him to let himself go. 'Your instincts are right,' he wrote; 'your judgment is sound; let your colleagues know more fully what you want; let them feel your leadership.'⁴³ Lord Chelmsford replied:

The policy of the attainment of the goal was my policy; ... the policy of inviting you out was my policy, and I think you will own that I had only to lift my little finger and I could have obtained dissent from the majority of the proposals to which you and I with certainly the bulk of my colleagues have given agreement. I cite these things not to obtain credit, for they will remain locked up in our correspondence, but to show my deliberate method. I believe I can carry my colleagues with me, but if I can, it is not by the obtrusion of my own fiat, but by patience and command of temper.⁴⁴

The contemporary verdict remained, and has marked the viceroyalty as a failure. Yet it is worthwhile to look again at its

⁴¹ Willingdon to Montagu, 24 April 1921, MP21, & also 28 May 1920, MP20.

⁴² Chelmsford to Curzon, 23 April 1918, CP15.

⁴³ Montagu to Chelmsford, 23 April 1918, CP4.

⁴⁴ Chelmsford to Montagu, 28 April 1918, CP4.

achievements. It had seen the successful conclusion of a great war; it had fostered a new international and imperial status for India; it had investigated the possibility for changes in education and for state involvement in industry; it had tried to remedy the disability of economic exploitation and racial discrimination; it had devised a policy for dealing with a new type of agitation; it had refrained from beginning a conflagration by suppressing the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements; it had controlled the Hijrat; it had begun to loosen the strait-jacket of executive powers, but had reduced the threat of 'revolutionary' conspiracy; most of all it had initiated, fought for, worked out, defended and finally seen the introduction of epoch-making constitutional reforms. It had done all this while staff and money were in short supply; while energies were diverted by unprecedented difficulties with nationalist agitation; while both the Government of India and the Viceroy were supposed to be less than usually distinguished by ability or imagination. The reputation and the achievement contradict one another.

It is not difficult to see how this happened. The Jallianwala Bagh infected all, and did so at a time when rising prices, epidemics, Muslim grievances and social insecurity - all matters outside the Government's control and some of them world-wide problems - magnified and distorted the public reaction. Chelmsford, for all his personal charm, was not ready with informal speeches and imaginative gestures to restore confidence. His greatest coup - the reforms, the deliberate relating of government policy to the goal of a future transfer of power - was at first attributed solely to Montagu and then, by some Indians, rejected altogether. His cautious policy towards unrest pleased neither the agitators nor the loyalists nor many of the officials. It is now possible to be more judicious. Alongside the undoubted failures - the indecisiveness over the Panjab, the general lack of tact, the tendency to be formal and unyielding - must be placed the very considerable achievements of a remarkable period of progress and change.

What had happened during these years was that, because there had evolved a permanent articulate opposition, the government's policies were being judged and were having an effect as a whole. Failures in one area prejudiced success in another; and at the same time Indian demands and expectations constantly rose higher. Hardinge, after a grand gesture in ending the partition of Bengal, had been able to make do with little more than promises. Chelmsford had been expected to put the promises into effect. Hardinge, too,

had managed to introduce repressive laws under cover of the war. Chelmsford had tried to retain them during the peace, as a last resort in dealing with internal hostilities. But the legacy he passed on to Reading was a virtual commitment to eschew such executive powers in future.

In 1916 when Chelmsford asked 'what is the goal of British rule?', his intention was to start enquiries on constitutional reforms. But his conclusions inevitably affected policies in other fields. If the goal were to be the future transfer of power - not as a pious aspiration but as an active principle of policy embodied in immediate steps - then public opinion had to be scrutinised and attended to, political activity had to be seen in a generous light, the use of repressive powers had to be reconsidered. And each of these changes influenced or made necessary the others. The autocratic and bureaucratic had to take account of and begin to accommodate the future rulers of India; and this process was expressed partly in an increased awareness of interdependence between different spheres of government.

