

**AN IMPERIALIST AT BAY: LEO AMERY AT THE INDIA OFFICE,
1940 – 1945**

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ABSTRACT

Pressure for Indian independence had been building up throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, initially through the efforts of the Indian National Congress, but also later, when matters were complicated by an increasingly vocal Muslim League. When, in May 1940, Leo Amery was appointed by Winston Churchill as Secretary of State for India, an already difficult assignment had been made more challenging by the demands of war.

This thesis evaluates the extent to which Amery's ultimate failure to move India towards self-government was due to factors beyond his control, or derived from his personal shortcomings and errors of judgment. Although there has to be some analysis of politics in wartime India, the study is primarily of Amery's attempts at managing an increasingly insurgent dependency, entirely from his metropolitan base. Much of the research is concentrated on his success, or otherwise, in influencing Churchill and diehard Conservatives, who wanted Britain to retain India at any cost, but also Labour colleagues in the coalition, who were much more closely aligned with Congress.

Inevitably, Amery's relationships with his two Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow and Viscount Wavell are central to this investigation. In different ways, his dealings with the dour, inflexible Linlithgow and the surprisingly radical, if irritable, Wavell varied between the cordial and the frosty, yet in both cases he regarded them with a considerable degree of intellectual snobbery. That said, the thesis demonstrates that he was unable to convince these colleagues in Delhi that the man on the spot did not always know best.

For many years Amery had been irked by American opposition to his cherished principle of imperial preference, and their overall dislike of the perceived colonialism

implicit in the British Empire. Once the USA had entered the war, transatlantic attempts to interfere in matters in India increased, further damaging Amery's efforts to promote constitutional reform. It was all the more painful for him that his desire to counter these ideas was compromised by the need to appease American public opinion in the interests of the war effort.

In making a balanced judgment on Amery at the India Office it is unwise to look only at his efforts to broker a constitutional settlement that ultimately foundered with the failure of the Simla conference in the summer of 1945. There is ample evidence of better outcomes in administrative and practical areas. From his early achievement in moderating the terms in which Congress could be prosecuted until his later successes in obtaining grain to alleviate famine he revealed a tenacity, and courage that could, on occasion, overcome the suspicion that he often generated amongst his peers.

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Quaid-i-Azam</i>	Jinnah
<i>Satyagraha</i>	Peaceful, non-violent protest
<i>Shabbash</i>	Well done, congratulations
<i>Swaraj</i>	Independence or freedom
AICC	All India Congress Committee
CUP	Cambridge University Press
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
ICS	Indian Civil Service
<i>JICH</i>	<i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i>
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OUP	Oxford University Press
SEAC	South East Asia Command

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will examine the realities of imperial management, chiefly from a metropolitan perspective. In simple terms, it will consider Leo Amery's success or failure as Secretary of State for India from May 1940 until July 1945; a period that coincided exactly with Winston Churchill's first occupation of 10 Downing Street.

There has been relatively little academic consideration of Amery's entire spell at the India Office, and similarly there has been a shortage of analysis of the wider matter of the administration of Britain's dependencies from London, in wartime. This study represents an attempt to fill both these lacunae.

The research that has been undertaken shows that an examination of Amery's effectiveness needs to encompass not only a review of his own strengths and weaknesses, but also an evaluation of the wide variety of external factors that affected his duties as Secretary of State. Certain of these influences might well have been important at any time in the twentieth century. However, the complications introduced by global war proved to be even more critical, frequently making Amery's task almost impossibly onerous.

A brief account of the formation of Amery's imperial ideas will be attempted in the first two chapters, but to make any real sense of his approach to his official duties it is necessary to consider the detailed aspects of his personality. For a politician who had enjoyed the advantages of Harrow, Balliol and All Souls, he remained an outsider. Indeed, were it not for his luck in 1917 to have the support of his mentor, Lord Milner, in obtaining the post of assistant to Lord Hankey, the Cabinet Secretary, he might well have remained a backbencher.

A number of reasons can be adduced as to why he failed to secure a major post in the Cabinet, but it will be seen that a tendency to verbosity, both in speech and the written word, reduced his influence with his colleagues. As early as 1920, the normally taciturn Stanley Baldwin had remarked that 'Amery does not add a gram of influence to the government'.¹ Despite the fertility of his mind, particularly in realising the strategic and global potential of technological progress, he often spoiled matters by self-delusion, either regarding supposed past successes, or perhaps more seriously, his future capacity to be effective. Examples of both scenarios abound. Firstly, in a speech to the Oxford University Conservative Association on 24 November 1934 he predicted that the provisions of the 1935 Government of India Act would be favourably received by moderate opinion in India, thereby making Congress largely irrelevant.² This claim proved to be completely incorrect. Secondly, a few weeks after being appointed to the India Office, Amery, in conversation with Churchill, offered to go to France to 'keep the French up to scratch'.³ Not surprisingly the Prime Minister rejected this attempt to rally Britain's demoralised allies.

The following chapters will show Amery to have been a patriotic and hard working man, but also prone to intellectual snobbery, and not a little pomposity. He was often generous about the personal and moral qualities of colleagues such as Stafford Cripps, Clement Attlee, Ernest Bevin, Archibald Wavell, and even Churchill, but rarely did he praise their intelligence.⁴ Such accolades were generally reserved for

¹ Robert Holland, review of William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill*, New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1992, *North American Conference on British Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Winter 1993), p. 755.

² *Oxford Mail*, 24 November 1934, Amery Papers, AMEL 2/5, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge. Hereafter, references to this collection will just bear the identification of the relevant file.

³ Amery diary, 14 June 1940, AMEL 7/34.

⁴ Stafford Cripps (1889 – 1952): Leader of the Cripps mission to India 1942, Lord Privy Seal, Leader of the House of Commons and Minister of Aircraft Production. Clement Attlee (1883 – 1967): Deputy

academics such as Reginald Coupland, who more often than not, were fellows of All Souls.⁵ The same overestimation of his own abilities led him to offer himself for posts for which he had little chance of being chosen. For example, before he fell out with Neville Chamberlain at the Ottawa Conference in 1932, he had pressed his case to be the President of the Board of Trade in a future Conservative administration.⁶

Although he pursued such energetic activities as cross country running and mountaineering, the latter into middle age, his attitude towards cerebral hobbies could be precious and snooty. On the one hand he read Greek and Roman literature as well as a large number of works of economic theory. On the other hand he was quick to dismiss *King Lear* as an 'ignoble potboiler', and Jane Austen's novels as demonstrating a 'good knowledge of the world of emptiness'.⁷

It will be shown that his donnish approach to politics led to difficulties with more pragmatic, hard headed colleagues. One of the key qualities in a minister is the ability to be convincing both in Cabinet and in the House of Commons, and here, it has to be admitted, Amery was found wanting. Since his first spell as a government minister he had been regarded as long winded to the point of losing his listeners' interest. In the context of articulating his ideas on Indian constitutional reform, despite often repeating himself, he rarely managed to carry the other members of the War Cabinet with him. With such diehards as not only Churchill, but also Sir John

Prime Minister, Dominions Secretary and Lord President of the Council. Ernest Bevin (1881 – 1951): Minister of Labour. Archibald Wavell (1883 – 1950): Commander-in-Chief, Middle East; Commander-in-Chief, India and Viceroy of India.

⁵ Reginald Coupland (1884 – 1952): Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford University, 1920 – 1948.

⁶ Amery diary, 9 December 1930, AMEL 7/24. Neville Chamberlain, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1932, was irked by Amery who had attended the conference merely as a representative of the Empire Sugar Federation, and as always, indefatigably made his case for imperial preference.

⁷ Amery diary, 13 January 1945, AMEL 7/39. Amery, who served a term as President of the Alpine Club, climbed Mount Cook, a peak in New Zealand of over 12,000 feet.

(Percy) Grigg, Lord Simon and Lord Cherwell to contend with, the task of promoting reform was tricky enough.⁸ For all his reputation as a Tory right winger, it will be seen that he enjoyed more support in this area of policy from senior Labour politicians such as Attlee and Cripps.

The relationship of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India was one of constitutional clarity, since the latter was responsible to the British Parliament for the conduct of affairs in India. However, this did not guarantee an efficient working partnership. It had long been necessary for both their personal and official dealings to be harmonious, if Britain's presence were to be maintained in a country whose own politicians had been steadily increasing their demands for independence since the end of the nineteenth century. This remained the imperative with Amery and the two Viceroys with whom he worked, Lord Linlithgow and Viscount Wavell.

Although his relationship with each of these two men was very different with consensus on the prosecution of the war far stronger than on the nature of reform to the Indian constitution, their public demonstrations of agreement rarely faltered. Nevertheless, matters became more fraught, as during the war a number of new factors made the partnership between London and Delhi far more complicated, and on occasion, troubled.

Many problems arose because the Secretary of State did not visit India, almost certainly because it was thought that this would diminish the Viceroy's authority and status as the representative of the King Emperor. Amery realised that he suffered by not being the man on the spot, but his attempts to go to India were rebuffed in their

⁸ 'Percy' Grigg (1890 – 1964): Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War 1939 – 1942, Secretary of State for War from 1942 – 1945. John Simon (1873 – 1954): Lord Chancellor 1940 – 1945, previously Chairman of the Simon Commission on Indian constitutional reform. Lord Cherwell (1886 – 1957): Before ennoblement, Frederick Lindemann, statistical and scientific adviser to Churchill, 1939 – 1945.

different ways by both Linlithgow and Wavell. Although such visits would have been difficult, it is more than probable that if he had been able to do so, he would have paid greater attention to Indian politicians such as Gandhi and Jinnah, whom, for a long time, he regarded as irrelevant, and able to be bypassed in reform initiatives.

It will be necessary to look at the difficulties of governing a dependent territory, at a time when the mother country was enduring German bombing, and for a time was under the threat of invasion. As will be seen, home interest in Indian matters waned as the need to finish the war, and reconstruct a damaged and bankrupt Britain took priority. This was to be the case when Amery sought aeroplanes, military equipment and even shipping capacity to transport grain for the relief of famine.

Furthermore, another set of problems were posed when Japan entered the war in December 1941. The risk of Japanese occupation altered the balance of Indian politics, emboldening Congress to make demands that required Amery to support the firm stance taken in Delhi, particularly as the maintenance of the war effort, at least for a while, took precedence over the creation of a new constitution and progress towards Indian self-government. The rather more subtle rise of Jinnah and the Muslim League proved harder to read, both in London and in Delhi, especially as unlike Congress, they took no steps to withdraw their support from the war effort.

During the course of the war, it became apparent that other factors were hindering Amery's attempts to perform his duties. Firstly, Labour backbenchers and a senior coalition minister, Ernest Bevin, became frustrated with certain aspects of British policy towards India, especially the apparent absence of a forward position on constitutional reform. In the House of Commons, a small group of socialist MPs, led

by the member for Leyton, Reginald Sorensen, tenaciously questioned Amery in their support for Gandhi and the Congress Party. Secondly, once the USA had entered the war, dislike of British colonialism and concern at the possibility of an Indian military defeat, tempted its politicians to interfere in Indian politics. This rarely came directly from the White House, but generally through emissaries, who may, or may not have been sent by Roosevelt. Amery had long been opposed to American economic ideas, especially as these contradicted his fundamental tenet of imperial preference. Once matters such as most favoured trading nation status, and the American conditions for Lend-Lease, were added, his dislike for the policies represented, above all by Cordell Hull, increased.⁹ However, as the thesis will show, Amery was obliged to take American public opinion into account when proposing any new constitutional initiatives or taking action against Congress.

Amery's grasp of detail was formidable, and did not deteriorate, even for a man who by July 1945 was in his seventy second year. However, he tended to hold certain opinions, that in their repetition would be a barrier to making constitutional progress. To the very end of his period in office, he believed that no solution could be made to work until there was a considerable amount of communal agreement. Similarly he was convinced, possibly with reason, that the British system of an executive responsible to a democratically elected legislature, was not suited to the particular circumstances of India. Unfortunately the creativity that he brought to strategic issues was not applied to these political conundrums.

The possessor of a highly academic mind, Amery was generally more comfortable with similar persons, with the consequence that, on many occasions, his

⁹ Cordell Hull (1871 – 1954): United States Secretary of State, 1933 – 1944.

first instinct in finding a solution to a problem was to set up a committee or arrange a conference attended by intellectuals. The result would invariably be a long and closely argued report. While this was generally acceptable in Whitehall, it drew condemnation from shrewd, practical administrators such as Wavell, especially during the tense meetings in 1944 and 1945, when Britain's proposals for the Simla Conference were discussed. Here, Wavell's plan to introduce an interim government in which the only Englishmen would be the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, was summarily rejected by Jinnah, but it cannot have helped that the precise terms of the British offer were discussed for far too long in London.

Amery's later years in office were dogged with worry over his son, John (Jack), who had led a dissolute life involving failed relationships and bankruptcy. In 1943, to his parents' horror, he was heard broadcasting pro-Nazi propaganda from Berlin. Although Amery was treated by colleagues, opponents and the press with a level of kindness and understanding that would be unthinkable today, his occasional diary entries about this ordeal show the distress that he was suffering. By contrast, he was proud of Julian whose army career had taken him to the Balkans, where his father had undertaken intelligence duties during the Great War. Often, as a distraction from his official duties, he would visit the room in which the Allied campaign in this theatre of war was being run.

With these influences consistently in mind this study will examine, in chronological order, the major events and crises during Amery's service from May 1940 until July 1945. In terms of chapters this can be summarised.

Chapter I is a review of the relevant literature, not only about Amery and his career, but also about accounts written by witnesses of the various crises during the

war.

Chapter II examines attempts at Indian constitutional reform before Amery took Office. In particular, there is a study of his dogged defence of the 1935 Government of India Act against the diehards, albeit from the back benches. There is also a less flattering account of Amery's first official contact with Indians in the context of their rights in East Africa, thereby providing the origins of lasting Congress suspicion of his opinions about Indian independence.

Chapter III initially chronicles the doomed attempts to implement the federal provisions of the 1935 legislation before looking at Amery's appointment to the India Office. The latter part of this chapter analyses Amery's first crisis and his difficulties with Linlithgow and Churchill over the drafting of the August offer of Indian self-government, after the war.

The response by Amery, His Majesty's Government and the Government of India to the *satyagraha* campaign that followed the rejection of the August offer is covered in the early part of Chapter IV. In particular, there is an exploration of his disagreements with Churchill and Linlithgow over the release of the *satyagrahas*. Later in the chapter there is a review of Amery's attempts to revive the moribund reform process by giving All Souls men, Henry (Harry) Hodson and Reginald Coupland, the opportunity to work in India and produce new constitutional ideas. Finally, there is reference to the Atlantic Charter, a document that led to friction with both Americans and Indian nationalists over the issue of self-determination.

The important episode of the Cripps mission to India in March and April 1942 is the main topic in Chapter V. It will be seen that Amery played a diminishing part in this initiative, although the consequences of the failed enterprise made some form

of Indian independence inevitable.

The major violence during Amery's time in office took place during the 'Quit India' movement that was launched after the Cripps mission had failed. Amery's response to this Congress campaign forms a large part of Chapter VI, although considerable attention is also given to his attitude towards Gandhi's fast in 1943.

Chapter VII shows that Amery had little influence on the surprise choice of Wavell as Linlithgow's successor. However, he had more control over events in the struggle to prevent his War Cabinet colleagues from altering the financial arrangements that had led to India becoming a major sterling creditor of Britain. The final part of the chapter proves that Amery fought tenaciously to obtain the necessary supplies of food to combat widespread famine in 1943 and 1944.

The last doomed attempts by Amery and Wavell to produce a constitutional settlement in the summer are examined in Chapter VIII. It will be seen that in addition to serious disagreements with each other, Amery and Wavell were faced by powerful forces of reaction in London that were against any reform commitments being made in wartime. This final chapter ends with the failure of the Simla Conference and Amery's defeat in the General election of 1945.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Although a vast amount of primary source material relating to Amery's term as Secretary of State for India exists, there is far less secondary material available to provide analysis or information. As this thesis seeks to evaluate the influence that Amery was able to exert from his base at the India Office in London, much of the literature chosen for this review will not be exclusively concerned with matters on the subcontinent. Consequently, the historiography will be concerned both with Amery's earlier personal and public development, and also his time in office from 1940 to 1945. Where literature has been chosen to review specific episodes, it is on the basis that it informs the reader about Amery's ability to control matters from his metropolitan location.

1. Works that Concentrate on Amery

(a) Childhood and Education

There is not a great variety of published material on Amery's early life and influences, although the introduction to the first volume of his edited diaries is a rich source of information. Here, his son Julian paid more than his due of filial duty when he stated that his father started life with little in the way of inherited wealth or family connections, yet achieved Cabinet office, as well as becoming a true imperial thinker and enthusiast as heir to the traditions of

Benjamin Disraeli, Joseph Chamberlain and Alfred Milner.¹

Amery's first set of memoirs written in 1953 revealed the likely source of his ferocious ambition by showing the extreme penury into which he was placed when his father left his young family to pursue a series of doomed business ventures.² Amery's diaries and memoirs were remarkably short on detail as regards the racial origins of his mother from whom he inherited much of his drive and energy.³ Although rumours had existed throughout Amery's life over his mother's Jewish ancestry, he maintained his reticence until his death, and the matter was not publicly revealed until 2000 in a passionately written article by William D. Rubinstein.⁴ He showed that Amery's mother, while taking the name of her British step-father, Dr J M Leitner, had been born in 1841 to a Jewish couple in Budapest with the family name of Saphir. Rubinstein accused Amery of dissimulation over his mother's origins, but acknowledged that his awareness of his ethnicity gave him the impetus to support a number of Jewish causes as well as his better known imperial ones.⁵

A more sympathetic account of Amery's childhood by a former Conservative MP, David Faber, identified a spell of two years in Cologne from the ages of nine to eleven, when the harshness of the school regime left him with an affection for, but also, a lifelong suspicion of, Germany. But, Faber's

¹ Julian Amery, Introduction, *The Leo Amery Diaries Volume I, 1896 – 1929*, John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds.), London, Hutchinson, 1980, pp. 11 – 22.

² L. S. Amery, *My Political Life Volume I*, London, Hutchinson, 1953, pp. 28 – 29.

³ Ibid, p. 30.

⁴ William D. Rubinstein, 'The Secret of Leopold Amery', *Historical Research*, Vol. 73 (2000), pp. 175 – 176.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 183 – 186. Rubinstein cited Amery's work on the Balfour Declaration as evidence of his closet Zionism.

main focus was on Amery's progress through Harrow, Balliol and All Souls when his successes were nearly all the result of overcoming earlier setbacks.⁶

(b) Chamberlain, Milner and the Origins of Amery's Imperial Views

The historiography of both Amery's intellectual and spiritual commitment to the British Empire, and also a ministerial career concerned with wider imperial issues, is much larger. It is important because Amery developed opinions and policies which although not primarily in connection with India, would have consequences for his period of office from 1940 to 1945, whether in connection with the way he approached the job, or in the way he was perceived, especially by Congress and the Muslim League.

Although Amery was first attracted to the idea of the British Empire while still a pupil at Harrow, his first serious thinking on the matter really began with the influence of Joseph Chamberlain who had launched a campaign of tariff reform based on a system of imperial preference. Amery had recently returned from working as a journalist in the South African War (1899 – 1902), and was so affected by Chamberlain's speech in his native Birmingham in May 1903 that he likened it to 'the theses which Luther nailed to the church door at Wittenberg'.⁷ Furthermore, a recent study by Travis L. Crosby has shown that Chamberlain formalised his relationship with Amery by asking him to join Leo Maxse, J. Garvin, and others in a small unofficial cabinet, charged with

⁶ David Faber, *Speaking for England*, London, The Free Press, 2005, pp. 15 – 25. Faber wrote not just about Leo Amery, but also his sons Julian, and the tragic John who was executed for high treason in December 1945. Many of the critical political episodes in Amery's life are, of necessity, dealt with cursorily, but the work is useful in drawing together the threads of his family and public life.

⁷ Denis Judd, *Radical Joe*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1977, p. 245.

acting as a think tank for their boss.⁸

When Chamberlain was incapacitated by a stroke, Amery's mentor in imperial matters became Lord Milner. Milner, who had met Amery while serving as High Commissioner in South Africa had the capacity to inspire younger men with his ideas, a matter that has been the subject of scholarly literature.⁹ Although Amery generally wrote about Milner in fulsome terms, they did not always agree. Indeed, when their former enemy, Jan Smuts, was in London in 1917 as the South African representative at the Imperial War Cabinet, Amery took his side against Milner and other Round Table members who wanted the future British Commonwealth to be a federal state.¹⁰

Milner's views on the need for cooperation and federation within the British Empire have attracted more unfavourable comment from historians, especially as his opinions were based on imperial preference for white dominions only, and furthermore demonstrated an undisguised contempt for parliaments and the democratic process. Amery's perceived closeness to Milner, and his ideas, would have consequences when he later had responsibility for dependencies in the British Empire.¹¹

Amery's attempts to build on the ideas of Chamberlain and Milner were

⁸ Travis L. Crosby, *Joseph Chamberlain*, New York, I. B. Tauris, 2011, p. 166.

⁹ A. M. Gollin, *Proconsul in Politics; a Study of Lord Milner in Opposition and in Power*, New York, Macmillan, 1964. This was a study of Milner as a practitioner of imperial ideas. Also, W. Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men: The Kindergarten in Edwardian Imperial Affairs*, Durham, N. C. 1968.

¹⁰ O. Geysler, 'Jan Smuts and Alfred Milner', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, No. 360 (2001), p. 429.

¹¹ Eric Stokes, 'Milnerism', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1962), pp. 47 – 60. Milner's willingness to use war rather than diplomacy as a means of defeating Kruger in the Boer War shocked even Joseph Chamberlain who had appointed him. Also, Paul Williams, 'A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Empire, Intellectuals and the Chatham House Project, 1919 – 1939', *International Relations*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2003), pp. 35 – 58. Milner had restricted ideas about freedom, liberty and equality within a changing British Empire.

analysed in 1995 by E. H. H. Green as part of a work on the difficulties of the Conservative Party before the Great War. Green asserted that Amery divided British subjects into two classes; the full British citizen and the British subject. Amery expanded this notion of a two tier imperial citizenship, based on an explicitly racial division, and concluded that British subjects within his definition would have rights under the law, if not of full electoral franchise.¹² Amery's memoirs revealed that his ambitions for the British Empire were less related to political development, but rather had a stronger basis in economics. His first theoretical work on the subject, *The Fundamental Fallacies of Free Trade* advocated such a basis for imperial cooperation, while dismissing both the ideas of Keynes and Marx.¹³ These conclusions did not to change to any great degree over the long period from 1906 until 1945.

In understanding the development of Amery's imperial thought, it is also worth considering his differences with Lionel Curtis, who was a full Round Table thinker, and like Milner a believer in political union. The root causes of their often prickly relationship were cogently explained in a journal article by William Roger Louis about the Australian historian, Sir Keith Hancock. Louis explained that in the 1920's Hancock, during his spell as an All Souls fellow, supported Amery's almost metaphysical concept of 'British' imperial consciousness against Curtis' Milnerite attachment to federalism.¹⁴

¹² E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism 1880 - 1914*, London, Routledge, 1995, pp. 200 – 201.

¹³ L. S. Amery, *The Fundamental Fallacies of Free Trade*, London, National Review Office, 1906.

¹⁴ William Roger Louis, 'Sir Keith Hancock and the British Empire: The Pax Britannica and the Pax Americana', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 120, No. 488 (September 2005), p. 939.

(c) Amery, Mandates and the Colonial Office

Amery's subsequent thoughts on the British Empire were developed through his experiences of ministerial office during the 1920s, the majority of which were spent as Secretary of State for the Colonies and Dominions Secretary. The way that his conduct over the dependent territories developed in this period would have repercussions for perceptions of him, not least in India.

The historiography of Britain's role in the post-war Mandates system is vast, but there are sources that are relevant to Amery's duties in connection with East Africa, where he had responsibility for Indian citizens, especially in the annexed former German East Africa (Tanganyika) and the East African Protectorate, shortly to become Kenya. Accounts of the origins and early days of the Mandates system revealed that both Amery and Milner were pragmatic in their fulfilment of Britain's responsibilities to the League of Nations under the East African treaties, despite making complacent public statements about the paramountcy of native interests.¹⁵

The long period during the later years of the decade when Amery fought a long, and sometimes acrimonious battle to establish responsible white government in Kenya, and a form of federation in the region, has been chronicled by a variety of historians representing different standpoints. Not all of the literature is confined to India and East Africa, as Diana Wylie has written persuasively of the cool relationship that existed in London during the

¹⁵ Wm. Roger Louis, 'Great Britain and the African Peace Settlement of 1919', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (April 1966), pp. 875 – 892. Also, Andrew J. Crozier, 'The Establishment of the Mandates System 1919 – 1925', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (July 1970), pp. 483 - 513.

1920s between an Amery-led Colonial Office, uncertain as to whether to support Africans or white settlers in Kenya, and an India Office without any such doubts as to its loyalties.¹⁶

The most comprehensive and unbiased account of the effect of British colonial policy on Indians in East Africa was written by Robert G. Gregory in 1971, and has since suffered very little from revisionism.¹⁷ Amery's ultimately fruitless campaign to achieve economic union in East Africa did not fail through lack of energy, but Gregory showed that throughout his spell as Colonial Secretary he managed to alienate not only Indians in East Africa and India, but also colleagues in London and Delhi. However, whether it would have been believed in the subcontinent or not, his personal appointee as Governor of Kenya, Sir Edward Grigg, regretted that he (Amery) had more sympathy for Indians than the white settlers.¹⁸

However, Amery's ambivalence towards Indians in East Africa was perfectly illustrated by his decision to send the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, Sir Samuel Wilson, on a mission to East Africa in order to circumvent the findings of the Hilton Young Commission that had broadly found in favour of Indians in the region and against the brand of economic federalism that was being advocated in London. Many of the relevant primary documents, and accompanying commentaries relating to this unwise enterprise, and the resulting outcry in Delhi, are included in a collection edited

¹⁶ Diana Wylie, 'Confrontation over Kenya: The Colonial Office and its Critics 1918 – 1940', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1977), pp. 427 – 430.

¹⁷ Robert G. Gregory, *India and East Africa, A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890 to 1939*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971.

¹⁸ Lord Altrincham, *Kenya's Opportunity, Memories, Hopes and Ideas*, London, Faber and Faber, 1955, p. 213.

by Frederick Madden and John Darwin.¹⁹

Amery's work for the rest of his time in this period demonstrated his idea of a two-tier British Empire. His memoirs and diaries are not the only authority for his dream, which, in 1925 became a reality when he persuaded Baldwin to create a separate Dominions Office that he would lead, but yet keep responsibility for the Colonial Office. The teething troubles of this new department, and its difficult relationship with the Colonial Office, which retained responsibility for the dependent territories, were well set out in a recent journal article by Andrew Stewart.²⁰

(d) Amery, the Conservative Party and 1935 Government of India Act

This section examines the historiography of Amery's opinions and actions in connection with constitutional reform in India during the period from 1922 until the Government of India Act received its Royal Assent in 1935. During this period he had little or no contact with Indians other than in connection with his responsibilities for East Africa. However his diaries showed that he did talk about matters in India on his occasional visits to All Souls College, Oxford, in February 1926 when he tried to inspire Irwin, who was about to take up his duties as Viceroy of India.²¹ Amery and the All Souls connection over India was covered in great detail by Sarvepalli Gopal who, despite a Congress bias, showed that Irwin, Sir John Simon and Amery, although

¹⁹ Frederick Madden and John Darwin (eds.), *The Dependent Empire 1900 – 1948, Colonies, Protectorates and Mandates*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1994, pp. 740 – 768.

²⁰ Andrew Stewart, 'The "Bloody Post Office": The Life and Times of the Dominions Office', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2010), pp. 45 – 47.

²¹ Barnes and Nicholson (eds.), *The Leo Amery Diaries Volume I*, p. 443. Lord Irwin (1881 – 1959), previously Edward Wood, and subsequently Lord Halifax, was Viceroy of India from 1926 to 1931. During the Second World War he was British Ambassador to the USA.

being fellows of such an influential college, made very different contributions to reform in India.²²

Amery's views on the radical changes to Indian governance made by the Secretary of State for India, Sir Edwin Montagu, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, were forcefully explained in his work of imperial and economic philosophy, *The Forward View*. Given Amery's lifelong aversion to liberal political thinking, it is not surprising that he found the resulting system of diarchy, providing for limited delegation in provincial government, well intentioned, but muddled. Furthermore, he deplored the mild reforms at the centre, which he felt encouraged irresponsible representation ahead of Indian readiness for self-government.²³

By November 1927, Sir John Simon had joined Irwin in holding a post that directly affected reform in India, having been appointed by the diehard Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, to chair an all-party commission to review the consequences of the 1919 Act, and to make recommendations for further reform.²⁴

The amount of scholarship on Irwin's promise of future dominion status for India and its contrast with the timidity of Simon's proposals is large, but other than Gopal's article, there has been very little commentary on their connection with Amery. His diaries and correspondence for the period show

²² Sarvepalli Gopal, 'All Souls and India', *JICH*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1999), pp. 189 – 205. Also, 'All Souls and India: The 1920's' and 'All Souls and India: The 1930's and After', S.J.D. Green and Peregrine Hordern, (eds.), *All Souls and the Wider World*, Oxford, OUP, 2011, pp. 193 – 221. This is an expanded, and very useful version of Gopal's original article.

²³ L. S. Amery, *The Forward View*, Freeport, New York, Books for Libraries Press, 1935, 211 – 217.

²⁴ John Campbell, *F. E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1983, pp. 741- 743.

that his political sympathies were with Simon, whom he clearly felt to be a Tory in disguise, rather than with his personal friend, Irwin, who had managed to annoy both moderates and radical nationalists in India.²⁵ Despite his qualified opinion of Irwin's declaration, two of his biographers have suggested that his support for the Viceroy was rather more fulsome.²⁶

It is possible to identify two major studies of the Conservatives and their divisions over India in the period from 1929 to 1935. Carl Bridge devoted an entire volume to the interaction between politics in Britain, and the complicated situation in India.²⁷ By contrast, Graham Stewart's work was wider in scope covering the party's response to the European dictators' ambitions as well as the passage of the 1935 Act.²⁸ Unfortunately, neither Bridge nor Stewart provided much in the way of detail about Amery's apparently loyal support for Baldwin as party leader in opposition, or as a partner in the National Government. Their scholarship is restricted to Amery's parliamentary humiliation of Churchill in the debate on the Report of the Committee of Privileges in June 1934.²⁹

Apart from an excess of *schadenfreude* at the embarrassment caused to Churchill by his speeches, it is difficult to find a straightforward explanation of Amery's support for Hoare and Baldwin over the 1935 legislation, especially as he had already been absent from the Conservative front bench for several

²⁵ Amery, *My Political Life Volume III*, London, Hutchinson, 1935, pp. 96 – 97.

²⁶ Faber, *Speaking for England*, p. 264.

²⁷ Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire, The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution*, Delhi, Stirling Publications, 1986.

²⁸ Graham Stewart, *Burying Caesar, Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party*, London, Weidfeld and Nicolson, 1999.

²⁹ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p. 131. Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, p. 179.

years. With Amery's fondness for intrigue in mind, it is tempting to apply Maurice Cowling's yardstick of the pursuit of personal advantage in the form of a front bench job as the reason for such apparent loyalty.³⁰

Although Amery appears to have shown little interest in India from the 1935 India Act to his appointment as Secretary of State in May 1940, there were developments, or indeed a lack of them, that were to affect his wartime duties. The critical historiography for this period concerns the attempts by London and Delhi to implement the federation clauses in the 1935 legislation, in particular the need to persuade the Indian princes to sign their accession deeds. It is easy to ignore the constitutional importance of the princes and concentrate too much on the triangular struggle between Britain, Congress and the Muslim League. The definitive work on the part played by the princes at this time was written in 1997 by the Australian academic, Ian Copland, who laid much of the blame for the failure to produce a truly federal India upon the Secretary of State, Lord Zetland, whose dilatory approach allowed the princes to become alarmed by the success of Congress in the provincial elections held in 1937.³¹

A wider review of British policy during the period from 1936 until the fall of Chamberlain has been written by R. J. Moore.³² While stressing the damage caused by the failing negotiations with the princes, Moore was also

³⁰ Carl Bridge, 'The Impact of India on British High Politics of the 1930's: The Limits of Cowlingism', *South Asia*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 1982), pp. 13 – 23.

³¹ Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire 1917 – 1947*, Cambridge, CUP, 1997, pp. 144 – 182.

³² R. J. Moore, 'British Policy and the Indian Problem 1936 - 1940', C. H. Phillips and M. D. Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India, Policies and Perspectives 1935 – 1937*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1971, pp. 79 – 94.

keen to emphasise the growing problem during this time of reconciling Congress pressure for a self-governing India, with Jinnah's demands for the safeguarding of Muslim interests.³³ Above all, it should be remembered that the failure of federation would have been particularly disappointing to Amery, who had spoken up for it and written so enthusiastically about it during the passage of the Act.

(e) Amery as Secretary of State for India

There are three main published sources that provide important information of Amery's period in office from May 1940 to July 1945. Firstly the detailed commentaries by John Barnes and David Nicholson in the second volume of Amery's diaries.³⁴ Each chapter containing the edited diary entries was prefaced by approximately fifteen pages of explanations, which are extremely valuable, although more in the way of narrative than analysis. The editors made no attempt to consult any Cabinet archives or India Office records, but referred to correspondence from Amery's papers, held at Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, and cited secondary sources on constitutional reform in India.³⁵ Although it is important to be aware that the published extracts represented only a part of Amery's original diaries, and that some subjectivity was inevitably introduced by the very act of selection, the commentaries

³³ Ibid, pp. 82 – 83.

³⁴ John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds), *The Empire at Bay, The Leo Amery Diaries 1929 – 1945*, London, Hutchinson, 1988.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 604. In their first commentary on Amery's time at the India Office, Barnes and Nicholson turned to B. R. Tomlinson and R. J. Moore to provide essential background material to events in India since the Royal Assent of the 1935 Act. B. R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj*, London, Macmillan, 1976, and R.J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979.

show both the fluctuations in the urgency of his work at the India Office, as well as the other matters in which he became interested during the war.³⁶

The second published source is a collection of the transcripts of a selection of Amery's speeches that he delivered during his early years at the India Office.³⁷ The speeches delivered, not only in the House of Commons, but also before a number of other audiences, varied in subject matter from the Congress rejection in 1940 of the August offer, India's contribution to the war effort and the complexities of constitutional reform following the Cripps mission. The theme throughout the speeches was the need to proceed with caution to the goal of self-government that he thought would never be available, in any circumstances, until after the war.

The third, and most relevant in terms of an assessment of Amery's performance during the war, was written by the American historian, William Roger Louis.³⁸ In a slim volume that was really a collection of lectures examining Amery's imperial commitment, the author showed how he divided his time between the narrower portfolio of his duties at the India Office, and his perennial campaign for imperial preference. Central to this account of Amery's time at the India Office is the continual, if ultimately one-sided battle with Churchill over constitutional reform. Louis drew out the policy differences between the two men with great clarity, but even after making some reference to the contributions of Clement Attlee and Stafford Cripps to

³⁶ Barnes and Nicholson referred to Amery's active interest in other theatres of war such as the Balkans and Middle East.

³⁷ L. S. Amery, *India and Freedom*, London, OUP, 1942.

³⁸ William Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill*, New York/London, W. W. Norton, 1992.

developments in India, oversimplified what was, in reality, a more complex situation. That said, this is an excellent signpost for further research, especially as the author made judicious use of the India Office records held at the British Library.

David Faber's family portrait of Amery and his two sons devoted a mere thirty pages to the Second World War, but although saying very little on the constitutional position that is not be found in Louis' book, provided a possibly better informed analysis of the political realities faced in London by Amery.³⁹

Although there are many other books and journal articles which cover various aspects of Britain's relationship with India from 1939 to 1945, and which include references to Amery, there is very little discrete material on his performance as Secretary of State. One exception is a detailed paper written in 1979 by Peter Hill, which gave a sympathetic, if uncritical account of his attempts to encourage constitutional reform from the date of his appointment in 1940 to the eve of the Cripps mission in early 1942.⁴⁰

2. Amery's Viceroys

Linlithgow and Wavell, the two Viceroys who served under Amery, have been the subjects of a historiography that contains memoirs, diaries and works of analysis. All make some contribution to Amery's dealings with the 'men on the spot'. Not surprisingly, Lord Glendevon, as Linlithgow's son, attempted to rehabilitate his (Linlithgow's) reputation in a biography that

³⁹ Faber, *Speaking for England*, pp. 367 – 396.

⁴⁰ Peter Hill, 'L. S. Amery, India and the Commonwealth: 1940 – 42', *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 57, Parts 2 – 3 (1979), pp. 315 – 341.

dealt as much with his father's service from 1935 until 1940 as with the final three years of his Viceroyalty. Amery was generally shown to have been supportive of Linlithgow, particularly in regard to Gandhi and Jinnah, but throughout the book was the underlying suspicion that, back in London, he did not really understand the political and practical difficulties in India.⁴¹

Gowher Rizvi followed Glendevon in trying to restore Linlithgow's standing, but although having full access to official documents, was not able to consult the private papers of Amery or Churchill.⁴² Rizvi generally absolved Amery of the charge of dilatoriness that was levelled at the previous Secretary of State, Lord Zetland, and although he offered some censure for his part in the difficulties with Churchill in the summer of 1940, believed that he gave Linlithgow real help in coordinating the Indian war effort. Whether he had a case in asserting that Linlithgow 'dominated Amery' in the period leading up to the Cripps Mission is highly questionable.⁴³

Of greater relevance to a study of Amery is Wavell's journal that was edited by Penderel Moon, a career member of the ICS.⁴⁴ The greater frankness afforded by the diary format reinforces the view, that while Amery may have been more progressive towards Indian reform than Linlithgow, the reverse was the case with Wavell, who had been appointed by Churchill in the mistaken belief that he would be an opponent of Indian nationalism.

⁴¹ John Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay*, London, Collins, 1971.

⁴² Gowher Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, London, Royal Historical Society, 1978.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 234.

⁴⁴ Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell, The Viceroy's Journal*, London, OUP, 1973. Penderel Moon (1905 – 1987) was a Senior Indian Civil Service official and historian of Indian affairs.

2. PUBLISHED SOURCES ON BRITAIN AND INDIA FROM 1919 TO 1945

Collections

A number of invaluable collections are available, whether of official documents, or articles in connection with India's final progress towards partition and independence. From the standpoint of research into the British policy and decision making over India, it is essential to consult the selections of official papers assembled by Nicholas Mansergh, E.W.R. Lumby and Penderel Moon for the *Transfer of Power* series which covers the period from the genesis of the Cripps Mission in January 1942 until the handover of power in August 1947.⁴⁵ Each volume is arranged in broadly the same pattern as the *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, the choice of papers being made by independent historians who had free access to both official archives and private collections of viceregal correspondence held by the British Library in their collection of India Office records.