This awareness was one of Chelmsford's achievements. He sought coherence. He sought it in method by his collective decision-making, and in policy by his enunciation of the goal. We too must assess all his policy. We see then that all the political moves - international changes, tactical non-interference, positive advances, publicity, repression, constitutional and secretariat reforms - were part of one whole, conceived as complementary, directed towards a deliberate goal. It is in this sense, not in any total abandonment of old methods or prejudices, that Chelmsford's viceroyalty marks a new starting-point.

This list gives additional information about persons mentioned in the text, in cases where the person may not be well known, or the information may be relevant to the discussion. There is no attempt to give comprehensive information.

ALI, Muhammad - Scholar and translator of the Quran; member, Central Khilafat Committee, 1920-1924; Congress President 1923; leader, Civil Disobedience Movement (in opposition to Gandhi), 1930.

ALI, Shaukat - brother of Muhammad; civil servant for 15 years; Khilafat leader; representative of Muslim League, Round Table Conference; member ILA, 1934.

ANSARI, Dr. M.A. - 1880-1936; Muslim League President 1920; Congress General Secretary 1920; Congress President 1927; imprisoned 1930 & 1932.

ARUNDALE, G.S. - 1878-1945; Theosophist; Honorary Professor of History (1903) & later Principal, Central Hindu College, Benares (founded by Annie Besant in 1898).

BARNES, Sir George Stapylton - barrister; comptroller with Board of Trade, 1904-1913; member, various wartime financial commissions; Commerce & Industry Member, G/I, 1915.

BASU, Bhupendranath - Member, Bengal legislature, 1909-1912, ILC, 1916, & S/S Council, 1917-1924; Congress President 1914.

BEACHCROFT, C.P. - Acting Puisne Judge, Calcutta High Court.

BEATSON-BELL, Sir N.D. - ICS 1886; Member, G/Bengal, 1914-1918; CC/Assam, 1918 (Governor, Jan. - March 1921).

BISHAMBER NATH - vakil; Government Pleader & Public Prosecutor, Ajmir; member, Ajmir Municipal Committee, 1896; famine worker, 1899-1900 & 1905-1906; Government guest at Delhi coronation durbar.

BRUNYATE, Sir James - ICS 1889; FD Secretary 1914-1917; Member, S/S Council, 1917, & committee on Indian exchange & finance, 1919.

BUTLER, Sir Spencer Harcourt - ICS 1888; Member, G/I, 1910-1915; LG/Burma 1915; LG/United Provinces, Feb. 1918 (Governor, Jan. 1921).

BUXTON, Sir Thomas Fowell - 1837-1915; G/South Australia, 1895-1898; considered for viceroyalty 1915.

CARMICHAEL, Baron, of Stirling - MP 1895-1900; G/Victoria, 1908-1911; G/Madras 1911; G/Bengal, 1912-1917.

CHAKRAVARTI, B. - barrister; Member, Bengal legislature; Minister 1927; founding member of National Party under Sapru (qv.), 1926.

CHANDAVARKAR, Sir Narayan Ganesh - retired Bombay judge; pleader 1881; Editor, Indu Prakesh; Delegate to England 1885; Member, Bombay legislature, 1897-1900; Congress President 1900; High Court judge 1901-1913; Vice-Chancellor, Bombay University, 1909.

CHELMSFORD, Lord (Frederick John Napier Thesiger, 3rd Lord & 1st Viscount) - born 1868; educated Winchester, & Magdalen, Oxford (B.A. first class in law); Fellow of All Souls, 1892-1899; barrister 1893; Member, London School Board, 1901-1904, & London County Council, 1904-1905; G/Queensland, 1905-1909; G/New South Wales, 1909-1913; officiating Governor General of Australia, Dec. 1909 - Jan. 1910; alderman, London County Council, 1913; Privy Councillor 1916; V & Governor General of India, 4 April 1916 - 2 April 1921; First Lord of the Admiralty 1924.