For the purposes of this research into the career of Amery as Secretary of State for India, it would have been more useful if the series had begun with the outbreak of war, or his appointment by Churchill in May 1940. However the editors have made the case for a starting date of January 1942 on the basis that it coincided both with the renewed demands for independence by Congress, and the outbreak of hostilities in the East. Although this series of documents has been chosen from British sources by British scholars, with a short factual commentary by the editors prefacing each volume, it is difficult

⁴⁵ Nicholas Mansergh, E. W. R. Lumby and Penderel Moon (eds), *The Transfer of Power 1942 – 1945, Volumes I – V*, London, HMSO, 1971 to 1974.

to find any suggestion, even from Indian academics, that the result is anything less than fair and objective.⁴⁶

The first of two important collections of articles was published in the same year as the earliest *Transfer of Power* volume.⁴⁷ This anthology, edited by Professor C. H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright, was based on a seminar held in 1967 at the London School of Oriental and African Studies. The essays were written by scholars using primary archival sources, and middle ranking participants in the Raj reflecting on their experiences. The real value of this volume in relation to Amery lies in the background detail on the period between the wars as well as rigorous reviews of the developing rift between Congress and the Muslim League. There was a considerable emphasis on the political development of local areas in India, but rather less on how this may have been changed by the war. Disappointingly, Professor Philips when writing his otherwise informative introduction to the book, disposed of the effect of the war on constitutional change in a mere two paragraphs.

The second anthology is a more radical collection edited by Professor D. A. Low, and published a few years later in 1977. In terms of the consequences of British policy towards reform, the articles written by Johannes Voigt and Professor R.J. Moore are particularly useful in that these scholars came to diametrically opposed explanations of the eventual partition of the country. Voigt took the more predictable view that the strains of war made the ending

⁴⁶ B. Shiva Rao, 'The Cripps Mission', review of Nicholas and E.W.R. Lumby (eds.), *The Transfer of Power, Volume I, January – April 1942, Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1971), p. 273.

⁴⁷ Philips and Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India, Policies and Perspectives 1935 – 1947*.

of the Raj inevitable, since the British were forced to take harsh repressive measures that finally alienated all sections of Indian opinion. Moore, by contrast, believed that the offer made by Cripps in 1942, although refused by Indians, nevertheless made full independence inevitable, soon after the war.⁴⁸

Britain and India during the War

Later, Voigt and Moore also produced full volumes about Britain and India during the Second World War.⁴⁹ Both are of value in judging Amery's success or failure at the India Office. Voigt's account was more conventional, but well researched using official archival material from India and the USA as well as Britain. It is welcome that there were rigorous analyses of the British attempts to control matters from London and Delhi, and the responses from all sections of Indian political life. He also wrote in detail about the intensity of the American influence on constitutional reform and the Indian war effort.

Professor Moore's wartime study was a sequel to his earlier work, *The Crisis of Indian Unity 1917 – 1940*, and chronicled in detail one of history's great 'might-have-beens'.⁵⁰ If Congress had been able to accept the offer put to them by Cripps on behalf of the British government, it is possible to make a case that the 'Quit India' movement, communal bloodshed, and even partition might have been avoided. Moore showed that Amery, although having a more

⁴⁸ D. A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj*, London, Heinemann, 1977. Also, in this connection, Johannes Voigt, 'Cooperation or Contradiction, 1939 – 1942', pp. 349 – 374. Also, R. J. Moore, 'The Problem of Freedom with Unity: London's India Policy, 1917 – 1947', pp. 395 – 402.

⁴⁹ R. J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India 1939 – 1945*, Oxford, OUP, 1979. Johannes Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1988.

⁵⁰ Judith Brown, review of R. J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 374 (January 1980), p. 184.

central role in the preparation of the declaration that Cripps took to Delhi, was far less influential during the final stages of the mission.

A relatively recent short essay by Nicholas Owen on Britain and India during the war is particularly useful in pointing out the internal divisions that were present throughout the conflict, in each of three main groups; the British authorities, Congress and the Muslim League.⁵¹ The fissures amongst the British, both within the Government of India and the War Cabinet in London are well known, but Owen identified the dissatisfaction of liberal Hindus such as Tej Bahadur Sapru towards more radical Congress leaders, and the antagonism of some Muslims towards Jinnah. Owen's short, concise account of the August offer and the Cripps mission offered a good view of the political climate in which Amery was obliged to work, although his judgement that the latter's appointment as Secretary of State strengthened the diehard element, which opposed Indian nationalism, is very much open to question.⁵²

Although only covering the early years of the war, two distinguished historians have explained the relationship between Britain and Indian campaigners for independence.⁵³ The earlier work by Tomlinson was brief, but revealed how Amery was outmanoeuvred by Churchill in the wording of the August offer, and by Attlee over the nature of the Cripps mission. Perhaps more useful and surprising, was his analysis of the failure of Linlithgow,

⁵¹ Nicholas Owen, 'War and Britain's Political Crisis in India', *What Difference did the War Make?* Brian Brivati and Harriet Jones (eds.), London, Leicester University Press, 1994, pp. 106 – 129.

⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 110 – 112.

⁵³ B. R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj 1929 – 1942*. Also, D. A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism, The Imprint of Ambiguity 1929 – 1942*, Cambridge, CUP, 1997.

Amery and Churchill to exploit the negotiating potential of Congress moderates such as Chakrovarti Rajagopalachari, in order to ensure an orderly path to reform that would not derail the Indian war effort.

Low also did not ignore the significance of Indian liberals in his history, that stressed British incompetence in responding to nationalist calls for reform. His review of the ultimately doomed initiative by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru to produce rapid constitutional change was an essential element in his analytical model that identified a contradiction between Britain's naturally liberal attitude towards national self-determination, and the repressive measures employed to maintain the stability and continuation of the Raj.

Amery, although admitted by Low to be a true Conservative reformer, was regarded as a classic example of such British ambiguity, especially in regard to Sapru's proposals for reform in January 1942.⁵⁴ When Japan entered the war in December 1941, and an invasion of India seemed likely, a frustrated Sapru attempted to circumvent Amery and Linlithgow with direct approaches to Churchill, and more prophetically, Roosevelt. Low showed that Amery reluctantly agreed with Churchill to do nothing with Sapru's proposals, a decision that forced the hand of Attlee, and made the Cripps mission inevitable.⁵⁵ Whether the failure to act positively to the Indian liberals really did prejudice a more orderly path to independence, or whether Britain was just outwitted by Nehru, Gandhi and Jinnah were the questions asked by Low's perceptive work.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ D. A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, p. 320.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 333 – 336.

⁵⁶ Peter Reeves, 'The Unravelling of Ambiguity: Anthony Low's Exploration of Imperialist-Nationalist Confrontation in the Process of Decolonisation in Late British India', *South Asia*,

Louis' account of Amery's problems with Churchill has already been mentioned. To a lesser extent, he shared the Prime Minister's dislike of Congress and its leading politicians, although perhaps not to the point of encouraging communal strife between Hindus and Muslims in order to prolong the existence of the Raj. Amery similarly had little time for Jinnah. By contrast, a recent work by Warren Dockter has shown that Churchill's sympathies lay with the Muslim community, possibly dating from the contribution of their forces in the Great War. This made for difficulties with Amery, especially as Churchill was more prepared than his Secretary of State to encourage Jinnah's quest for Pakistan.⁵⁷

Histories by Insiders

An important part of the historiography of Britain's part in the final years of the Raj was the series of accounts prepared by individuals who had held responsible posts in British India, and in some cases had been appointed by Amery. The work that was accorded the greatest official approval was written by Sir Reginald Coupland, who had already combined a career in imperial administration with academic work at All Souls when asked by Amery to conduct a study of Indian constitutional reform under the auspices of Nuffield College.⁵⁸ Coupland began his research in India in 1941, and soon completed three volumes, of which the more relevant for a study of Amery were the

Vol. 25, No. 2 (August 2002), pp. 1 – 12. Reeves maintained that Low's greatest contribution was to the historiography of the processes of Indian independence, particularly his steadfast adherence to the unfashionable view that credit should be given to the Government of India, and certain leading players in London.

⁵⁷ Warren Dockter, *Churchill and the Islamic World*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2015, pp. 239 – 246.

⁵⁸ Coupland had been a Round Table member from as early as 1910.

second and third as they combined analysis of the period from 1936 to 1942 with reform proposals.⁵⁹

Although a superficial reading of Coupland's work might suggest an unambiguous attack on Gandhi and the more militant elements of Congress, there was as Moore suggested, a worthy, if Whiggish analysis, which traced a sequence of progress from the Montagu-Chelmsford report to the promise of independence enshrined in Cripps' declaration in March 1942.⁶⁰ Coupland produced two solutions to the constitutional impasse. Firstly, a loose confederation of regions, formed by groups of provinces and princely states, which could be said to represent the Balkanisation so feared by Amery, but was hardly the disingenuous denial of freedom suggested by Moore.⁶¹ Secondly, a fanciful scheme based on the four main river basins of India, of which two would be Hindu led, and two would be Muslim-led. Surprisingly, sporadic support for this latter proposal survived until the final two years of the war.⁶²

Vapal Pangunni (V.P.) Menon was an Indian career civil servant who, in 1942, became adviser to Henry (H. V.) Hodson, the Reforms Commissioner. After supervising the accession of over five hundred princely states following independence, he was in a good position to write an insider's account of the events leading to the transfer of power. Amery, his boss in London was not spared strong criticism, chiefly over his perceived inability to read a particular

⁵⁹ R. Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942 Report on the Constitutional Position in India Part II*, Madras, OUP, 1942. Also, R. Coupland, *The Future of India*, Madras, OUP, 1943. Also, R. Coupland, *The Cripps Mission*, London, OUP, 1942.

⁶⁰ R. J. Moore, *Endgames of Empire Studies of Britain's Indian Problem*, Delhi, OUP, 1988.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 1.

⁶² Coupland, *The Future of India*, pp. 110 – 125.

situation with the subtlety required to avoid making inflammatory comments. Menon's comments demonstrated that however progressive the Secretary of State's intentions, the opposite impression was frequently given.⁶³

Hodson who was Menon's predecessor, was obliged by the weight of his duties at the Ditchley Foundation to wait until 1971 to publish his review of partition.⁶⁴ Unlike Menon, he was not an ICS man, but an All Souls fellow, a journalist specialising in economics, and an editor of the *Round Table*. Unfortunately, his appointment as Reforms Commissioner ended prematurely, although he stayed long enough to appreciate the difficulties caused by the lack of understanding between the Delhi government and the India Office.⁶⁵ As Hodson had full access to the Mountbatten papers, but could only interview middle ranking politicians from India and Pakistan, the sections referring to the war years were inevitably weaker, although still lucid.⁶⁶ As was the case with Hodson, Amery was not exempt from censure. Before the Simla Conference in 1945, his reform proposals that were intended to bypass Congress and the Muslim League were described as 'showing a profound neglect of the facts of Indian political life'.⁶⁷

The final history of this period to be written by an insider in Indian administration is a work published in 1961 by the editor of Wavell's diaries,

⁶³ V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Bombay, Longmans, 1957; p. 94 following the August offer; p. 107 in connection with the S93 notices; p. 142 for his response to the 'Quit India' campaign.

⁶⁴ H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide Britain – India – Pakistan*, London, Hutchinson, 1971.

⁶⁵ Robert Wade-Gery, 'Hodson, Henry Vincent [Harry] (1906 – 1999)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, henceforth *ODNB*, OUP, 2004, online edition, 2006.

⁶⁶ W. H. Morris-Jones, 'The Road to Disunion' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (August 1972), pp. 916 – 918.

⁶⁷ Hodson, *The Great Divide*, pp. 116 – 117.

Penderel Moon.⁶⁸ Moon spent much of his career in the Punjab, and after reaching the post of deputy commissioner to Amritsar, resigned in 1942 over the failure of the Government of India to provide better conditions for political prisoners. *Divide and Quit* took a surprisingly impartial view of the events leading to partition, blaming Britain for not promising dominion status at an earlier date, and also criticising Congress for failing to respond more positively to the Cripps mission. Muslims, for whom he clearly had more understanding and affection, were considered to have been cunningly drawn by Jinnah into partition arrangements they did not really want.

Specific Episodes in the Second World War

Certain events have been seen as sufficiently important to attract their own discrete historiography. Almost certainly the most prolific has chronicled the mission of Sir Stafford Cripps to India during March and India 1942. He attempted to broker a deal, whereby the constitution of India would be reformed at the end of hostilities, and in the interim, more Indians would participate in the management of the war effort.

Despite the mission ending in failure, the causes of the breakdown, and its effect on relations between Britain and India for the remainder of the war, have produced many different interpretations. Accounts written by insiders, although useful, need to be read with caution. For example, the Congress President, Maulana Azad, can be shown to have had an incomplete recollection of both his correspondence with Cripps in 1938, and the extent

⁶⁸ Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1961.

of the promises that were made regarding quasi-Cabinet government.⁶⁹

Three fringe participants, who have been mentioned before, and who wrote more measured memoirs, albeit without access to the official archives, were V. P. Menon, H. V. Hodson, and R. Coupland. Hodson and Menon who worked in the Viceroy's Reforms Office throughout the mission, both produced accounts that were even handed, and by no means biased against Congress.⁷⁰ Coupland, who stayed with the Cripps *entourage*, was more scholarly in his conclusions.⁷¹

Amery's contribution to events, particularly during the early stages when the decision to send out an emissary was being considered, was covered in substantial, if not always flattering detail by P. Clarke in his biography of Cripps. Not surprisingly, Amery disappeared from Clarke's narrative of the last few frenetic days in Delhi.⁷²

Amery's sole account was never published, but can be found in his draft memoirs. Considering that he had enjoyed the benefit of over a decade to reflect on the events, his analysis, although typically long-winded, was surprisingly thin, and contained an element of self-justification.⁷³ A better clue to his thinking during this period is, of course his diary which is full of London-based detail, but for this reason is less helpful about events in Delhi in April 1942. Of special value is the detailed commentary provided by his editors, Barnes and Nicolson, who were at least able to show that Amery had

⁶⁹ M. Azad, *India wins Freedom*, London, Sangam Books Ltd, 1989, pp. 46 – 69.

⁷⁰ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, pp. 114 – 138.

⁷¹ Coupland, *The Cripps Mission*, pp. 5 – 64.

⁷² Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version, The Life of Stafford Cripps*, London, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2002, pp. 309 – 322.

⁷³ Amery, draft memoirs, Chapter VIII, pp. 1 – 40, AMEL 8/86.

been even handed in his criticism of Cripps and Congress.⁷⁴

The most detailed analysis of the mission was written by Professor R.J. Moore in 1979, and as the title suggests, polarised the British approach between Churchill and Cripps. He did not suggest that Amery was a major player in the episode, and his highly detailed, but perhaps oversimplified account of the days leading up to the breakdown, puts the blame for the failure on an axis constructed between Churchill and Linlithgow.⁷⁵ A well argued article by Nicholas Owen, written in 2002, suggested that there was more common ground between Attlee and Amery over the conduct of the Cripps mission than might have been supposed. As an extension of this theme, he dismissed Moore's conclusion that an axis between Churchill and Linlithgow sabotaged Cripps' negotiations. Consequently, Cripps was happy with his support from the War Cabinet, and blamed Congress almost exclusively for the breakdown. At no time did Cripps feel any resentment towards Amery.⁷⁶

A second issue that created considerable political ill-will between London and Delhi during the war was the rapidly increasing amount of British indebtedness to India through the sterling balances. The historical background to the institutional complexities of Britain's financial relationship with India have been well explained by the economic historian,

⁷⁴ Barnes and Nicolson (eds.), *The Empire at Bay, The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929 – 1945*, pp. 729 – 738.

⁷⁵ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, pp. 96 – 132.

⁷⁶ Nicholas Owen, 'The Cripps Mission of 1942: A Reinterpretation', *JICH*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2002), pp. 90 – 98.

B.R. Tomlinson.⁷⁷ Many politicians were confused by the speed at which the balances grew, and while no cogent interpretations were offered at the time, Herbert Austen Shannon's article, written in 1950, properly apportioned blame between military and financial causes.⁷⁸ Although many of the political exchanges were public, and therefore are reported in Cabinet archives and Hansard, the origins of discontent with the balances amongst senior Treasury officials in London were usefully explored by Allister E. Hinds as recently as 1991.⁷⁹

The tragic food shortages, of which the Bengal famine was the most serious, have produced a large historiography, which is still increasing. Firstly, the size of the tragedy, and its causes. Sugata Bose, writing in 1990 summarised the statistical work of his colleagues, and computed a death toll exceeding three millions, almost twice the figure reported at the time.⁸⁰ While hoarding by Indian profiteers was often quoted in London and Delhi as a likely cause for the deaths, later analyses have been more sophisticated. Professor Amartya Sen accepted that there had been no real overall shortage of grain, but stressed that the income of poor families was not sufficient to make purchases at spiralling prices.⁸¹

⁷⁷ B. R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914 – 1947*, London, Macmillan, 1979, pp.91 – 92. Also, B. R. Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947 – 1949', *JCIH*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1985), p. 143.

⁷⁸ Herbert Austen (H.A.) Shannon, 'The Sterling Balances of the Sterling Area, 1939 – 1949', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 239 (September 1950), p. 540.

⁷⁹ Allister E. Hinds, 'Imperial Policy and Colonial Sterling Balances, 1943 – 1956', *JICH*, Vol. 19 No. 1 (1991), p. 25.

⁸⁰ Sugata Bose, 'Starvation amidst Plenty: The making of Famine in Bengal, Honan, and Tonkin, 1942 – 1945', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (October 1990), pp. 701 – 702.

⁸¹ Amartya Sen, 'Starvation and Exchange Entitlements: A General Approach and its Application to the Great Bengal Famine', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1977, I, pp. 34 – 35.

Secondly, there has been convincing scholarship on British failures to provide food relief. Lance Brennan attached particular blame to an indolent and certainly despondent administration in Bengal that had done very little, but had not yet not yet experienced the benefit of Casey's energetic leadership, while for the same period Auriol Weingard deplored the lack of coordination between Delhi and Calcutta.⁸²

Biographies, Autobiographies and Collections of Letters

In addition to the biographies of Amery, Linlithgow and Wavell that have already been mentioned, there are a number of other works that are of potential value. However, for many politicians, their involvement with Amery or India represented only a small part of their careers, and care must be taken to be as selective as possible.

Firstly, Churchill, who was the most important British political figure from 1940 until 1945. His official biographer, Martin Gilbert, made surprisingly few references to either Amery, or the wider matter of India in both the volumes that cover the period of the war, although there is an interesting account of Churchill's reaction to the increasing interest of the USA in Indian affairs.⁸³ Offering much more insight into Churchill's stance on India is Volume IV of his wartime memoirs which covers the period immediately before and after the

⁸² Lance Brennan, 'Government Famine Relief in Bengal, 1943', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (August 1988), pp. 561 – 563. Also, Auriol Weingard, 'Famine Management: The Bengal Famine (1942 - 1944) Revisited', *South Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1999), pp. 63 – 78. Richard Casey (1890 – 1976): Australian Ambassador to USA, 1940 – 1942, Minister Resident in the Middle East, 1942 – 1944 and Governor of Bengal, 1944 – 1946.

⁸³ Martin Gilbert, *Finest Hour Winston S. Churchill 1939 – 1941*, London, Heinemann, 1983. Also, Martin Gilbert, *Road to Victory Winston S. Churchill 1941 – 1945*, London, Heinemann, 1986, pp. 342 – 343.

Cripps mission. His analysis of events clearly revealed his outright opposition to any immediate concessions to the nationalist cause, and also reinforced Gilbert's view that he resented any interference by the USA in South Asian politics.⁸⁴

Most biographies of Attlee have concentrated on his socialist origins in voluntary work in the East End of London, or on his reforming post war administration. However he had a strong and lasting interest in India, both as a member of the Simon Commission in the late 1920s, and also as the chairman of the wartime Cabinet India Committee which sat from February 1942. Kenneth Harris wrote a short account of this latter role, although a recent biography by Nicklaus Thomas Symonds has provided more detailed analysis of both his time in India with Simon, and his influence during the war.⁸⁵ Another recent, and much praised biography of Attlee dealing only with the war years, said disappointingly little about his involvement with India, concentrating almost exclusively on domestic political infighting.⁸⁶

Attlee's own account in his autobiography is typically cryptic, but still managed to show his commitment to constitutional reform in India.⁸⁷

The Labour politician who had an even keener interest in India was Sir Stafford Cripps, who had already visited that country in 1939, and was sent

⁸⁴ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War Volume IV The Hinge of Fate*, London, Cassell and Co., 1951, pp. 181 – 196.