CHEVIS, William - ICS 1883; District Judge 1899; Judge, Panjab Chief Court, 1914 (temporary from 1911).

CHIROL, Sir Valentine - onetime director, Foreign Department, The Times; correspondent of Times in India, 1905-1906; Member, Public Service Commission, 1912; author of many books, chiefly on Middle East and India.

COBB, H.V. - ICS 1883; CC/Coorg, 7 April 1916 - 8 March 1920.

CRADDOCK, Sir R.M. - ICS 1882; CC/Central Provinces 1907; Home Member, G/I, 1912-1917; LG/Burma 1918.

CRAWFORD, Earl of (David Alexander Lindsay) - 1871-1940; conservative MP; party whip, 1903-1913; considered for viceroyalty 1915; later President of Board of Agriculture & Fisheries (1916), Lord Privy Seal (1916-1919), Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1919-1921), & Commissioner of Works (1921-1922). Described in the DNB as occasionally 'brusque and dictatorial' but in fact 'open-minded'.

D'ABERNON, Viscount (Sir Edgar Vincent) - 1857-1941; former army officer; Financial Adviser to Egyptian Government 1883; Governor, Imperial Ottoman Bank, 1889; Conservative MP, 1899-1910; Peer 1914; Chairman, Central Control Board, Liquor Trade, 1915; Considered for viceroyalty 1915; later (1920-1926) ambassador to Germany.

DAS, Chittaranjan - prosperous lawyer; defender of Aravinda Ghose in Alipore Bomb Case; Mayor of Calcutta; Congress President 1921; member, Swaraj Party (with Motilal Nehru & N.C. Kelkar).

DEVONSHIRE, Duke of (Victor Christian William Cavendish) - 1868-1938; Unionist MP 1891; Governor-General of Canada, 1916-1921; considered for viceroyalty 1915; Secretary of State for Colonies 1922.

DONOUGHMORE, Earl of (Richard Walker Hely-Hutchinson) - 1875-1948; Chairman of Committees (Lords), 1911-1931; Privy Councillor 1918; on deputation to India, 1917-1918; considered for viceroyalty 1915.

DU BOULAY, Sir J.H. - ICS 1887; PSV 1915; HD Secretary from 1916; temporary Home Member, G/I, 1917-1918; temporary Member, G/Bombay, 1918; member, Jails Committee, 1919.

DUFF, General Sir Beauchamp - Commander-in-Chief in India, 8 March 1914 to 1 Oct. 1916.

DUKE, Sir F.W. - ICS 1882; Member, G/Bengal, 1910-1914; Member, S/S Council, 1914-1919; on deputation to India, 1917-1918; Under Secretary of State for India, Jan. 1920.

DYER, Brigadier-General R.E.E. - born Panjab 1864; transferred to Indian Army 1888; awarded decorations in Burma (1886-1887), on the Northwest Frontier (Hazara, 1888; Waziristan, 1902; Zakka Khel, 1908), & mentioned in despatches, 1914-1918 War; Commander, Jullundur training brigade, 1917; injured in riding accident, 1917, invalided for one year, suffered increasing paralysis (paralysed 1921); responsible for Amritsar massacre 1919; invested as a Sikh by guardians in the Golden Temple for services to its protection; appointed to active service in Afghan War; forcibly retired.

GAIT, Sir E.A. - ICS 1882; Member, G/I, 1912; LG/Bihar & Orissa 1915.

GRANT, Sir A. Hamilton - ICS 1894; Assistant Secretary, FD, 1903; on mission to Kabul, 1904-1905; Deputy Secretary, FD, 1912, & Secretary, May 1916; CC/Northwest Frontier Province, Sept. 1919.

HAILEY, W.M. - ICS 1894; Secretary, G/Panjab, 1907; with FD, 1908; CC/Delhi, 1913; on deputation with reforms committees 1918; Finance Member, Dec. 1919; G/Panjab, 1928-1934; Baron 1936; Privy Councillor 1949; O.M. 1956.

HILL, Sir C.H.A. - ICS 1885; Member, Royal Commission on decentralisation, 1907; Agent to Governor General, Kathiawar, 1908; Member, G/Bombay, 1912; Member, G/I, 1915-1920.

HIRTZEL, Sir Arthur - joined India Office 1894; Assistant Under-Secretary of State 1917; Deputy 1921.

HOLDERNESS, Sir T.W. - ICS, 1870-1901; joined India Office 1901; Under-Secretary of State, 1912-1919.

HOLLAND, Sir T.H. - ICS 1890, as Assistant Superintendent, Geological Museum & Laboratory; Professor of Geology, Manchester, 1909; President, Indian Industries Commission, 1916; President, Munitions Board, 1917; Member, G/I, 1920 (temporary, 1919).

HORNIMAN, B.G. - editor, Bombay Chronicle; formerly with the Daily Chronicle, Morning Leader, Daily Express, Manchester Guardian, & Calcutta Statesman (1906); correspondent of The Times.

ISLINGTON, Baron (Sir John Dickson-Foynder) - 1866-1936; Conservative MP 1892 (became a Liberal over tariff reform, 1905); Member, London County Council, 1898-1904; Governor of New Zealand 1910; Privy Councillor 1911; Chairman, Public Services Commission, 1912; Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India, 1915-1919. According to the Times obituary (8 Dec. 1936), he was 'unassuming without shyness, and able without a touch of intellectual aloofness'.

JAMNADAS DWARKADAS - Home Ruler; founder editor, Young India, 1916-1919; Member, Indian Tariff Commission, 1923; Member, Congress & Bombay Municipal Corporation.

KELKAR, N.C. - editor, Kesari (1897-1899 & 1910-1931) & Mahratta (1897-1919); President, Poona Municipality, 1918 & 1922-1924 (Councillor, 1898-1924); President, Bombay Provincial Congress, 1920; Member, Home Rule deputation, 1919; Member, ILA, 1923 & 1926; originally (until 1896) a pleader.

KHAN, Sardar Sahibzade Sultan Ahmed - Barrister; Member for Appeals, Gwalior State; Member, Hunter Committee.

KHAPARDE, Ganesh Shrikrishna - 1854-1938; advocate; co-worker of Tilak; member, Home Rule deputation, 1919; Chairman, District Board, for 17 years; Member, ILC (re-elected 1925).

KITCHLEW, Dr. Saif-ud-din - German educated; barrister; Khilafatist; Muslim political leader, Amritsar.

LAJPAT RAI, Lala - 1856-1928; lawyer; Arya Samajist; deported 1907; Congress President 1919 (Calcutta).

LAWLEY, Sir Thomas - G/West Australia; LG/Transvaal; G/Madras; considered for viceroyalty 1915.

LLOYD, Sir G.A. (later Lord) - HM attache, Constantinople, 1905; MP, 1910-1918 (war service, 1914-1917); G/Bombay 1918.

LOWNDES, Sir G.R. - formerly a Leader at the Bombay bar; Legal Member, after Dec. 1915.

LYTTON, Lord - Parliamentary Under-Secretary after 1920.

MACLAGAN, Sir E.D. - ICS 1883; career largely in Panjab - Chief Secretary, 1914; ED Secretary, G/I, 1915; LG/Panjab, 26 May 1919 (Governor, Jan. 1921).

MAFFEY, Sir John - ICS 1899; officiating Deputy Secretary, F&PD, 1915; PSV 1916; Chief Political Officer, Northwest Frontier Province, May 1919.

MALAVIYA, Madan Mohan - 1861-1946; vakil; journalist; Congress President 1908 & 1918; Member, United Provinces legislature, 1902; Member ILC & IIA; a founder of the Hindu University, Benares (Varanasi).