⁸⁵ Kenneth Harris, *Attlee*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1982, pp. 201 – 204. Nicklaus Thomas Symonds, *Attlee A Life in Politics*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 43 – 53; 109 – 114.

⁸⁶ Robert Crowcroft, *Attlee's War*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2011. The only reference of real relevance to this dissertation is at page 40, where Crowcroft described Attlee's disquiet over Linlithgow's decision to declare war against Germany on behalf of India, without consulting any Indian politicians.

⁸⁷ Lord Attlee, *As it Happened*, London, Heinemann, 1954, pp. 179 – 181.

back by Churchill in early 1942 to secure a measure of agreement on constitutional reform; almost certainly in order to prevent any disruption of India's contribution to the war effort. Peter Clarke's meticulously researched biography of Cripps provided considerable detail on the mission, especially the personal and political differences with Amery who remained privately, and sometimes publicly, sceptical throughout.⁸⁸

The Australian, Richard Casey, was only Governor of Bengal for a short time from January 1944 until March 1946, but his innovative approach to alleviating the famine in the province yielded successful results. His working relationship with Amery was closer than would normally have been the case between a provincial governor and the Secretary of State, possibly because the latter had chosen him, or at least had taken the credit for having done so. Their prolific private correspondence is supported by important works of biography and autobiography that give valuable insight into, not only Amery's approach to the famine, but also provincial and national governance in India.⁸⁹

There is a wide variety of biographical coverage of the two most important Indian politicians during the war; Gandhi and Jinnah. Gandhi's autobiography was written in 1927, and he was already an elderly man of seventy years when war was declared. Judith Brown's biography of Gandhi followed her earlier accounts of specific periods when he was particularly politically active.⁹⁰ In particular she wrote with great clarity about the ageing Gandhi's

⁸⁸ Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, pp. 276 – 330.

⁸⁹ R. G. Casey, *An Australian in India*, London, Hollis, 1947. Also, R. G. Casey, *Personal Experience, 1939 – 1946*, London, Constable, 1962. Also, W. J. Hudson, *R. G. Casey*, Melbourne, OUP, 1986.

reconnection with his Congress colleagues, his part in the 'Quit India' campaign, and his eventual reluctant realisation that foreign troops might be needed for defence against Japan.⁹¹

Wolpert had earlier written a similarly researched biography of Jinnah in which he made little use of the voluminous Quaid-i-Azam papers held in the National Archives of Pakistan.⁹² There was an absence of hard detail about the Cripps mission and how it affected the Muslim community, although his account of Jinnah's dismay at the success of Congress in the 1937 provincial election was especially valuable. While the message from Wolpert was that, at this point, Jinnah had already settled for a separate state of Pakistan, Ayesha Jalal in her biography of Jinnah believed that he retained the idea of Muslim representation within a united India for longer.⁹³

Of particular value to researchers is the collection of letters written by the veteran Hindu politician Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Although more moderate than Gandhi in his preferred methods of achieving reform, his dislike of the British Raj was unambiguous, and during the war frequently manifested itself in vitriolic, if sometimes unfair, criticism of Amery.⁹⁴

The 'Cambridge' School

The relevance of the work of the 'Cambridge' school of Indian history to a

⁹⁰ Judith Brown, *Gandhi Prisoner of Hope*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989.
J. M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power Indian Politics 1915 – 1922*, Cambridge, CUP, 1972. J. M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience The Mahatma in Indian Politics 1928 – 1934*, Cambridge, CUP, 1977.

⁹¹ Brown, *Gandhi Prisoner of Hope*, pp. 314 – 355.

⁹² Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, New York, OUP, 1984.

⁹³ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, CUP, 1985.

⁹⁴ Rima Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule, Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Indian National Movement*, New Delhi, Rawat Publications, 1999.

thesis about the Secretary of State in wartime is a matter for delicate judgement. If it is accepted that Amery was not as well briefed on Congress and Muslim League politics away from the larger cities, then at least a working understanding of this work is of value. The intellectual origins of this coterie were not in the study of India, but in the work done by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson on the nature of imperialism in Africa.⁹⁵ Once they had transferred their interest to India, the focus became the interaction between local groups and anticolonial nationalist movements. The authors believed that imperial rule spread as the result of the collaboration between the British and local Indian rulers, and that later, when colonised groups chose to discontinue their cooperation, they formed into nationalist groups seeking independence.⁹⁶ The mechanics of this were clearly explained by Gallagher, who noted that the economic imperatives of maintaining the Raj required greater levels of local bureaucracy that became increasingly unwelcome to Indians, who to protect their interests, began to mobilise politically. The corollary was that Gallagher found it difficult to accept the idea of a united national Congress party, with Gandhi and Nehru as its truly representative leaders.⁹⁷

Anil Seal, whose work was initially supervised at Cambridge University by Gallagher, took his mentor's ideas regarding collaboration between imperialists and the colonised as far as the date of partition. In particular, he

⁹⁵ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, London, St Martin's Press, 1961.

⁹⁶ Howard Spodek, 'Pluralist Politics in British India: The Cambridge Cluster of Historians of Modern India', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (June 1979), pp. 689 – 690.

⁹⁷ Andrew S. Thompson, 'Gallagher, John Andrew (1919 – 1980)', *ODNB*, OUP, 2004, online edition 2007.

identified the financial pressures that caused the British to devolve more responsibility to local politicians, who then frequently sought even more. He believed that the desire for independence was really only the goal of a small group of elite politicians, but that as the war progressed, and the stakes relating to self-government became higher, local leaders of both communities were obliged to leave the final negotiations to Congress and the Muslim League.⁹⁸

Amery and his colleagues in India would certainly have benefitted from not only from better information on local politics, but certainly also the start of the long term financial difficulties in maintaining the Raj. This matter was rarely mentioned in the correspondence between Amery and the two Viceroys, although Gallagher and Seal's important work of collaboration proved that the sombre raw data had been available.⁹⁹

'Subaltern' History

In connection with this study, it is difficult to assess the value of a number of works that were written by a group of scholars, who under the collective name of 'Subalterns', eschewed an elite approach to historiography, and concentrated on the lower social classes in India. Unfortunately, many of these historians have overstated their otherwise valuable reviews of the impetus for change coming from poor communities by an excess of polemic and Marxist jargon.¹⁰⁰ Although these histories stress the link between

⁹⁸ Anil Seal, 'Imperialism and Nationalism in India', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1973), pp. 344.

⁹⁹ Gallagher and Seal, 'Britain and India between the Wars', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1981), pp. 387 – 414.

national elites and activism from below, there is disappointingly little analysis or explanation of how this might have affected negotiation with the British. Guha himself, wrote a useful, if simplistic article to explain the nature of the 'Subaltern' school, although in the first few pages he dismissed traditional histories, written from whatever standpoint, as merely providing chronological and institutional background for presumably more valid interpretations. Nevertheless, he was more convincing in his argument that independence might not have been achieved without the contribution of those at a lower level in Indian society.¹⁰¹

An important work by Sumit Sarkar bridged the gap between the more conventional histories of India and the 'Subaltern' approach. He derided the 'Cambridge' approach for suggesting that the collaboration of local groups with the British sprang from a degree of selfishness, and lack of patriotism that he believed was not the case.¹⁰² Although this work was frequently provocative, and not even handed, he made a fair job of allocating the roles of absolute diehard, reluctant diehard, and cautious reformer to Churchill, Linlithgow, and Amery respectively.¹⁰³

Purpose of This Study

This literature review has shown that there is a large historiography on both

¹⁰⁰ Sandra B. Freitag, review of Ranjit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I: Writings in South Asian History and Society*, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (August 1984) pp. 779 – 780.

¹⁰¹ Guha, 'On some aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', Vinak Charturvedi (ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, London, Verso, 2000, pp. 1 – 7.

¹⁰² Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885 – 1947 (Second Edition)*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989, p. 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 377.

the role of Congress and the Muslim League, before and during the war. There are also a number of secondary sources on British attitudes towards the increasing demands of Indian nationalism, especially in the twenty five years before the 1935 Government of India Act. However there has been little written about the process of imperial management from London, and how it was prioritised or not during the fluctuating Allied fortunes of the Second World War. As an already established thinker on the British Empire, if not its dependent parts, Amery's experiences provide academics an excellent opportunity to examine the difficulties when leaders were obliged to substitute pragmatism for theory, if faced with a wide variety of adverse influences. Ultimately it is hoped that it will reveal as much about the problems of British Cabinet government as the issues of Indian governance.

CHAPTER II

AMERY'S VIEWS OF EARLY ATTEMPTS AT INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Introduction

Despite Amery's often pejorative references to Indian politicians and the India Office when seeking a move towards federation in East Africa, in the decade after the Great War, it is possible to trace only a few references in his papers to constitutional reform in India until he began his active support of the Conservative front bench over the long gestation period of the Government of India Act of 1935. This is not surprising, as during the periods before the July crisis in 1914, and certainly after the Armistice until the Irwin declaration in late 1929, he concentrated on such issues as Irish home rule, imperial preference, and the economic development of the dominions.

During these years, Indian pressure for constitutional change, and the consequent need for Britain to make an appropriate response, gathered momentum. The Secretary of State for India, John Morley and the Viceroy, Lord Minto, had introduced a limited amount of reform in the Indian Councils Act 1909 which provided for the election of Indians to the central and provincial legislatures for the first time. However in the eyes of an increasingly militant Indian National Congress seeking nothing short of self-government, these modest measures were woefully inadequate.¹

A number of factors such as the rise of communalism (despite the

¹ Frederick Madden and John Darwin, *The Dominions and India since 1900, Select Documents on the Constitutional History*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1993, p. 656.

'Lucknow Pact' of 1916), and the expectancy of Indians for political rewards following the Great War, soon rendered the 1909 legislation obsolete.²

Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, proposed a constitutional solution that was radical for its time, with the rather more guarded support of the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. Montagu made his aspirations clear in an announcement that he made on 20 August 1917, albeit with some cautious editing by Lord Curzon.³

In his hopes for progression towards a system based on the British political model he envisaged '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'.⁴ Barely two months after Montagu's famous declaration, Amery, at the time Assistant Secretary to the War Cabinet, made his own views clear in a letter to the Australian Prime Minister, William Hughes. While introducing his now well known theory on British war aims that envisaged a worldwide circle of British domination, he identified the place of India in such an arrangement. Eschewing Montagu's purple prose he foresaw a British Monroe doctrine in South Asia, keeping the region free from other ambitious powers, and centred on an India that moved slowly towards democracy.⁵

² M. N. Das, *India under Morley and Minto*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1964, p. 350.

³ Madden and Darwin, *The Dominions and India since 1900*, p. 678. Curzon replaced the words, 'self-government' with 'responsible government' mistakenly believing this had a meaning more in line with Conservative principles.

⁴ *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*, Cmd. 9109, (1918), para 6. Cited by C. H. Philips, *The Evolution of India and Pakistan, Select Documents*, Oxford, OUP, 1962, pp. 264 – 265.

⁵ Amery to W. M. Hughes, 12 October 1917, AMEL 7/13.

Montagu's announcement presaged the reforms that carried his name, and that of Chelmsford. The resulting legislation was the Government of India Act of 1919 that introduced the principle of 'dyarchy', or dual government, into the provinces of British India. This innovative, if cumbersome system was the brainchild of Lionel Curtis, the Milnerite Round Table member and imperial thinker who travelled around India from November 1916 to February 1918 in order to work out the final details of a scheme that carried the imprint of the progressive liberalism of both Montagu and himself.⁶ The Act enlarged the provincial and central legislative councils and removed official majorities, although it was significant that provincial governors and the Viceroy respectively, kept reserve powers which could be used in cases of deadlock.

The new system made little difference to the Government of India, but at provincial level there was real change through 'diarchy', which transferred some subjects such as education to Indian ministers, responsible to the legislature and the electorate. Others, including policing and the administration of justice, remained under the direct charge of governors and their executive councils.⁷ For his measures to be successful, Montagu needed a long period of stability in India, and the goodwill of the politically minded Hindu and Muslim elites. Unfortunately, the initial support of moderate Congress politicians such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale was soon replaced by the opposition of Mahatma Gandhi who believed that full

⁶ Deborah Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth, a Biography of Lionel Curtis*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 142. Also, Lionel Curtis, *Letters to the People of India on Responsible Government*, London, Macmillan, 1918, pp. 10 – 11.

⁷ Judith M. Brown, *Modern India, The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 205.

independence, or *swaraj*, should be granted within a year.⁸ Although Gandhi's protests against Montagu's legislation were non-violent, more serious unrest broke out after three hundred protestors were killed at Amritsar by troops ordered to fire by the military commander, General Dyer.⁹

Amery had no direct responsibility for imperial affairs when he expressed his own views on constitutional reform in India to the Cambridge Branch of the Royal Colonial Institute on 9 February 1922. In a cautious and vague speech he agreed that responsible government as practised in the white dominions, was inappropriate for India at that time. Basing his arguments on the conclusions reached by Curtis, his Round Table colleague, he believed that such government could only be given to India on an incremental basis. He also showed a degree of uncharacteristic pessimism in stating that the reform process should have been started at least fifteen years earlier so that moderates would have had more influence in India, and agitators rather less.¹⁰

Within a few months, Amery was given much of the missing detail, albeit in partisan form, by his former colleague in the Balkans, George Lloyd, who at this time, was Governor of Bombay.¹¹ Lloyd who, during the next decade was to become a diehard opponent of Indian independence, told Amery that the Viceroy, Lord Reading, had lost control of public order. Lloyd blamed

⁸ R. Coupland, *The Indian Problem 1833 – 1935, Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1942, pp. 66 – 69.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 221.

¹⁰ *Cambridge Daily News*, 9 February 1922.

¹¹ D. Whittington, MA dissertation, *Leo Amery and the First World War in the Balkans*, UWE 2010, p. 38. Amery and Lloyd collaborated at Gallipoli when the former was engaged on intelligence work in the summer of 1915.

Gandhi's campaign of disobedience that had not confined itself to peaceful protest, as there had been many outbreaks of violence, both of a communal and anti-Raj nature. Following his threat of resignation, Lloyd was able to arrest Gandhi and other protestors, an action that he believed had bought him sufficient time to make an overall assessment of matters. He explained to Amery that the stark choice for Britain was either to enforce the 1919 legislation, or to grant immediate full dominion self-government to India.¹²

The closest we can get to Amery's view of the 1919 Act is in his volume of applied political philosophy, *The Forward View*, published in 1935. Although Amery's analysis was a combination of a Whiggish history of British achievement in civilising India, and unashamed propaganda for the 1935 Government of India Act, he went to some lengths to demonstrate that the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals were the product of doctrinaire liberalism. In particular, he believed that this philosophy led to unwise attempts to introduce British style parliamentary democracy to India. He was to promote this view throughout his period in office.¹³

Amery, Sir John Simon and Lord Irwin

In 1926 Amery discussed reform in India with two politicians, who during the next five years were to shape such change in very different ways. Both Sir John Simon, a Liberal and Edward Wood (later Lord Irwin, and even later Lord Halifax), a Conservative, were All Souls fellows, and represented two opposing approaches to Indian constitutional reform that dominated much of

¹² George Lloyd to Amery, 9 June 1922, AMEL 2/1/5.

¹³ Amery, *The Forward View*, pp. 211 – 217.

British political debate until the 1935 Government of India Act received the Royal Assent.¹⁴ Amery spoke to Irwin shortly before he left Britain on 17 March 1926 to become Viceroy, and possibly frustrated by Indian opposition to his own plans for an East African federation, advised him 'get away from the atmosphere of constitutional grievances, buck up India and make it proud of itself'.¹⁵ During dinner at All Souls two weeks later Amery had a discussion with Simon who had just returned from a private visit to India, and was also now convinced of its unsuitability for a British system of parliamentary government.¹⁶ Amery showed his approval of this opinion by writing that 'Simon was rapidly becoming a Tory'.¹⁷

In 1927 Amery was concerned with two matters in connection with India that did not directly involve constitutional reform, but that demonstrated his lack of sympathy for that country. Firstly, as a portent for the later crisis of the sterling balances he took part in Cabinet discussions about Indian financial liabilities that had accrued during the Great War. Unsurprisingly, Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer took a hawkish view over repayment, although he was vigorously opposed by the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead. Amery did not give explicit support to either colleague, but presciently declared that a final solution was required, otherwise 'these financial questions with India are going to involve us in continual trouble

¹⁴ Sarvepalli Gopal, 'All Souls and India, 1921 – 1947', pp. 86 – 91. Gopal's Indiacentric and schematic paper nevertheless clearly demonstrated the Christian influences behind Wood's surprisingly daring initiatives on reform in comparison with the lawyer dominated caution of Simon.

¹⁵ Amery diary, 20 February 1926, AMEL 7/20.

¹⁶ Viscount Simon, *Retrospect*, London, Hutchinson, 1952, p. 144.

¹⁷ Amery diary, 5 March 1926, AMEL, 7/20.

during the next twenty years'.¹⁸

Secondly as a member of the Defence of India Cabinet Committee that had been set up to counter a possible Bolshevik threat on the subcontinent, Amery contributed some fanciful strategic thinking. Adhering to his long held belief in the value of federation, he advocated the creation of a new frontier empire of Afghanistan and Persia, 'leaving India behind as a dominion contributing less in men and equipment to a defence that will have moved beyond them'.¹⁹

The 1919 Government of India Act had provided for a Statutory Commission to review the outcome of the reforms by the end of 1928. Birkenhead brought this forward as he feared that, under a future Labour Government, his likely successor, Colonel Wedgwood, would appoint radicals to the Commission.²⁰ This panel under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon consisted of four Conservative and two Labour politicians, including Clement Attlee, but no personnel from India, a policy that Irwin had suggested to Birkenhead on the grounds that a mixed race committee could well lead to separate and contradictory reports.²¹ Indian outrage at the composition of the Commission was shared by all shades of Congress opinion as well as by a minority of the Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership.²² Although Irwin predicted that the resulting boycott of the Commission would quickly die out, this did not turn out to be the case, and Simon was obliged to

¹⁸ Amery diary, 16 March 1927, AMEL, 7/21.

¹⁹ Amery diary, 3 May 1927, AMEL, 7/21.

²⁰ Gopal, 'All Souls and India', pp. 88 – 89.

²¹ John Campbell, *F. E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, London, Jonathon Cape, 1983, pp. 741 – 743.

²² Earl of Halifax, *Fulness of Days*, London, 1957, pp. 114 – 115.

travel around India obtaining information where he could.²³

Simon also had to compete with a constitutional report prepared, at the same time, under the chairmanship of a leading Congress politician and lawyer, Motilal Nehru.²⁴ This called for dominion status and a unitary system of government, demands that were soon increased, under the threat of further civil disobedience, to full independence.²⁵

The development of Amery's views on Indian constitutional reform, which lasted until he became Secretary of State in 1940, can be traced to his reaction to both the Irwin declaration and the recommendations of the Simon report. Irwin acted because he decided that the bitterness felt in India over the composition of the Simon Commission made it necessary to restore confidence in British intentions.²⁶ He planned to take action in two ways. Firstly, to make a clear statement that Britain had dominion status in mind for India, and secondly to arrange a conference in London where British and Indian politicians could discuss the issue of constitutional reform.²⁷

Irwin returned to London in the summer of 1929 to explain his proposals to King George V, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, William Wedgwood and Baldwin, now leader of the opposition. The first three gentlemen assented with enthusiasm, but the wily Baldwin was more circumspect. He did not consult his colleagues in the Conservative Business Committee (Shadow

²³ Halifax to Amery, 2 December 1928, AMEL 2/1/15.

²⁴ Motilal Nehru was the father of Jawaharlal Nehru.

²⁵ R.J. Moore, 'The Making of India's Paper Federation, 1927 – 1935', Phillips and Wainwright, (eds.) *The Partition of India*, p. 56.

²⁶ Halifax, *Fulness of Days*, p. 117.

²⁷ Andrew Roberts, *The Holy Fox, The Life of Lord Halifax*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991, pp. 26 – 28.