MARRIS, Sir W.S. - ICS 1895; Under-Secretary, HD, 1901; temporary appointments in India Office 1915, & as Inspector-General of Police, United Provinces, 1916, & as joint secretary, HD, 1917; drafter, Montagu-Chelmsford Report & on deputation with S/S to England, 1918; Secretary, HD, 1919; G/Assam 1921. (On p.95, above, Marris is mentioned as Officiating Secretary, HD, in 1913. The India Office List does not record this appointment; but the printed copy of the Secret Circular No. 89/100, 8 April 1913, in H.Poll. 13, May 1913, and the type-written copy on the Press Act file, IOR J&P4468/19, are clearly signed W.S. Marris, Officiating Secretary etc., and from internal evidence must be correctly dated.)

MAJUMDAR, Ambika Charan - 1851-1922; Lawyer 1877; Congress President 1916.

MESTON, Sir J.S. (later Baron) - ICS 1883; FD Secretary 1909; LG/United Provinces 1912; on deputation to Imperial War Conference & Cabinet 1917; Finance Member 1918; retired, Nov. 1919.

MEYER, Sir W.S. - ICS 1879; Member, Decentralisation Committee, 1907; Finance Member, 1913-1918; High Commissioner for India, London, 1920.

MITTER, B.C. - barrister 1897; Advocate, Calcutta High Court, 1893; Standing Counsel, G/I, 1910; Officiating Advocate General, Calcutta, 1911.

MONRO, General Sir C.C. - commissioned 1879; Commander-in-Chief in India, 1 Oct. 1916 - 21 Nov. 1920.

MULLICK, B.K. - educated King's, Cambridge; ICS 1887; judge, Patna High Court, 1916.

NAIDU, Sarojini - 1879-1949; poet, politician; first woman Congress President 1925; State Governor, Uttar Pradesh, 1947-1949.

NAIR, Dr T.M. - educated Presidency College, Madras, & Edinburgh University; surgeon; nominated (formerly elected) Member, Madras legislature; editor of a Madras medical journal; unsuccessful candidate for IIA; opponent of Home Rulers and Theosophists.

NARAYAN, Jagat - Member, United Provinces legislature & Hunter Committee.

PATEL, V.J. - 1873-1933; elder brother of Vallabhbhai; advocate; Congress General Secretary 1918; Member, ILC; became Swarajist & first elected President, IIA.

PENTLAND, Lord (John Sinclair) - commissioned 1879; Member, London County Council, 1889-1892; MP, 1892-1895; Secretary to Governor General, Canada, 1895-1897; MP, 1897-1909; Secretary for Scotland, 1909-1912; G/Madras, 1912-1919.

RAHIMTOOLA, Sir Ibrahim - Member, G/Bombay, 1 March 1918; reappointed, Jan. 1921; declined pressing invitation to join G/I, 1919.

RAWLINSON, General Baron, of Trent - Commander-in-Chief in India, 21 Nov. 1920.

REED, Sir Stanley - editor, Times of India; accompanied Prince of Wales on tour, 1905-1906; Western Indian representative, Imperial Press Conference, 1909; President, Publicity Board.

ROBERTS, Charles H. - MP since 1906; Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India, 1914-1915; on deputation with S/S, 1917-1918.

ROBERTSON, Sir Benjamin - ICS 1883-1920; C&ID Secretary, 1908-1912; temporary Member, G/I, 1910; CC/Central Provinces 1912; on special duty in South Africa, Jan. - April 1914.

RONALDSHAY, Lord (Lawrence Dundas, later 2nd Marquess of Zetland) - born (as Lord Dundas) 1876; travelled in the East, 1897-1907; Conservative MP, 1907-1917; G/Bengal, 1917-1922; succeeded to Marquessate 1929; Secretary of State for India, 1935-1940.

ROOS KEPPEL, Sir G.O. - commissioned 1886; commander, Khyber Rifles, 1903; CC/Northwest Frontier Province, 1908-1919; Member, S/S Council, 1919.