Cabinet), but told Irwin that his approval of both proposals depended on Simon's support. Simon's memoirs do not mention any resulting discussions with either Baldwin or Irwin.²⁸ Even if he had indicated agreement at any earlier time, this was repudiated on 24 September when he spoke for the Commission in opposing both the declaration on dominion status, and the need for a constitutional conference in London.

When the Conservative Business Committee met on 23 October, Baldwin was apparently told for the first time of Simon's objections to Irwin's proposals.²⁹ Surprised by the strength of his colleagues' outrage, he attempted to persuade Irwin to delay his statement, but without success.³⁰ Having returned to India, Irwin ignored the anger of a variety of politicians, including Lord Salisbury, Lord Birkenhead and Lloyd George, and made his statement on 31 October 1929 by means of a *communiqué* to the *Indian Gazette*. Whether Halifax truly believed in awarding full dominion status to India on the terms given to Australia, South Africa and New Zealand cannot be completely verified, but his final statement was,

I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgement it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress as there contemplated is the attainment of dominion status.³¹

Amery took little time to express his disapproval of Irwin's statement. On 5 November 1929 he wrote a long and detailed letter to Baldwin, from its

²⁸ Simon, *Retrospect*, p. 150.

²⁹ Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, *Baldwin*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p. 539.

³⁰ Gillian Peele, 'A Note on the Irwin Declaration', *JICH*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1973), p. 336.

³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 332 - 333. Also, *Indian Gazette* 31 October 1929, cited by Viscount Templewood (Sir Samuel Hoare), *Nine Troubled Years*, London, Collins, 1954, p. 45.

tone and content seemingly ignorant of the fact that he was no longer addressing him as the Prime Minister, but stating that the declaration should not have been made before the publication of the findings of the Simon Commission. His chief concern was the expectation that had already been created in India among moderate politicians while the reaction of more extreme elements was one of scorn and disbelief. He believed that it should soon be made clear to all sections of Indian opinion that any future conference would not be able to discuss any arrangements for dominion status, but merely debate the Simon Report, and how it might involve the princes.³² Remarkably, Amery does not refer to the Irwin declaration in either the chapter on India in *The Forward View*, published in 1935, or in his draft memoirs written in 1953.

If Irwin had hoped that his declaration would have a calming effect, he was soon to be disappointed. In Britain such prominent Tory figures as Birkenhead, Churchill and Austen Chamberlain condemned it as foolish and dangerous.³³ The response in India was mixed. Liberal politicians signified approval, but Congress was outraged, seeing in Irwin's choice of words either calculated procrastination, or the offer of some inferior brand of dominion status.³⁴

Simon quickly realised that Irwin's statement had fatally undermined his Commission whose findings had become obsolete before their publication in June 1930.³⁵ Nevertheless, Amery was unrestrained in his praise of Simon's

³² Amery to Baldwin, 5 November 1929, AMEL 2/1/18.

³³ Moore, 'The Making of India's Paper Federation', p. 58.

³⁴ Halifax, *Fulness of Days*, pp. 120 – 121.

³⁵ Simon, *Retrospect*, p. 150. Also, Brown, *Modern India*, p. 265.

conclusions that he believed went some way to rectifying the mistakes of the 1919 Act.³⁶ The Commission recommended the early replacement of diarchy by a fully responsible executive in the provinces, although with substantial powers reserved to governors. At the centre, larger changes were proposed whereby the idea of national or unitary government was discounted in favour of a federal structure capable of including the princely states.³⁷

Amery as a Backbencher and his Early Battle with the Diehards

Amery's active political interest in India in the five years from the Simon Report until the India Act of 1935 was conducted as a loyal supporter of party policy, although he had left the Conservative front bench in February 1930 as a result of differences with the leadership over the issue of imperial preference. The Labour Government fell in August 1931, and was replaced by a National Government. Amery never held ministerial office in this administration under either Ramsay MacDonald or Baldwin, but proved to be of value to the Conservative leadership during the frequently vicious party infighting that characterised this period over the issue of reform in India.

The timetable that resulted in the Government of India Act of 1935 was long and complicated, not only in terms of Britain's complicated relationship with India's diverse political and religious groupings, but also at home where there was an acrimonious struggle for power within the Conservative Party. Before the constitutional measures were finally enacted in 1935, there had

³⁶ Amery, *The Forward View*, p. 217.

³⁷ *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, HMSO, Cmd. 3568 – 3569, Vol. 2, Paragraphs 24 and 30.

been three Round Table conferences in London, a White Paper on the proposals, a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee to examine them, and further scrutiny when the Bill went through its parliamentary stages.

Amery had little to do with the first Round Table conference that took place from November 1930 to January 1931, and was boycotted by Congress as it coincided with Gandhi's second civil disobedience campaign that had begun with his protest over the salt tax issue, and ended with his pact with Irwin in March 1931.³⁸ In their absence, the moderate Hindus, Muslims and representatives of the princely states made a limited amount of progress towards a federal centre, a scheme approved by both the Labour Government and Samuel Hoare, who led the Conservative Party delegation.³⁹ By contrast, Churchill opposed these first tentative steps towards Indian self-government in a series of stinging speeches that marked an almost complete severance from Baldwin and Hoare.⁴⁰ Somewhat prophetically in May 1930, Baldwin had already confided in Amery over Churchill's likely future behaviour as a diehard over India, and revealed that his strategy since the General Election in 1929 had been to 'allow him enough rope to hang himself'.⁴¹

Although Amery had not attended the first Round Table conference he did correspond with individuals who were deeply concerned about the latest developments on reform in India. In February 1931 he had an acrimonious disagreement over India with Lord Lloyd, who had been dismissed as High

³⁸ Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi, Prisoner of Hope*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989, p. 236.

³⁹ Moore, 'The Making of India's Paper Federation', p. 60.

⁴⁰ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, 1986, pp. 55 – 62.

⁴¹ Amery diary, 26 May 1930, AMEL 7/24.

Commissioner of Egypt in 1929 by the Labour Government, and who was now as fiercely opposed to Indian constitutional reform as Churchill. At a meeting of the India Committee of Conservative MPs on 9 February 1931, Lloyd led a powerful diehard faction in asking for more repression of dissent by the Government of India. Amery believed that he had protected Baldwin by making the first reply to Lloyd, pleading for more consideration of the federal idea, but not abandoning the need to maintain order in India.⁴² On the following day, Lloyd apologised to Amery by letter for having verbally harangued him at the meeting, but nevertheless expressed his fears for India that he felt was suffering from a combination of 'a Brahmin conspiracy and Soviet sedition'. His fundamental imperial tenet was that, 'if India goes, everything goes'.⁴³

Amery did not speak again on these matters before the second Round Table conference that began in September 1931. However he did keep in touch with Irwin, who had retired as Viceroy, and discussed the situation in India with him at All Souls on 17 May 1931, before recording that he agreed with him on most aspects of reform policy.⁴⁴ Within three weeks, Irwin wrote to him from his home in Garrowby to warn him that many British administrators working for the Government of India would only be prepared to support measures that actually delayed any transfer of power.⁴⁵

Before the second Round Table conference opened on 7 September, the National Government had replaced the Labour administration that had

⁴² Amery diary, 9 February 1931, AMEL 7/25.

⁴³ Lloyd to Amery, 10 February 1931, AMEL 2/1/21.

⁴⁴ Amery diary, 17 May 1931, AMEL 7/25.

⁴⁵ Lord Irwin to Amery, 6 June 1931, AMEL 2/1/20.

resigned a couple of weeks earlier. During the conference a General Election was held on 27 October 1931, resulting in a Conservative representation of 473 seats, although Ramsay MacDonald remained as Prime Minister. Hoare became Secretary of State for India, although Amery did not regain ministerial office.

Britain suffered a grave financial crisis in the late summer of 1931 which necessitated corrective measures, some of which caused problems for the Indian rupee. Relations between the conference delegates were also affected by the loan indebtedness of India to Britain while the trade balance of payments saw a fundamental change against the Lancashire cotton manufacturers, due mainly to Indian tariffs aimed to protect their own textile industry.⁴⁶

It had been hoped that the optimism created by the pact between Irwin and Gandhi would have produced a more favourable atmosphere at the conference, but tensions between Congress, led by Gandhi, and other groups such as Muslims and the princes made for little progress.⁴⁷ This vacuum was skilfully filled by Hoare, who pressed on with the legislative timetable to produce provincial autonomy, and a federal centre.⁴⁸ In India, the failure of the conference led to further civil disobedience, with Gandhi and Nehru imprisoned once again.⁴⁹ A third hastily arranged Round Table conference

⁴⁶ Bridge, *Holding Britain to the Empire*, pp. 68 – 73.

⁴⁷ Graham Stewart, *Burying Caesar, Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1999, pp. 146 – 147.

⁴⁸ Barnes and Nicholson commentary, *Amery Diaries, 1929 – 1945*, p. 277. Also, India Committee conclusions, 4 October 1932 – 17 November 1932, CAB 27/520, The National Archives. Henceforth, references to the CAB series will not bear either the full title, or the abbreviation, TNA.

⁴⁹ Coupland, *The Indian Problem*, p. 127.

lasted just five weeks during November and December 1931, achieving very little beyond a communal award of one third of the seats at the centre to Muslims.

Throughout this period, and throughout 1932, Amery concentrated on imperial preference, and the state of British military preparedness. His prospects for regaining office were certainly not helped by his attendance at the Ottawa Imperial conference in August 1932, when as a representative of the Empire Sugar Federation, his perceived interference caused resentment amongst his former front bench colleagues, many of whom vowed to have him permanently excluded from ministerial office.⁵⁰

Amery in Support of the White Papers and the Joint Select Committee

Hoare then acted quickly. On 17 March 1933 he published his reform proposals for consideration by a Joint Select Committee of both Houses.⁵¹

During the period of three months between the close of the third Round Table conference and the publication of the White Paper, the Conservative diehards stepped up their campaign of resistance. Believing that their constituency members were opposed to responsible government at the centre in India, Sir Henry Page Croft and his diehard colleagues proposed a motion in the House of Commons that legislation should be confined to self-government in the provinces; a return to the Simon Commission proposals.⁵² Although this motion was defeated, opposition had already been formalised with the

⁵⁰ Amery, *My Political life, Volume III*, pp. 86 – 87.

⁵¹ *Proposals for Indian Constitutional Reform*, 17 March 1933, Cmd. 4268, CAB 24/238.

⁵² Gillian Peele, 'Revolt over India', Gillian Peele and Chris Cook (eds.), *The Politics of Reappraisal, 1918 – 1934*, London, Macmillan, pp. 133 – 134.

creation of the India Defence League (IDC) which included Churchill, and the peers, Carson and Lloyd.⁵³

Hoare's White Paper, although formidable in length, had only two main Recommendations; firstly, the creation of provinces with a good measure of self-government; and secondly, a carefully designed federal structure that through the design of the legislative and the executive would allow a combination of princes, Muslims and liberal Hindus to vote down a militant Congress.⁵⁴ The selection of the members of the Joint Select Committee represented another tactical victory for Hoare. Of the thirty two members (sixteen from each House), only five were confirmed diehards, with another six, sceptical but uncommitted. This, combined with the minority status of the approximately sixty potentially rebellious MPs in a very large Conservative parliamentary representation, left the critical arithmetic very much in Hoare's favour.

Bearing in mind such a voting advantage for the government, it is important to make a realistic assessment of Amery's contribution to the successful enactment of the legislation. In 1933, although not a member of the Joint Select Committee, he addressed two important Conservative Party meetings on the reform proposals. Firstly, in June 1933 he spoke in support of Hoare at the annual meeting of the Central Council of the National Union, and was quick to praise his own contribution at this caucus.⁵⁵ However, the

⁵³ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, pp. 94 – 95. Within months, the India Defence Committee had been expanded, given substantial support, and renamed as the India Defence League

⁵⁴ Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, pp. 154 – 155.

⁵⁵ Amery diary, 28 June 1933, AMEL 7/22.

true architect of the front bench success was Baldwin who skilfully convinced the meeting by a margin of 838 votes to 356 votes to have the work of the Joint Select Committee declared *sub judice* until the final report.⁵⁶

Secondly, in October 1933, at Hoare's insistence, Amery spoke in support of the White Paper at the Party Conference held in Birmingham. Although the India Defence League made a considerable attempt to influence the constituency delegates, Neville Chamberlain made a skilful speech in his home city, and managed to turn the debate on Indian reform into a motion of confidence in the Government which he won by a two to one margin.⁵⁷ Amery believed he had been able to reduce the temperature of the meeting by stressing the similarities between the White Paper and the Simon Commission recommendations, and minimising the points of difference. Whether this was sufficient grounds for claiming that he had demonstrated the true Tory credentials of the proposed constitution is less certain.⁵⁸

Amery, Churchill and the Committee of Privileges

In such favourable circumstances the Government believed that the work of the Joint Select Committee could be completed in time for the summer recess of 1934.⁵⁹ Progress was halted in April when charges of a breach of parliamentary privilege were laid by Churchill against Hoare and Lord Derby, and ultimately Amery's services were required for their rebuttal.⁶⁰ Churchill

⁵⁶ Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, pp. 170 – 171.

⁵⁷ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p. 105.

⁵⁸ Amery diary, 5 October 1933, AMEL 7/27.

⁵⁹ Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, p. 92.

⁶⁰ Lord Derby was the principal Tory peer in Lancashire, and a member of the Joint Select Committee on Indian Reform.

produced documents in support of his allegation that Derby had put pressure on the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to alter their evidence to the Joint Select Committee by softening the tone of their objections to the reform proposals. Furthermore, Churchill accused Hoare of being complicit in Derby's actions.

A cross party Committee of Privileges, including MacDonald, Baldwin and Attlee, was appointed on 19 April, and examined all the available letters and minutes before exonerating Hoare and Derby when their report was published on 9 June.⁶¹ Amery was unaware of any tampering of evidence, and was therefore happy to agree, when asked on 12 May 1934 by Hoare to play a prominent part in the debate on the report of the Committee of Privileges.⁶² Early in the debate on 13 June, Churchill criticised the Committee, both for the evidence it sought and concealed, and also on constitutional grounds.⁶³ He was attacked by Amery who made an equally long and forceful speech which started by questioning Churchill's motives for raising the issue of parliamentary privilege, used vernacular Latin to taunt him, and concluded with a verbose review of the balance between Lancashire cotton interests and the fiscal autonomy of India.⁶⁴ From the perspective of his memoirs in 1953, Amery believed this to be, if not his best

⁶¹ Carl Bridge, 'Churchill, Hoare and Derby and the Committee of Privileges', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 1979), pp. 218 – 225. Bridge made a well-researched case to show that it was unlikely that the Committee of Privileges saw all the critical documents as some were weeded from the files of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and some were never produced at all.

⁶² Amery diary, 12 May 1934, AMEL 7/28.

⁶³ Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume V 1922 – 1939*, London, Heinemann, 1976, pp 539 – 535.

⁶⁴ *Hansard's Parliamentary Reports*, 13 June 1934, vol. 290, cc1741 – 808. Henceforth abbreviated to *Hansard*.

speech, certainly his most effective in the House of Commons, especially as Churchill's charges were rejected.⁶⁵

Amery's Support for Indirect Elections to the Federal Legislature

For all his apparent radicalism, Amery was complicit in the adoption of a compromise amendment to the proposals by Austen Chamberlain, a member of the independent centre of the Joint Select Committee, to have the key matter of direct elections to the Federal Assembly revised in favour of nomination by provincial governments.⁶⁶ On 8 July 1934 Amery hosted a lunch attended by the Earl of Willingdon, the Viceroy, who was home on leave from India, and Lord Simon, with the object of discussing Austen Chamberlain's proposal. Amery agreed that the amendment would make the ultimate passage of the Bill easier, but recognised Willingdon's concern that it would 'give Gandhi a handle' to foster discontent.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, he showed no such reservations on 24 November when telling the Oxford University Conservative Association that it was the most important state paper since Durham's report on Canadian self-government during the previous century.⁶⁸

Over the next year Amery was even more outspoken in his opinions that were to last into his wartime spell as Secretary of State, especially in relation to the alterations to the proposed franchise for the Federal Assembly. These were published in 1935 in *The Forward View*, in which he based his arguments on both practical and theoretical grounds. On the first account he

⁶⁵ Amery, *My Political Life Volume III*, p. 104. This would appear to be an extravagant claim, if his speech in May 1940 that led to Neville Chamberlain's resignation is also considered.

⁶⁶ Madden and Darwin, *The Dependent Empire*, p. 739.

⁶⁷ Amery diary, 8 June 1934, AMEL 7/28.

⁶⁸ *Oxford Mail*, 25 November 1934.

adjudged that the size of the constituencies in direct elections would produce no personal contact between electors and elected.

In terms of political principle, he was even more forceful in dismissing the capacity of a poorly informed Indian population to understand federal issues, especially in the absence of a developed political system. He reasoned that until the princely states could take their place in a party political structure there would be a continuing need for communal representation.⁶⁹

Hoare used Amery as a spokesman in support of the Joint Select Committee report at both Conservative Party meetings and in the House of Commons. On 5 December 1934 he proposed the adoption of the report at the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations in opposition to Lord Salisbury who wanted to avoid a commitment to responsible central government in India. Using Salisbury's key word 'irrevocable', Amery said there could be nothing worse than a missed opportunity, and warned of the financial and political chaos that might ensue if the Government permitted any Labour Party proposals produced by Sir Stafford Cripps to be introduced.⁷⁰ That the margin in support of the report was as high as 1,102 votes to 390 votes caused Amery to note in his diary that the 'back of the diehard resistance is broken'.⁷¹

Amery had been asked by Hoare to make a supportive speech during the Parliamentary debate on the Joint Select Committee report on 10 and 11 December 1934. Having been called late in the debate he delivered his own

⁶⁹ Amery, *The Forward View*, pp. 221 – 224.

⁷⁰ *The Times*, report, 5 December 1934.

⁷¹ Amery diary, 5 December 1934, AMEL 7/28.

philosophical interpretation of various forms of government such as federation and diarchy, and explained how the current proposals were best suited to India.⁷² An ironic editorial in the *Daily Mirror* put Amery's role as an apologist for modest reform into perspective with the comment, 'when instinctive diehards approve, it is harder to die harder than they'.⁷³

Once the Commons division on the debate on the Joint Select Committee report had resulted in a substantial majority for the Government, diehard opposition from the India Defence League fell away. The Bill, as finally enacted, contained 473 clauses and 16 schedules.⁷⁴

Amery and Churchill during the Passage of the Bill

Although Churchill was unable to cause further delay to the legislation, he kept up his rhetorical barrage, and had more than one skirmish with Amery, who, with Hoare's prompting, spoke in favour of the Bill on several occasions.⁷⁵ On 12 March 1935 he derided Churchill for professing to admire the detailed recommendations of the Simon Commission, yet violently opposing each one before it was voted into the Bill.⁷⁶ During the final debate on 5 June 1935, and prior to Bill passing to the House of Lords, Churchill made a long and sombre speech that suggested the Bill sounded the death knell for the British Empire, and said that he believed Amery was sharpening his pencil to make an attack on him with full governmental approval. Amery's

⁷² *Hansard*, 11 December 1934, vol. 296, cc214 – 348.

⁷³ *Daily Mirror*, 13 December 1934.

⁷⁴ The General Election was held on 14 November 1935, and resulted in a large, but reduced majority for the National Government.

⁷⁵ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p. 138.

⁷⁶ *Hansard*, 12 March 1935, vol. 299, cc225 –259.

witty, but triumphalist reply accused Churchill of being as gloomy as the prophet Jeremiah, and then attempted to demonstrate that the Bill provided equal status for India, not then, but at some unspecified future time.

It was typical of Amery's fondness for geographical *realpolitik* that he justified India's potentially tardy acquisition of dominion status on the grounds that her defence requirements had always been greater than the white dominions that had been able to grow their institutions in peace.⁷⁷

Whether Amery had been such an assiduous party man during the passage of the Bill and the diehard rebellion because he believed in the principles enshrined in the final legislation, or because he wanted to show Baldwin that he deserved to regain high office, is a matter for conjecture.

Amery and Indians in East Africa

Amery's direct political contact with the interests of Indians originated as early as his two spells at the Colonial Office. He was Under-Secretary to Lord Milner from January 1919 until April 1921, and he served in the Cabinet as Secretary of State from October 1924 until the Labour election victory in May 1929. In both these periods the political and economic rights of Indian settlers in East Africa were issues that engendered strong feelings not only on the subcontinent, but also in Britain and India. Indeed it can be argued that soon after the Armistice, Indian perception of British treatment of their countrymen in East Africa was regarded as an indicator of the imperial power's likely attitude towards constitutional reform at home.

⁷⁷ *Hansard*, 5 June 1935, vol. 302, cc1885 – 2015.

Not surprisingly this was the view of the radical Indian National Congress politician, Subhas Chandra Bose who regarded the perceived injustices committed against Indians in Kenya as typical of the prejudice suffered by the *swarajist* campaigners for independence from the Raj.⁷⁸ However, disillusionment was also experienced in India by more moderate elements such as C. R. Rajagopalachari, editor of *Young India* who began to doubt the value of retaining close ties with the colonial power, and regarded the treatment of the Indian settlers in Kenya as the 'acid test' of British intentions over constitutional reform.⁷⁹

After 1918, opinions over the rights of the 34,000 Indians in East Africa were divided.⁸⁰ On one side there were diehard white settlers, anxious to retain their privileges, and an imperial establishment fearful of alienating General Smuts and British loyalists in South Africa where Indian settlers had only been able to achieve a limited improvement in their rights. In opposition was a coalition of Indian nationalists, the India Office, various missionaries and a few liberal members of the imperial bureaucracy.⁸¹

Despite early local optimistic feeling that it might just be possible for

⁷⁸ Sisir K. Bose and Sugata Bose (eds.), *The Indian Struggle 1920 – 1942 Subhas Chandra Bose*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 100 – 101. Subhas Chandra Bose was a British educated Indian political leader who, unlike Gandhi, refused to rule out violence in his campaign to get rid of the Raj. During the Second World War, Bose defected to the Axis powers in a doomed attempt to obtain their support for an invasion of India. He was killed in an air crash in August 1945.

⁷⁹ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 253. C. R. Rajagopalachari was an Indian writer and politician of great longevity, who while campaigning for independence, nevertheless refused to endorse the 'Quit India' movement which followed the failure of the Cripps mission in 1942.

⁸⁰ Robert C. Gregory, *South Asians in East Africa, an Economic and Social History, 1890 – 1980*. Boulder, West View Press, 1993, p. 12.

⁸¹ Diana Wylie, 'Confrontation over Kenya: The Colonial Office and its Critics 1918 – 1940', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1977), p. 427.

Britain and Germany to preserve the *status quo* in East Africa until after a settlement in Europe, the British Cabinet had already decided to annex as many of the enemy's colonies as possible.⁸² The final defeat of Germany produced an increase in tension in East Africa between the white settlers and the Indian community that would soon occupy Amery's attention at the Colonial Office. Indians believed that their wartime efforts justified a substantial dividend, in particular the conquered territory in German East Africa, a possibility suggested before the war by Lionel Curtis.⁸³

Amery as Under Secretary at the Colonial Office

Amery, who had been appointed as Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office in January 1919, did not envisage exclusively Indian control of this former German colony, because during a meeting on 26 February 1919 with Sir Satyendra Prasanna Sinha, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the India Office, he stressed that the uplands in the newly mandated territory would be reserved for white settlers; one of the first of his many statements that would antagonise all Indians.⁸⁴

Although India soon gave up its aspirations for a colony in German East Africa, the inclusion of this territory as a Class B Mandate under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations on 28 June 1919 would soon have

⁸² Ibid, p. 73. Note also that Amery was to the fore in this thinking as Secretary of the Territorial Committee (1917).

⁸³ Lionel Curtis spent the period from November 1916 to February 1918 in India, researching the constitutional aspects of diarchy that became an essential element in the provincial sections of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms that led to the Government of India Act of 1919. As part of an increasing Indian capacity for self-government he envisaged a joint administration of East Africa and India.

⁸⁴ Amery diary, 26 February 1919, AMEL 7/15.

consequences for the entire region.⁸⁵ Both Milner and Amery saw Britain's responsibilities under the mandatory system as barely any more onerous than those exercised by any benevolent colonial power.⁸⁶ Indeed Amery, with not a little degree of complacency, explained in the House of Commons on 30 July 1919 that 'the conditions imposed by the Mandates were in essence no different from those that would be set by ourselves whenever we dealt with subject peoples', and prophetically in the light of his future difficulties over trusteeship, 'the essence of our principle of government in these vast areas is to govern in the interests of the native inhabitants'.⁸⁷ However he had already expressed a more opportunistic view of Britain's responsibilities under the mandatory system when he wrote in the privacy of his diaries, 'it makes no difference as long as we get our flag up'.⁸⁸

By the late summer of 1919, Amery was already thinking of an imperial bloc in the region as he had insisted upon the insertion of a clause in the Mandate for the future Tanganyika whereby Britain would have the right to establish closer union with the East African Protectorate and Uganda.⁸⁹ Furthermore, in August 1920 such a federation became more likely when the East African Protectorate became Kenya.

Milner was also unpopular with the Indian community, when, although

⁸⁵ Michael D. Callahan, 'The Failure of "Closer Union" in British East Africa, 1929 – 1931', *JICH*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1997), pp. 267 – 268.

⁸⁶ Wm. Roger Louis, 'Great Britain and the African Peace Settlement of 1919', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (April 1966), pp. 887 –890. Also, Andrew J. Crozier, 'The Establishment of the Mandates System, 1919 – 1925; Some problems Created by the Paris Peace Conference', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (July 1970) pp. 483 – 493.

⁸⁷ *Hansard*, 30 June 1919, vol. 118, cc2172 – 2243.

⁸⁸ Amery diary, 30 January 1919, AMEL 7/15.

⁸⁹ L. S. Amery, *My Political Life Volume II*, London, Hutchinson, 1953, p. 181.

refusing to set a limit on Asian immigration, he maintained his policies of maintaining exclusive European access to highland property, and segregation in urban areas. However, Indian opinion everywhere was most outraged by his refusal to grant a common electoral roll in Kenya.⁹⁰ Amery had the uncomfortable task of defending these policies in the House of Commons, enduring withering personal criticism from his Labour opponent, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, who accused him of bias in favour of the white settler class, and being 'prepared to put the Indians into ghettos and segregated other settlers'.⁹¹ Amery's responsibilities for East Africa ended abruptly, when six weeks after Milner's resignation as Colonial Secretary, he was moved to the Admiralty as Parliamentary and Financial Secretary.

The outraged reaction of Montagu, Secretary of State for India, to Milner's policies marked the start of a period of tension between the Colonial Office and the India Office that lasted until the General Election of 1929. Indeed so difficult were relations between these great departments that civil servants behaved not as colleagues in the same administration, 'but more like the diplomats of sovereign powers in serious conflict'.⁹²

Amery's Early Years as Colonial Secretary

An East African Commission to consider the future of the region had already been set up, and by the time that it reported in July 1925, Amery had been appointed as Colonial Secretary by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin. The

⁹⁰ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 194.

⁹¹ *Hansard*, 11 August 1920, vol. 33, cc456 – 494.

⁹² Keith Kyle, 'Gandhi, Harry Thuku and Early Kenya Nationalism', *Transition*, No. 27, 1966, p. 17.

conclusions of what became better known as the Ormsby-Gore Commission disappointed Amery, especially the rejection for the foreseeable future of an East African federation. Amery did not let the matter rest as he appointed Sir Edward Grigg as governor of Kenya, believing that he shared his views on federation.⁹³ When Grigg realised that Amery placed a higher priority on economic groupings than political union, he became disillusioned with his boss, especially when he also discovered that the whole matter of East African reform would be reviewed by yet another scrutinising body, the Hilton-Young Commission.⁹⁴

Amery was also disappointed when his draft White Paper that preceded the work of this commission was amended by a nervous Cabinet.⁹⁵ Baldwin had already been alerted to Amery's search for a compliant panel on the Commission by the deputy secretary to the Cabinet, Thomas Jones, who feared that the panel would be overloaded with Round Table figures such as Lionel Curtis.⁹⁶ When a hastily convened Cabinet committee rewrote the White Paper on 30 June 1927, it contained, much to Amery's disgust, a more cautious approach to federation in East Africa.⁹⁷

Neither the White Paper nor a speech by Amery in the House of Commons on 19 July 1927 made more than a brief reference to the future rights and status of Indians in Kenya, although he did promise to adhere to

⁹³ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 289.

⁹⁴ Amery diary, 9 June 1927 and 13 June 1927, AMEL 7/19.

⁹⁵ White Paper, *Future Policy in Regard to East Africa*, London, July 1927, Cmd. 2904, CAB 24/187.

⁹⁶ Thomas Jones, diary 21 June 1927, *Whitehall Diary Volume II 1926 – 1930*, London, OUP, 1969, p. 103.

⁹⁷ White Paper, *Future Policy in regard to East Africa*, p. 8.

Devonshire's principle of native paramountcy.⁹⁸ Not surprisingly, condemnation came from Labour MPs and academics who suspected that Amery was subordinating African and Indian interests to those of the white settlers and bowing to influence from the dominions in the formation of imperial policy.⁹⁹

Furthermore, Indian agitation, which had been minimal since the report of the Ormsby-Gore Commission, increased when the implications of Amery's White Paper were considered. The East African Congress and the Government of India, now led by Lord Irwin as Viceroy, made strenuous protests that were to persist until the publication of the later Hylton-Young report.¹⁰⁰ The dysfunctional nature of this commission was clear as it produced no single unanimous set of conclusions in 1929, but a majority report and a dissenting minority report signed only by its chairman. The majority report warned that political federation and responsible government could only be achieved in the distant future, and also gave satisfaction to supporters of Indian rights by indicating that careful progress could be made towards a common electoral roll.¹⁰¹

Sir Samuel Wilson's Mission

Amery worked assiduously to salvage something from the report, and in doing so caused considerable annoyance to both the supporters of the Indian cause, and his political colleagues at home, where the Cabinet were soon

⁹⁸ *Hansard*, 19 July 1927, vol. 209, cc284 – 294.

⁹⁹ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, pp. 306 – 307.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 310 –312.

¹⁰¹ *Report of the Commission on Closer Union of the Dependencies in Eastern and Central Africa*, London, 1929, Cmd. 3234, CAB 24/201, pp. 236 – 237, and pp. 294 – 311.

made aware of his intentions. In February 1929 Thomas Jones showed Baldwin a letter from Professor Reginald Coupland arguing that the majority report of the Commission should be given a chance and that 'Amery should not be allowed to stampede the Cabinet and get a pro-Delamere (i.e. white settler) policy'.¹⁰²

Amery's Cabinet memoranda of 23 February 1929 and 4 March 1929 proposed a mission to East Africa by Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, to negotiate a quick local modification of the conclusions of the majority report.¹⁰³ Amery's manoeuvring to find a formula that could be enacted unobtrusively by Orders in Council, and still produce an unofficial majority in the Kenyan Legislative Assembly, was regarded by Viscount Peel, Secretary of State for India, as potentially dangerous to Indian interests.¹⁰⁴ He warned Amery of the great hostility that the mission would provoke in India, and invited him to declare exactly what instructions he had in mind for Wilson.¹⁰⁵ Peel's deep distrust of Amery's true regard for Indian rights in East Africa was clearly evident in a detailed briefing telegram that he sent to Irwin in Delhi on 13 March 1929 in connection with Wilson's impending mission to Kenya.¹⁰⁶

The extent of Indian unease with Amery's instructions to Wilson was made clear to the Cabinet on 21 March 1929 by a memorandum written by Peel that enclosed telegrams to him from the Viceroy who reported the apprehension

¹⁰² Jones, *Whitehall Diary Volume II*, 13 February 1929, p. 171.

¹⁰³ Amery, *My Political Life*, Vol. II, p. 364.

¹⁰⁴ Barnes and Nicolson, p. 579.

¹⁰⁵ Peel to Amery, 19 February 1929, AMEL 2/4/10.

¹⁰⁶ Peel to Irwin, 13 March 1929, AMEL 2/4/10.

felt by all political parties in the Indian Legislative Council.¹⁰⁷ Peel clearly believed that Amery did not understand the nature of politics in India, and soon sent him a strong letter emphasising the likely difficulties that would be endured by the Viceroy and Government of India in a volatile atmosphere worsened by unwise comments.¹⁰⁸

Summary: Indian Opinions of Amery

Amery eventually obtained a favourable compromise over the nature and terms of Wilson's mission, but the Indian community in Kenya refused to accept any dilution of their common roll claim.¹⁰⁹ When Amery failed to achieve his desired form of federation in East Africa, his expressions of increasing frustration became biased in favour of the European settlers to the point of echoing those made by Churchill's in his notorious speech at the East African Dinner, in 1922. More ominously for the future, he attracted the permanent ire of Congress politicians and newspaper owners in India, who from now regarded him as a diehard.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Viscount Peel, Cabinet memorandum, 21 March 1929, AMEL, 2/4/10.

¹⁰⁸ Peel to Amery, 27 March 1929, AMEL 2/4/10.

¹⁰⁹ Lord Passfield, Cabinet memorandum, 17 July 1929, C.P. 202 (29), CAB 24/205. Passfield succeeded Amery as Colonial Secretary following the Labour election victory.

¹¹⁰ Gregory, *India and East Africa*, p. 329. Gregory cited B. N. Anantini, who quoted Amery's comments in an article in the June 1929 issue of the *Indian Review*, 'Responsible Government for East Africa and its Implications'.

CHAPTER III

AMERY FROM 1935 UNTIL THE AUGUST OFFER OF 1940

Introduction

It is difficult to trace any reference to India by Amery in his diaries, memoirs or correspondence, from the Royal Assent of the 1935 Act in August 1935 until he was appointed as Secretary of State by Churchill in May 1940. There is therefore nothing to suggest that he had much to do with matters on the subcontinent, or that he had moved from his essentially cautious view of Indian readiness for self-government or dominion status as expressed in *The Forward View*.¹ During this period of almost five years, Amery combined an expanding portfolio of company directorships with his advancement of a number of political causes.² His perennial commitment to imperial preference and security was matched by a developing view that it would be necessary to oppose Hitler and Mussolini with some vigour.³ This had not always been the case. Initially, he hoped that a realistic view could be taken whereby the dictators' ambitions could be overlooked, provided they were confined to Europe, and did not imperil the British Empire. Indeed, the record of his meeting at Berchtesgaden with Hitler in August 1935 revealed that while he may have disapproved of the Fuhrer's policies on Austria, constitutional liberty or the Jews, the two men had some common ground on economics, especially

¹ Amery, *The Forward View*, pp. 226 – 235. These final pages of the chapter devoted to India explained why Amery believed that the country was not ready for a British political model, in which members of the legislature could also be members of the executive. He made no mention of Congress, either in its impatience to govern, or its capacity to rule.

² Amery's directorships included Marks and Spencer Ltd, Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Company Ltd, and the British South-West Africa Company.

³ Amery, *My Political Life, Volume III*, pp. 246 – 260.

preferential tariffs. Nevertheless, once Amery became convinced that the British Government might be considering the return to Germany of their former colonies in Africa, his opposition to appeasement hardened considerably.⁴ Earlier he had pressed for Britain to make the kind of settlement with Mussolini that would have split him off from Hitler. Of particular relevance to his future work at the India Office was his fear that Italian success in Abyssinia would lead to control of the Eastern Mediterranean by an enemy power, with the consequent strategic dangers to Britain's imperial assets in the Middle East and India.⁵ Before long his fears for the security of the British Empire extended to the dangers implicit in a possible alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan. While not favouring direct appeasement, he believed that there would be a threat to Hong Kong, Singapore and India if Japan were to be alienated over the issue of Manchuria.⁶

When Neville Chamberlain succeeded Stanley Baldwin in May 1937, Amery's faint chance of immediate ministerial office disappeared. Not only did he disagree with Chamberlain's foreign policy, but by his own admission there was an even greater divergence with him over the way to conduct cabinet government, to the extent that he was quite happy 'to be excluded as a disturbing element from outside'.⁷

⁴ Amery diary, 19 September 1935, AMEL 7/27. Amery had also campaigned against this idea during the Great War through the Territorial Committee of 1917.

⁵ Amery, *My Political Life Volume III*, p. 228. Amery's hopes for an Anglo-Italian *Entente* that would ensure the safety of Britain's Empire to the East of the Mediterranean lasted until 1938.

⁶ William Roger Louis, 'The Governing Intellect: L. S. Amery, the British Empire and Indian Independence', *Ends of British Imperialism*, William Roger Louis (ed.), New York, I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 384.

⁷ Amery, *My Political Life, Volume III*, pp. 226 – 227.

Amery during the Phoney War

When war was declared, Amery was a few weeks short of his sixty-sixth birthday, and lacked his previous range of contacts inside the government to keep him informed about the formation and execution of policy. Despite this shortage of confidants Amery continued to demonstrate, with increasing candour, his frustration with Chamberlain's prosecution of the war. Not surprisingly, he concluded that after appealing to the Labour MP, Arthur Greenwood, to 'speak for England' during a debate in the House of Commons on 2 September 1939, he had 'killed his chances of office' under Chamberlain.⁸

Amery spent the time between September 1939 and May 1940 pressing the case for supporting the Finns against Stalin's forces, but in the main discussing the war effort at innumerable dinners and lunches, as well as making a number of interventions in the House of Commons. His frustration at the time can be detected from his choice of the phrase, 'playing at war' for the heading of the chapter in his memoirs on the *drole de guerre*.⁹

Amery was even more critical of the urgency and vigour of the war effort during the winter and spring of 1939/40. He became chairman of Anthony Eden's former anti-Munich Tories as well as belonging to an all-party ginger group led by the future Liberal leader, Clement Davies. His real ire was saved for the Government's reluctance to make any air attacks on Germany's industrial capability, especially in the Ruhr, thereby permitting the German army and *Luftwaffe* to build up their resources. He felt contempt for the

⁸ Amery diary, 2 September 1939, AMEL 7/33.

⁹ Amery, *My Political Life Volume III*, p. 327

excuses for British inaction made by Chamberlain and Halifax, who thought that any belligerence would only lead to reprisals.¹⁰

The failure of the British campaign in Norway provided the subject of the debate in the House of Commons on 7 May during which Amery made his frequently quoted exhortation to Chamberlain to go, 'in the name of God'.¹¹ The resulting division of the House saw a sufficient defection of Conservatives to force Chamberlain's resignation, and for the King to send for Churchill.

Amery's appointment as Secretary of State for India

Apart from his speech in the Narvik debate, Amery did not have a central part in the feverish activity that resulted in Churchill's accession to the premiership, but on 10 May he visited Churchill, who had yet to kiss hands with the King, to discuss his own preferred position in a new administration. He asked if he could be appointed as either Chancellor of the Exchequer, or as a War Cabinet coordinator of defence reporting to Churchill. At this meeting, Churchill was only prepared to offer Amery the Ministry of Supply, stating firstly, that he intended to be his own defence coordinator, and secondly that in wartime, he had little regard for the importance of economic policy.¹²

Amery was kept waiting for his new ministerial appointment by Churchill, who wanted to accommodate Chamberlain, but not alienate the Labour Party, whose support he needed in a coalition government. On 13 May, Churchill asked Amery to be the new Secretary of State for India, and despite further

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 330.

¹¹ *Hansard*, 7 May 1940, vol. 360, cc1073 – 1196.