ROY, K.C. - editor & journalist; Director, Associated Press of India; member, Reuter's Indian staff, British Institute of Journalists, & secretary, committee for organisation of Indian Branch of Empire Press Union (see IOR J&P4468/19 for J&P1575/21).

SADLER, Sir Michael Ernest - 1861-1943; Secretary, Extension Lectures Committee, Oxford, 1885; Member, Bryce Commission on Education; Director of the office of special enquires & reports, Department of Education, 1895-1903; part-time Professor of Education, Manchester; Vice-Chancellor of Leeds 1911; Chairman, Calcutta University Committee, 1917; Master, University College, Oxford, 1923. According to the DNB, he was known in 1903 as 'the greatest living authority in England on educational matters'.

SALISBURY, Marquess of (James Edward Hubert Gascoyne-Cecil) - 1861 - 1947; MP 1885; Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1900; Lord Privy Seal 1903; Chairman, Conscientious Objector Tribunal, 1916; considered for viceroyalty 1915; opposed Indian self-government 1934-1935.

SANKARAN NAIR, Sir C. - Government pleader 1899; Advocate-General, Madras, 1907; High Court judge 1908; Education Member, 1915-1919; Member, S/S Council, 1919.

SAPRU, Sir Tej Bahadur - advocate, Allahabad High Court; Member, United Provinces legislature (1913-1916) & ILC (1916-1920); Law Member, G/I, 1920-1923; onetime member, All-India Congress Committee; President, Indian Liberal Federation; delegate, Round Table Conference, 1930, 1931, 1932.

SARMA, Rao Bahadur Bayya Narasimheswara - pleader; member, Madras Legislative Council, 1914-1916; deputation to England 1914; member, G/I, 1920.

SASTRI, Srinavasa - 1869-1949; schoolmaster; member, Servants of India, 1907; Member, Madras legislature, 1907; represented India at Imperial Conference & League of Nations 1921; Leader of Liberal Party.

SATYA PAL, Dr. - assistant surgeon, & Hindu political leader, Amritsar.

SELBORNE, Earl of (William Waldegrave Palmer) - 1859-1942; Liberal MP, 1885-1895; Under-Secretary of State for Colonies under Joseph Chamberlain; First Lord 1900; accepted viceroyalty, 1904, but refused after Curzon's extended term, 1905; High Commissioner (later Governor-General) in South Africa, 1905; President, Board of Agriculture & Fisheries, 1915; Chairman, Joint Select Committee, Indian Reforms, 1919; offered viceroyalty by Lloyd George, 1920.

SETALVAD, Chimanlal Harilal - advocate, Bombay High Court; Vice-Chancellor, Bombay University, 1917; member, Hunter Committee, 1920; additional judge, Bombay, 1920; Member, G/Bombay, Jan. 1921.

SETON, Sir Malcolm C.C. - ICS 1895; India Office 1898; on deputation with S/S, 1917-1918; assistant Under-Secretary of State, Dec. 1919 (acting, Dec. 1918).

SHAFI, Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad - barrister; Education Member 1919.

SINHA, Lord, of Raipur (Sir Satyendra) - Advocate-General, Bengal, 1916; Member, Bengal legislature, 1916-1919; on deputation to Imperial War Conference & Cabinet, 1917 & 1918; Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, 1919-1920; G/Bihar & Orissa, 1921.

SLY, Sir Frank George - member, Public Service Commission, 1912-1915; on deputation to England with reforms committee, 1919; CC/Central Provinces, Jan. 1920 (Governor, Dec.).

SOUTHBOROUGH, Baron (Francis John Stephens Hopwood) - 1860-1947; civil servant; Permanent Secretary, Board of Trade, 1901; Under-Secretary of State for Colonies, 1907-1910; Privy Councillor 1912; peer 1917; Chairman, Indian Reform Committees, 1918; non-political in Lords.

SPOOR, Ben - 1878-1928; member, Labour Party executive, after 1919; Chief Whip under Macdonald; pacifist; member, I.L.P.; Secretary British Committee of the Congress. (See Georges Fischer, Parti travailliste et la décolonisation de l'Inde, Paris 1966, 113; he adds, with what seems to me, for 1919, a certain confusion of categories, 'Il [Spoor] était lié bien davantage aux milieux modérés du Congrès qu'avec Besant et ses amis. Cependant, en 1919, aux Communes, il mène la lutte avec Wedgwood pour amender le projet gouvernemental sur l'Inde ...'.)

STEVENSON-MOORE, C.J. - ICS 1885; magistrate & collector 1898; Inspector-General of Police 1904; officiating Director, Criminal Intelligence, 1907; Chief Secretary, G/Bengal, 1910; Member, Board of Revenue, 1914.

VINCENT, Sir W.H.H. - ICS 1885; judge, Calcutta High Court, 1909; LD Secretary, G/I, 1911; Member, G/Bihar & Orissa, 1915; Home Member, G/I from April 1917.

WACHA, Sir Dinshaw Edulji - 1844-1936; Managing Agent, Morarji Gokuldas & Sholapur Mills; Bombay Presidency Association Secretary, 1885-1915, & President, 1915-1918; Congress Joint Secretary, 1896-1907, & Secretary, 1908-1913, & President, 1901; member, Bombay Corporation & Bombay legislature, 1915-1916, & ILC, 1916-1920.

WILLIAMS, L.F. Rushbrook - 1890- ; Fellow of All Souls, Oxford, 1914-1921; Professor of Modern Indian History, Allahabad, 1914-1919; on special duty in connection with reforms (1918) & in HD (1919); Director, Central Bureau of Information, 1920-1926.

WILLINGDON, Lord (Freeman Freeman-Thomas) - MP, 1900-1910; G/Bombay, 1913-1918; G/Madras after 1919; V & Governor General, 1931-1936.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The manuscript and documentary sources listed here are those cited in the footnotes. Descriptive summaries are given to assist the location of documents which can be found in more than one collection. (In the footnotes only one reference is normally given for each document. Where possible this is to the Chelmsford Collection, except in cases where a document may be consulted more usefully elsewhere among other papers on the same subject.)

The list of published and other sources includes those works mentioned in the footnotes, but also records supplementary and illustrative material consulted in the course of research.

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Austen Chamberlain Papers, University of Birmingham Library.

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- AC13/5/1-7 & 15/4/1-147. Letters on appointment & resignation as Secretary of State, 1915 & 1917.
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- AC18/1/1-46. Correspondence with Lloyd.
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- AC22/1 & 2. Memoranda on goal of Indian government.
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- AC45/2/1-26. Private telegrams with India, 1915-1917.
- AC47/3/1. Imperial War Conference, 1917.

Chelmsford Collection - Papers of Lord Chelmsford while Viceroy of India (55 Vols.), India Office Library, London.

1. Correspondence with King-Emperor.
- 2-14. Correspondence with Secretary of State.
- 15 & 16. Correspondence with persons outside India.
- 17-26. Correspondence in India.
- 27 & 28. Speeches.
- 29-39. Despatches.
40. Mesopotamia Commission Report.
41. Indian Industrial Committee Report, 1918.
42. Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918.
43. Sedition Committee Report, 1918.
47. Disorders Inquiry Committee Report, 1919.
48. Proceedings of Military Requirements Committee (II), 1921.
50. Index to pending departmental cases, 1916-1921.
51. 'Goal of British Rule in India' - correspondence and memoranda on self-government.

Neston Papers, India Office Library, London.

1. Correspondence with Chelmsford, 1916-1917.
10. Round Table.
11. Correspondence with Curtis.
- 16-33, 51 & 53. Reforms papers.

Montagu Collection - Private Correspondence of E.S. Montagu,
India Office Library, London.

- 1-11. Correspondence with Chelmsford, 1917-1921.
15. Correspondence with Pentland.
- 16-21. Correspondence with Willingdon.
- 22-26. Correspondence with Lloyd.
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