¹² Amery diary, 10 May 1940, AMEL 7/34. Also, Amery, *My Political Life Volume III*, p. 373.

doomed entreaties to be appointed as a defence coordinator, was left with the stark choice of accepting office, or remain in the wilderness. Churchill attempted to placate Amery by saying that India would be important, particularly if the war moved eastwards, but his feelings were of disappointment, and a sense that he was being isolated from the mainstream war effort.¹³ Nevertheless, Amery accepted the India Office, despite the financial cost of having to give up his directorships, almost certainly for the twin reasons of the sage advice of his wife, Florence (Bryddie), and his own undoubted patriotism.¹⁴

Amery received many letters of congratulation on his appointment, the majority from expected quarters such as provincial governors in India, teachers and dons at Harrow and Oxford University, but also a few that might be regarded as surprising. In particular, he received a warm note of approval from the socialist thinker, Harold Laski who believed he would be a progressive Secretary of State.¹⁵

There is little or no evidence in Churchill's papers, or those of his closest colleagues, to explain why he sent Amery to the India Office. Churchill must have realised that their views on Indian constitutional reform diverged widely, and would certainly have remembered their often bitter opposition before the passing of the 1935 Government of India Act.

¹³ Amery diary, 13 May 1940, AMEL 7/34. Amery clearly felt that his appointment to the India Office had been orchestrated by Chamberlain and his friends as some kind of revenge.

¹⁴ Amery, *My Political Life Volume III*, p. 375.

¹⁵ Laski to Amery, 15 May 1940, AMEL 1/6/6.

Indian Constitutional Reform and Politics from August 1935 to September 1939

The 1935 Government of India Act, despite its great length and acrimonious gestation period, contained only two new major proposals. Firstly, provincial dyarchy conceived by Lionel Curtis for inclusion in the 1919 Government of India Act was discontinued, and replaced it with a system that gave each province a separate legal personality, as well as securing equal treatment for all portfolios.¹⁶ In an attempt to provide better local democracy, the electorate for provincial legislatures was expanded to 30 million voters, with a separate communal category for Muslims. However, the Indian provincial ministers elected under these arrangements were not given complete autonomy as governors were given powers to override in certain policy areas, and as was to happen during the war, would be able to suspend ministries under Section 93 of the Act for reasons of security, or law and order.¹⁷

The second, and ultimately doomed major reform, proposed a federal system of government at the centre, with the Indian states nominating members to two new legislative bodies, the Council of State (upper house) and the Federal Assembly (lower house).¹⁸ Legislators from British India were not directly elected as had been recommended by the Joint Select Committee, but chosen by members of the provincial legislatures, a

¹⁶ Coupland, *The Indian Problem 1883 – 1935 Report on the Constitutional Position in India Part I*, p. 133.

¹⁷ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885 – 1947*, London, Macmillan, 1983, p. 336.

¹⁸ B. N. Pandey, *The Break-Up of British India*, London, Macmillan, 1969, p. 139. The Council of State was to have 286 seats of which 104 would be allocated to the Indian states. The Federal Assembly was to be large with 125 of the 375 seats available to the nominees of the Indian states.

concession made by Hoare to the diehards.¹⁹

The Act transferred diarchy from the provinces to the federal centre because certain important areas such as defence and foreign affairs remained under the control of the Viceroy. Furthermore, the liberal credentials of the reforms were damaged when it was decided that a future Federal executive would not be responsible to the upper and lower houses, but instead controlled by the Viceroy, his councillors and Indian ministers whose advice he was not obliged to accept.²⁰

Unfortunately there were stringent criteria to be met if a full federal structure were to come into force. If the rulers of states representing at least half the aggregate population of those states did not signify their desire to accede to the federal system, the arrangements at the centre, introduced by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, would remain.²¹ This system, introduced in 1919, had been relatively simple, with executive power in the hands of the Viceroy and his nominated Council. Although there were two largely elected legislative bodies in Delhi, their powers were limited, and subject to the Viceregal veto.²²

The Response to the Act in India

The Indian response to the 1935 Act was complex. Although the federal centre never materialised, a new political environment was created, which was the product of complex and diverse changes that took place throughout

¹⁹ Moore, 'The Making of India's Paper Federation, 1927 – 1935', Phillips and Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India*, p.75.

²⁰ Pandey, *The Break-Up of British India*, p. 139.

²¹ Menon, *The Transfer of Power*, Bombay, p. 51.

²² John Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay*, London, Collins, 1971, pp. 15 – 16.

British India and the princely states. Tomlinson asserted that, despite the intentions of British legislators to maintain the Raj for as long as possible, the perverse consequence of events was to place the political future of India into the hands of Congress.²³

The initially hostile attitude of Congress to Hoare's legislation was demonstrated by Jawarahal Nehru who returned to India following the death of his wife, Kamala, in 1936, and immediately took office as President of Congress following his nomination by Gandhi.²⁴ Despite Linlithgow's appeal to Congress for cooperation, Nehru stated clearly in April 1936 that he intended to 'combat the Act, and seek to end it'.²⁵ However, he underestimated the desire of his colleagues to exercise power in provincial government, and was outvoted at meetings of the Congress Working Committee over the issue of whether to take office following the elections that were held in 1937.²⁶ These elections had proved to be very successful for Congress who won 711 seats out of a possible 1,585 provincial assembly seats, and achieved absolute majorities in five provinces.²⁷ Once Linlithgow had given assurances that provincial governors would not routinely interfere with the decisions of elected ministers, Congress agreed to take office.²⁸ The fortunes of the Muslim League were quite different, as they won only 108 of the 185 seats

²³ Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj, 1929 – 1942*, p. 31.

²⁴ Michael Brecher, *Nehru, A Political Biography*, Oxford, OUP, 1959, pp. 89 – 102. Gandhi believed that if Nehru became President, he would be obliged to steer a middle course between the increasing Marxist and socialist line that Congress was taking and the right wing tendencies of the 'old guard'.

²⁵ Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 18.

²⁶ Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawarahal Nehru, A Biography Volume I: 1889 – 1947*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1975, pp. 212 – 218.

²⁷ Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 349.

²⁸ Ministries were formed immediately in United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, Central Provinces, Bombay and Madras. North-West Frontier Province was added a few months later.

that had been allocated to them under the communal arrangements, a great disappointment to Jinnah who had also only just returned from Europe.²⁹

The first experience of office for Congress did little to produce unity amongst Hindus, especially as agitation increased involving trade unionists, Marxists and other left wing groups, as well as an increasing proportion of the rural work force.³⁰ As Congress attempted to cope with the widely differing opinions and policies espoused by such different senior members as the liberal Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the radical nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose, the Muslim League attempted to recover from their poor recent electoral performance. It was not helped by a bullish Congress that tried to incorporate it into their national structure, but refused to offer them seats in the United Provinces and Bombay.³¹

The British Response to the Act

The proposed federation of British India and the princely states to form the main institution of central government was never welcomed by Congress, was mistrusted by the Muslim League, and was, in truth only ever the subject of lukewarm interest by the princes.³² The princes became increasingly unnerved when Congress began an intense campaign to secure that the representatives of the states were directly elected, and not nominated.³³

²⁹ Pandey, *The Break-up of British India*, p. 143.

³⁰ Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 351 – 375.

³¹ R. Coupland, *Indian Politics, 1936 – 1942, Report on the Constitutional Problem in India Part II*, p. 300.

³² Pandey, *The Break-up of British India*, pp. 139 – 140. A distinction has to be made between the larger states (Hyderabad, Baroda, Mysore and Kashmir) whose rulers even dreamed of independence in the event of the end of the Raj, and the smaller petty states, whose main reason to welcome federation was freedom from British paramountcy.

³³ R. J. Moore, 'British Policy and the Indian Problem 1936 – 1940', Philips and Wainwright (eds.) *The Partition of India*, p. 83 – 84.

Indeed, Gandhi stated in February 1938 that *Swaraj* or independence should extend to the states, and also encouraged popular movements seeking increased civil liberties.³⁴

It is doubtful whether Britain, showing an apparent lack of urgency towards obtaining the minimum number of princely accessions, had taken into account the twin trends of Congress pressure on the states, and the increasing coolness of the princes towards federation. Despite Linlithgow's early confidence that federation would be completed by 1 April 1938, there were soon differences of approach between London and Delhi over the princely states. In London, officials at the India Office favoured slower progress to avoid a recurrence of trouble with Conservative diehards, while colleagues in their legal department were daunted by the difficulties in drafting the accession documents.³⁵ The Secretary of State, Lord Zetland, was similarly cautious in pressing the princes to accede, refusing to make any kind of concession that was outside the wording of the 1935 Act.³⁶ Indeed, Zetland's memoirs, published in 1956, cited even wider reasons for delaying federation.³⁷ Linlithgow's entreaties to London to amend the Act to give the princes more favourable terms predictably fell victim to departmental infighting at the India Office.³⁸ By the time that war was declared, progress on federation had stalled completely.

³⁴ Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 366.

³⁵ Copland, *The Princes of India*, pp. 144 – 145.

³⁶ Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 66.

³⁷ Marquess of Zetland, *Essays*, London, John Murray, 1956, pp. 241 – 256.

³⁸ Copland, *The Princes of India*, pp. 158 – 159.

Britain and India from August 1939 to May 1940

Britain's goal in the first few months of the war was to maximise India's contribution to the allied war effort, while both Congress and the Muslim League pressed for constitutional changes as a price for their cooperation. Nehru and Congress were quick to declare their attitude to India's participation in the war. Nehru, applying Marxist analysis, had consistently pointed to parallels between fascism and imperialism, and remarked with some vehemence that Britain had connived at Nazi aggression to protect its empire.³⁹ At the Congress Working Committee meeting from 9 to 11 August 1939, he had taken the lead in producing a resolution that opposed any imperial war that might be foisted on India.⁴⁰ By contrast, the Council of the Muslim League did promise cooperation with Britain, but made this conditional upon changes to the 1935 Government of India Act that would protect Muslims, especially in the provinces ruled by Congress.⁴¹

Indian opinion, including the more moderate elements, was offended on 3 September when Linlithgow, using national radio, declared war against Germany on behalf of British India and the princely states. Although not obliged in strict constitutional terms to consult Indians before declaring the country a belligerent, there is no doubt that his decision to proceed unilaterally was a serious mistake that set the tone for relations between Britain and India for a good part of the war.⁴² Indeed, the humiliation was greatest for Indians seeking independence as the dominions had submitted

³⁹ Gopal, *Jawahar Nehru*, p. 250. Nehru had cited the collapse of Republican Spain and the fall of Czechoslovakia as examples of Britain's duplicity and diplomatic timidity.

⁴⁰ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 57.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 57.

⁴² Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 129

their declarations of war for approval by their parliaments.⁴³

The reactions of different communities to the prosecution of the war varied considerably. Initially, Gandhi offered moral support, if nothing more, but Jinnah while non-committal over helping the war effort, lost little time in asking Linlithgow to further the rights of Muslims in the provinces ruled by Congress.⁴⁴ Surprisingly, the Muslim Prime Ministers of Bengal and the Punjab offered Britain unqualified help, while, perhaps more predictably, certain princes promised men, money and materials to the Allies.⁴⁵

The detailed conditions under which Congress was prepared to support the war effort were set out on 15 September following another meeting of the Working Committee. Taking a course somewhere between Gandhi's fulsome support and Bose's aggressive opportunism, Nehru drafted a statement that asked Britain to state its war aims in respect of democracy and imperialism, and to indicate when India could expect full independence.⁴⁶ Such a radical request was unlikely to produce a positive response from the British Cabinet, and after a few weeks of telegrams between London and Delhi, Linlithgow was finally authorised to make his offer to Indians on 17 October. Congress response to such a rejection of their request for early clarification on independence was one of outrage, with equal scorn directed at the consolation prize of a nominated body of Indians to be consulted about the conduct of the war.⁴⁷

⁴³ Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942*, p. 212. Parliament had been consulted in Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Australia.

⁴⁴ Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman, Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, p. 47.

⁴⁵ Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942*, p. 213.

⁴⁶ Hodson, *The Great Divide*, p.77.

⁴⁷ Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj*, p. 142.

Although Congress ministers in the provinces had settled well into their work since the elections in 1937, the party as a whole was uneasy with its dual role of opposition and government. Accordingly, the reaction of the Congress Working Committee to the Viceroy's offer was to recommend the resignation of their provincial ministries. By 31 October these provincial ministries had been replaced by British governors under the terms of Section 93 of the Government of India Act, a development that appealed to Churchill, who praised any sidelining of Congress for the duration of the war.⁴⁸

This apparent stalemate, together with the apparently increased support of the Muslim League, seemed acceptable to Linlithgow, whose main priority was the scale of India's contribution to the war.⁴⁹ This was not the case with Zetland who, for the remainder of his period in office until May 1940, differed from his Viceroy over the urgency of the need to make constitutional progress. During these next few months, he made a number of radical proposals that either had little support in the British Cabinet, or were actively resisted by Linlithgow.⁵⁰ The substance of his plans was to establish, at the end of the war, a constituent assembly of Indians to frame their own constitution. The safeguard for Britain would be a treaty signed with the new Indian government that would protect, possibly for a fifteen year period, the financial, industrial and military assets of the Raj.

Two conferences in the spring of 1940 widened the schisms between

⁴⁸ War Cabinet conclusions, 25 October 1939, CAB 65/1/60.

⁴⁹ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 68.

⁵⁰ Peter Hill, 'Towards an Indian Dominion, Lord Zetland and the Indian Constitutional Problem, 1939 – 1940', *Journal of Indian History*, vol. 60 (1982), pp. 208 – 215.

Britain and both Congress and the Muslim League. Firstly the Congress Working Committee made a forceful statement at Ramgarh on 19 March, refusing to be any part of an imperial war, and calling for complete independence for all Indians, including those in the princely states.⁵¹ Surprisingly this statement did not satisfy Nehru who wanted Britain to promise not to intervene in the East, and who wanted the threat of civil disobedience to be made explicit.⁵²

Secondly, on 22 March at Lahore, the Muslim League ratified a proposal by Fazul Haq, the Premier of Bengal that there should be independent Muslim states in geographically contiguous units where there were Muslim majorities. Known as the 'Pakistan Resolution', this gave a start to the campaign for separate nations in Bengal and the Punjab. Britain had been largely unaware that the Muslim League had cleverly exploited the void left by the break with Congress, possibly because they had provided more apparent support for the war effort, and had retained office in their majority provinces.⁵³

That these two developments were reflected in divisions in both Delhi and London was apparent from the sombre White Paper, *India and the War*, published by Zetland on 9 April 1940 in which he expressed real shock at the 'Pakistan Resolution', and grudgingly acknowledged some of the realism in the Viceroy's position.⁵⁴ Churchill, by contrast, was more triumphalist, arguing at the meeting of the War Cabinet on 12 April that he could now detect a welcome sign of self-reliance amongst Muslims in India, which, of course,

⁵¹ Coupland, *Indian Politics, 1936 – 1942*, pp. 237 – 238.

⁵² Tomlinson, *Indian National Congress and the Raj*, p. 146.

⁵³ Voigt, *India in The Second World War*, p. 43.

⁵⁴ Zetland, War Cabinet memorandum, *India and the War*, 9 April 1940, CAB 67/5/46.

could only enhance their ability to confront Congress.⁵⁵

Amery's First Weeks as Secretary of State for India

Although there had been some cross party approval of Amery's appointment, the same could not be said of Indian opinion. Indians remembered Churchill's diehard opposition to the 1935 Act, but somehow forgot that his principal adversary arguing for moderation in the long drawn out debate had been Amery.⁵⁶ Whether Hindu suspicions about Amery dated from his period as Colonial Secretary is likely, but in May 1940 there was little doubt that, whether for good reason or not, Brahmins regarded him as anti-Congress.⁵⁷ Amery was surprised by this opinion as he believed that his support for the 1935 Act would have generated goodwill in India towards his appointment.⁵⁸

Amery took over an elaborate bureaucratic structure from Zetland at the India Office. In addition to his Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Parliamentary Private Secretary, and Permanent Under-Secretary he had the support of specialist Indian, European, and military advisers. In addition he had the benefit of an Indian High Commissioner, Sir Firoz Khan Noon, who was resident in London, and able to provide an up to date perspective on matters on the subcontinent.⁵⁹ Amery's analysis of the relationship between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy in general, and his rapport with Linlithgow in particular, were described in uncritical terms in his draft memoirs covering

⁵⁵ War Cabinet conclusions, 12 April 1940, CAB 65/6/34.

⁵⁶ Coupland, *Indian Politics, 1936 – 1942*, p. 238.

⁵⁷ Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 151.

⁵⁸ Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, Chapter II, pp. 2 – 3, AMEL 8/85.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 5 – 6. Amery's first Parliamentary Under-Secretary was the Duke of Devonshire, his first PPS was Captain Edward Cobb, and after a brief spell by Sir Stewart Brown, the post of Permanent Under-Secretary at the India Office was held for the duration of the war by Sir David Monteath.

the war. This thesis will test Amery's contention that his dealings with Linlithgow were almost always harmonious, and that he regarded himself, not as the Viceroy's superior, but as his representative and advocate in the War Cabinet.⁶⁰

Zetland briefed his successor, and underlined the fate of his proposals for an Indian constituent assembly that would have been completed by a treaty protecting Britain's interests.⁶¹ He was frank about the size of the task facing Amery, especially as his own resignation had been driven by the certainty that his plans for India were at variance with the new Prime Minister. The implication, which is not unreasonable, is that Zetland aired his concern because he felt that Amery's preferred solutions to the political deadlock in India would be similar in substance and spirit to his own.⁶²

The sharp downturn in the fortunes of war following the German *blitzkrieg* in Europe had a marked effect upon the economic and strategic significance of India, especially after Italy had entered the war. Once the Suez Canal had been closed to the Allies, the route to the eastern parts of the British Empire was via the Cape.⁶³ In political terms, matters also changed profoundly once the possibility of Britain losing the war became apparent to all parties in India. Accordingly, the response by Congress in the early summer of 1940 became ambiguous. While Gandhi and Nehru emphasised the horror of a Nazi victory, they made clear in their different ways that Britain could not expect India to suspend its claim for independence, nor participate in any official war

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 7 – 9.

⁶¹ Zetland to Amery, 15 May 1940, AMEL 1/6/18.

⁶² Zetland, *Essayez*, pp. 295 – 296.

⁶³ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, pp. 46 – 47.

committees.⁶⁴

Outside his India Office correspondence, Amery lost little time in writing to his old political friends to project his early views on his new responsibilities. In particular, he derived support from an exchange of letters with Jan Smuts, at the time Prime Minister of South Africa. Amery's trust in Smuts was apparent as he felt able to confide to him that although he regarded his appointment as perhaps not what he would have wanted, it did provide a challenge that could that could extended to global matters within the Empire.⁶⁵ Shortly afterwards on Smuts' seventieth birthday, he asserted that no progress could be made, unless Indians came to some agreement among themselves; a view that he repeated for the rest of his period in office.⁶⁶

Amery's reservations about the suitability of the British model of parliamentary democracy for India, which grew during his time in office, were mirrored in a long handwritten letter that he received in May 1940 from Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of India. Although a lawyer, and not a politician, Gwyer's letter was full of pessimism at the 'impasse that had been reached', and broached the idea, later adopted by Amery that the answer to the conundrum was a federal constitution based on the Swiss model.⁶⁷

Amery's first BBC broadcast on India was made in June 1940, and was at once innovative and eccentric, linking the seven hundred and twenty fifth anniversary of Magna Carta with the need to proceed practically, rather than theoretically in matters of Indian reform. Although providing little detail, he

⁶⁴ Coupland, *Indian Politics, 1936 – 1942*, p. 239.

⁶⁵ Amery to Smuts, 18 May 1940, AMEL 2/1/31.

⁶⁶ Amery to Smuts, 24 May 1940, AMEL 2/1/31.

⁶⁷ Sir Maurice Gwyer to Amery, 14 May 1940, AMEL 2/1/31.

gave no indication that he wanted a radical solution to constitutional change, at least for the duration of the war.⁶⁸

Early Differences on Constitutional Reform between Amery and Linlithgow

Although the first telegrams between Amery and Linlithgow contained the usual civilities, it soon became clear that the differences of approach on constitutional reform that had existed between the Viceroy and Zetland would continue in the new partnership. The added complication regarding political progress from May 1940 was the replacement of the pragmatic, and often persuadable, Chamberlain by the more inflexible Churchill. Indeed, the first three months of Amery's tenure were to witness serious misunderstandings, as evidenced by acrimonious triangular correspondence. Nevertheless, away from political reform there would be agreement between Amery and Linlithgow over the need to stimulate India's war effort, whether in improving industrial performance, or in military recruitment.

Amery's first letter to Linlithgow gave little indication of later problems between the two men. Having read the India Office papers on the constitutional deadlock, he asserted that it should be made clear to Indians, and the British Parliament, that the Secretary of State and Viceroy would do all they could to bring people together, but would eschew initiatives that could only end in failure, and lessen British prestige. Linlithgow's sober first letter dated 14 May cited recent correspondence with Gandhi, who, once again stressed the need for immediate Indian independence. In these

⁶⁸ Amery, broadcast 15 June 1940. Reproduced in L. S. Amery, *India and Freedom*, pp. 9 – 13.

circumstances, Amery was only too pleased to accept the Viceroy's suggestion that a Parliamentary question and answer should be arranged to clarify the British position on India .⁶⁹

Two Parliamentary questions invited Amery to state the British Government's attitude towards the problems facing them in India, and to indicate whether any measures had yet been taken to promote a small conference of representative Indians to agree on the next steps to resolve the constitutional deadlock. Amery wisely showed his draft answers to both Linlithgow and the War Cabinet, although very few revisions were needed.⁷⁰ On 23 May 1940, Amery gave a combined answer to these two questions during his first appearance in the House of Commons as Secretary of State for India. Given his short period in office, the statement was predictably cautious and vague, with the emphasis on India's communal differences as well as the continuing obstacles to progress.

Amery's first attempt to make political progress was made as early as 1 June. In a typically longwinded, if naïve telegram, he suggested a multi-stage approach designed to produce an immediate formula that could solve the political crisis as soon as possible after the war. Amery's plan was to invite a number of Indian politicians, provincial premiers and princes to discuss the best approach to be adopted as a first step to settling the issue of constitutional reform. In terms of detail, Amery envisaged a conference of Englishmen and Indians meeting to choose a small committee that would be

⁶⁹ Linlithgow to Amery, 14 May 1940, EUR. MSS. F. 125/9, Linlithgow collection, India Office Records. Henceforth references to this collection will neither bear this title nor the abbreviation, IOR.

⁷⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 18 May 1940, EUR. MSS. F. 125/9. Also, War Cabinet conclusions, 23 May 1940, CAB 65/7/30.

charged with explaining the pros and cons of various solutions to the constitutional deadlock.⁷¹

Building on Zetland's idea, he proposed to safeguard existing British interests by a treaty, not freestanding, but as a key part of a new constitution. His fears that he might be moving too quickly for Linlithgow were borne out by the Viceroy's telegram of 6 June 1940 which counselled against hasty action. He briefly expressed concern over the details of Amery's radical plan, but took longer over the differences in their respective approaches to reform. Linlithgow did not want to encourage Congress as he feared this might harm the military efforts of the Muslim provinces that he reported were providing 60% of recruits to the Indian Army.⁷²

Amery responded at length by telegram on 17 June 1940, prefacing fresh proposals with the comment that the situation in India was too serious to suffer the lack of a new initiative by the Viceroy, especially in view of India's reaction to military events in the West. This time he recommended an appeal to the leaders of all parties to meet in order to create the kind of consensus that would enable Congress ministers to resume control in their provinces, and would also permit Indians to join an expanded Viceroy's Executive Council. Amery hoped that this would be without prejudice to Indian consideration of the revised constitutional policy that he had proposed, and for which he intended to obtain Cabinet approval. The details of these arrangements can be summarised,

[1] India to achieve Dominion status as soon as possible.

⁷¹ Amery to Linlithgow, 1 June 1940, EUR. MSS. F. 125/19.

⁷² Linlithgow to Amery, 6 June 1940, EUR. MSS. F. 125/19.

- [2] India to be allowed to frame its own permanent constitution.
- [3] As soon as possible after the war, India would form a constituent body to adopt and ratify the new constitution.
- [4] Britain would be prepared to accept the findings of this body, subject to safeguards for an agreed number years to protect its long term interests in India. These would include such matters as defence, the sterling debt, and protection of the princely states.⁷³

Linlithgow remained unconvinced by Amery's new proposals, but did not respond in detail, choosing instead to arrange meetings with Gandhi and Jinnah. Although his intention was to discuss the general war situation, he hoped he would have the chance to 'probe their minds' on Amery's plan for his carefully chosen study group.⁷⁴ This attitude frustrated Amery who saw unwelcome delay if Gandhi and Congress could not be offered a definite timetable for constitutional reform.⁷⁵

Before Linlithgow could see either Gandhi or Jinnah, there were important meetings of both Congress and the Muslim League. Firstly, the Working Committee of the Muslim League met on 15 June 1940, when despite the moderating influence of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Prime Minister of the Punjab, Jinnah managed to obtain authorisation that he alone should negotiate with the Viceroy.⁷⁶ Secondly, the sessions of the Working Committee of Congress from 17 June to 20 June resulted in a much more complicated outcome. To some extent motivated by the Nazi military successes in the West, the Committee decided that they could not retain Gandhi's policy of non-violence in the case of aggression against India, and

⁷³ Amery to Linlithgow, 17 June 1940, EUR. MSS. F. 125/19.

⁷⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, 20 June 1940, EUR. MSS. F. 125/19.

⁷⁵ Amery to Linlithgow, 22 June 1940, EUR. MSS. F. 125/19.

⁷⁶ Coupland, *Indian Politics, 1936 – 42*, p. 243.

reserved the right to create its own system of defence and public security.⁷⁷

A Surprising Change of Approach by Linlithgow

When Jinnah spoke to Linlithgow on 27 June he assured him that the Muslim League was prepared to cooperate to the extent of joining the Viceroy's Executive Council, and would also supply non-official advisers in the Section 93 provinces. In return, Jinnah wanted a promise that Britain would give a fair hearing to the concept of Pakistan, if and when, constitutional discussions began.⁷⁸ The Viceroy's concern at a likely adverse reaction from Congress if Jinnah's offer were to be accepted was borne out by his meeting with Gandhi on 29 June 1940. Linlithgow went further than he had anticipated in offering Gandhi, on a purely personal and unofficial basis, self-governing status for India, within one year of the end of the war, subject only to certain safeguards for British interests. Linlithgow assumed that even if this offer were to be ratified by the British Cabinet, it would be turned down. In a rare show of political cunning, he calculated that if such an offer were made and spurned by Congress, Britain could be shown to have been reasonable.⁷⁹

When Amery received Linlithgow's own draft declaration and proposals for wider consultation at the centre, he became very busy. He soon accomplished his first task of agreeing immediate amendments to Linlithgow's draft, the Viceroy taking the lead in providing more emphasis on the need for agreement between elements in India, if progress were to be made on

⁷⁷ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, pp. 87 – 88.

⁷⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 1 July 1940, EUR. MSS. F. 125/9

⁷⁹ Ibid.

political reform.⁸⁰ Anticipating difficulty when the War Cabinet considered these new proposals, Amery lobbied assiduously for support from his senior colleagues, especially Simon whose cautious views on India generally commanded respect from Churchill.⁸¹ His promises of backing from Halifax and Attlee were perhaps more predictable, as was encouragement from Zetland, whose ideas he had taken a stage further.⁸²

Amery had already submitted a detailed memorandum to accompany the draft statement. The long early sections on the development of the constitutional issue since September 1939 with their bland style and content were almost certainly the work of senior staff at the India Office.⁸³ However, Amery's own influence can be detected in the latter part of the memorandum where he juxtaposed urgency, and the need to obtain wider Indian support for the war effort, with damning judgements on the Congress case for universal adult suffrage. At no point did he suggest the implementation of any political reform before the end of the war.⁸⁴

Churchill's Implacable Opposition to Reform and a Misunderstanding with Linlithgow

Sir Edward Bridges' sparsely written minutes of the meeting of the War Cabinet on 12 July 1940, when Amery's memorandum and Linlithgow's draft declaration were discussed, show that opposition to issuing a declaration on political reform was indeed led by Churchill, who stressed the unlikelihood of any sufficient agreement amongst Indians to enable change to go ahead. He

⁸⁰ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 8 July 1940, CAB 67/7/23.

⁸¹ Amery diary, 6 July 1940, AMEL 7/34.

⁸² Amery diary, 7 – 8 July 1940.

⁸³ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 6 July 1940, CAB 67/7/23, pp. 1 -4.

⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 5 – 7.

wanted any statement to be made in the future when Britain was in a position of greater military strength, and the Indian war effort was more developed. His misgivings on a declaration were energetically shared by Lord Lloyd, the Colonial Secretary, and rather more reluctantly by other colleagues, Neville Chamberlain, Sir John Anderson, Arthur Greenwood, and surprisingly, Attlee. While the measures to expand the Viceroy's Executive Council and set up a War Advisory Council were approved, Amery was charged with agreeing a more modest declaration with the Viceroy for consideration by the War Cabinet.⁸⁵ These minutes did not reflect the desperation felt by Amery who believed that Churchill's criticisms were sham, revealing that he had no grasp of the problems of India at all.⁸⁶ He was even more hurt by his abandonment by colleagues who had not delivered their promised support, and who in his own colourful prose had 'left him feeling like a lonely Ajax trying to argue in the intervals of the lightning flashes'.⁸⁷

Daunted by Churchill's opposition across the War Cabinet table, Amery soon wrote to him explaining why the proposals, put forward by Linlithgow and himself, should have been approved. He argued that moderate opinion in India, while wanting self-government and equality with Britain and the other Dominions, would not wish to see the war effort damaged. He also felt, perhaps naively, that an enlargement of provincial influence could forestall the need for partition.⁸⁸ Amery had already sent a copy of this letter to Halifax who sympathised with him, but felt that no amount of reasoned

⁸⁵ War Cabinet conclusions, 12 July 1940, CAB 65/1/13.

⁸⁶ Amery diary, 12 July 1940, AMEL 7/34.

⁸⁷ Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, p. 22, AMEL 8/85.

⁸⁸ Amery to Churchill, 14 July 1940, reproduced verbatim in draft memoirs, Volume IV, pp. 23 – 27, AMEL 8/85.

argument would carry any weight with Churchill.⁸⁹

Before Churchill could reply, Amery received an unexpected and disquieting official telegram from Linlithgow, who said with some force that he would not have agreed Amery's development of his own draft declaration if he had known that it had not received the backing of the War Cabinet, 'in substance or form'. As he believed that any perceived rebuff of his proposals by London would reduce the standing of the Government of India, he wanted all future drafting to originate in Delhi. His next complaint was of a more personal nature. He accused Amery of applying insistent pressure on him, throughout his short time in office as Secretary of State, to put forward proposals in the constitutional field that went further than his experience deemed advisable. In particular he thought that Amery's suggestions had revealed 'insufficient familiarity with matters in India', and asked, in future for a relationship based less on instruction from London but more on consultation. He also made the point that his acquiescence with Amery's initiative was based on the assumption that the War Cabinet had been consulted, and had been in broad agreement.⁹⁰

Churchill replied to Amery's longwinded letter of 14 July 1940 with a brief, but withering rebuke, accusing him of seeking to introduce measures that were an 'immense departure from anything that had previously been put to Parliament, or the British public'. Above all, he believed that Amery was unwisely attempting to grant India its independence using the precedent of the arrangements employed in the case of Egypt, particularly at a dangerous

⁸⁹ Halifax to Amery, 15 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/18.

⁹⁰ Linlithgow to Amery, 15 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/16.

time for Britain.⁹¹

Amery's rejoinder sent on 17 July made an unconvincing attempt to agree with Churchill's view that the state of the war ruled out any early progress on Indian political reform. However, sticking tenaciously to his convictions, he underlined the modesty of his proposals for Indian independence, and reminded Churchill, with some force, that he had supported South African self-government in 1910 to the extent that Smuts was now behind the British war effort.⁹²

Amery also lost no time in trying to mollify Linlithgow. He suggested that his opinions in the earlier telegrams were really only examples of 'thinking aloud', and that while he may have made strong pleas to the Viceroy, he had never intended that there should have been any coercion. He also stated that he had moved faster because the Viceroy had appeared to adopt a more optimistic view about the chance of reform, after his meetings with Gandhi and Jinnah, in late June. He was also frank in admitting that he had overestimated his likely backing within the War Cabinet, and had also failed to foresee the actual vehemence of Churchill's opposition to any change in India.⁹³

Churchill's suspicions about the origins of a fresh declaration were also evident from a telegram that he sent to Linlithgow on 16 July, after first sending a copy to Amery at the India Office. Churchill asked whether Linlithgow's views had changed from his position in April 1940 when he had

⁹¹ Churchill to Amery, 17 April 1940, Chartwell Papers 20/2, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁹² Amery to Churchill, 17 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/16.

⁹³ Amery to Linlithgow, 16 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/16.

stated unequivocally that the schisms in India made a policy of 'wait and see' inevitable. His description of the disruption to Britain's capacity to defend itself that would be caused by a lengthy debate on reform in India, left the Viceroy in little doubt as to his dislike of a new declaration.⁹⁴

Before Linlithgow replied to Churchill, he sent a telegram to Amery in which he appeared to accept the Secretary of State's explanations for his actions, but still expressed his displeasure at being misled, whether deliberately or not.⁹⁵ Linlithgow's letter to Churchill on 18 July was also seen by Amery, who was annoyed that the Viceroy wanted to protect his position by showing Churchill all the telegrams that he had exchanged with the India Office in June 1940.⁹⁶ Eventually, to the dismay of both correspondents, all official and personal telegrams passing between Amery and Churchill were not only shown to Churchill, but circulated to the War Cabinet.

While Linlithgow was redrafting his declaration for circulation to the War Cabinet, Amery was irked by a memorandum prepared by George Lloyd, the Colonial Secretary. Returning to the tone of his diehard opposition during the passage of the 1935 Government of India Act, Lloyd produced a point by point rebuttal of the draft declaration, attributing more responsibility for the document to Amery than to Linlithgow. While he used forceful language to warn of the likely totalitarian nature of a Congress administration, he attempted to justify his stance on two main grounds. Firstly, that Britain needed to protect ordinary disenfranchised Indians, and secondly that there

⁹⁴ Churchill to Linlithgow, 16 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/16. Also, Amery diary, 16 July 1940, AMEL 7/34.

⁹⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 18 July 1940, AMEL, 1/6/16.

⁹⁶ Amery diary, 18 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/16.

were compelling economic, diplomatic and military arguments to support the continuation of the Raj.⁹⁷ Halifax realised that this memorandum would please Churchill, and accordingly spoke to the Prime Minister, who said that he still felt strongly about Amery's part in the preparation of a more radical declaration.⁹⁸

Churchill's Redrafting of the Declaration

Amery had mixed feelings about Linlithgow's revised draft that eventually went before the War Cabinet on 25 July 1940. This version contained the substance of Amery's desired reforms, in particular the paragraphs that provided for a body agreed by Indians to frame their new constitution, and for dominion status to be achieved within twelve months of the end of the war.⁹⁹ However, Amery was appalled by the 'longwinded and clumsy phrasing' of the draft, an opinion that he was unable to keep from Linlithgow, when he mentioned by telegram on 23 July that he would have preferred the declaration to be shorter, and more emphatic.¹⁰⁰

Consideration of the revised declaration at the meeting of the War Cabinet on 25 July 1940 took place in two distinct parts. Firstly, there was an adversarial exchange between Churchill and Amery over the correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State in June and early July. In effect, Churchill reprimanded Amery, both for developing a dialogue with

⁹⁷ Lord Lloyd, War Cabinet memorandum, *India and the War*, 17 July 1940, CAB 66/10/11.

⁹⁸ Halifax to Amery, 24 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/18. Note that in this letter, Halifax supposed that Lindemann (later Lord Cherwell) was the 'evil genius' behind Churchill's aggressive response to Amery's ideas.

⁹⁹ Linlithgow to Amery, 22 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/18.

¹⁰⁰ Amery diary, 23 July 1940, AMEL 7/34. Also Amery to Linlithgow, 23 July 1940, AMEL 1/6/16.

Linlithgow on such an important matter as a new declaration on Indian independence, and also for allowing the Viceroy to believe that the new initiative had the support of the War Cabinet. Amery's attempts to justify his actions were lame, although particularly disingenuous when he insisted that the centrepiece of his plans was not the declaration, but the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive, and the creation of a new War Advisory Council.¹⁰¹

Secondly, there was a difficult discussion of Linlithgow's draft, in particular the promises in respect of self-government and dominions status. Although Amery received a limited measure of support from Halifax and Attlee, he was predictably opposed by Simon and Lloyd who disliked the declaration, both in principle and detail. Again the bitterest condemnation came from Churchill who saw the idea of a statement on constitutional reform as dangerous, especially if Britain contracted to accept any arrangements arrived at only by Indians.

Most humiliatingly for Amery, the War Cabinet agreed that if there were to be a declaration at all, it should be redrafted by Churchill, himself, and should incorporate no departure from the position set out by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons on 23 May 1940.¹⁰² Amery's diaries stated in stark fashion that he had endured a 'thoroughly bad morning during which Churchill had launched a tremendous onslaught on him'.¹⁰³ When Amery saw Churchill on the following day, he explained that only the circumstances of war had prevented him from resigning. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister was

¹⁰¹ War Cabinet conclusions, 25 July 1940, CAB 65/14/14.

¹⁰² War Cabinet conclusions 25 July 1940, CAB 65/8/24.

¹⁰³ Amery diary, 25 July 1940, AMEL 7/34.

unsympathetic, saying that 'he would rather give up political life than be responsible for a resolution that meant the end of the Imperial Crown in India'.¹⁰⁴

Churchill quickly obtained Linlithgow's agreement to his latest draft of the paragraphs concerning the body by which a fresh Indian constitution would be written, the commitment of the British Parliament to those findings, and the date by which Dominion status could be awarded.¹⁰⁵ Formal approval was given at the meeting of the War Cabinet on 1 August 1940.¹⁰⁶ Amery's view of Churchill's amendments is surprising, given that the direct promises agreed with Linlithgow on the composition of the body to create the new constitution, and the urgency with which the new measures would operate, after the war, were replaced by a verbose, yet vague statement of British intent. Briefed by Halifax that Churchill's draft was 'better than might have been expected', Amery took the view that it contained everything that he had originally envisaged, and would be sufficient for Indians to realise that Britain had sincere intentions in the long run.¹⁰⁷ Despite his continued reservations about the style of the final declaration, Amery held to this favourable judgement about its contents some fifteen years later in his draft memoirs.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Amery diary, 26 July 1940, AMEL 7/34. Amery lamented that his impetuosity in trying to get the right thing done showed that he was perhaps not enough of a politician. A rare piece of self-pity.

¹⁰⁵ Linlithgow to Churchill, 28 July 1940, circulated with War Cabinet memorandum by Churchill, 30 July 1940, CAB/66/10/25. This memorandum enclosed the redrafted declaration.

¹⁰⁶ War Cabinet conclusions, 1 August 1940, CAB 65/8/29.

¹⁰⁷ Amery diary, 30 July 1940, AMEL 7/34.

¹⁰⁸ Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, p. 32, AMEL 8/85. The full text of the declaration is reproduced at Appendix I.

Amery's Defence of the Revised Declaration

Amery tried to persuade a number of Indian journalists of the merits of the proposals, and although his departmental advisor, Rajavendra Rao, had assured him of a positive response from moderate Congress politicians, these briefings were largely in vain.¹⁰⁹ The declaration was finally published on 8 August 1940 in the name of the Governor-General.¹¹⁰ Between the issue of *India and the War* and Amery's defence of it in the House of Commons on 14 August 1940, initial reaction was received from a number of quarters. The first hostile response was made by the Muslim Congress President, Abul Kalam Azad, who refused to meet Linlithgow on 10 August since he believed that the announcement provided no common ground for a discussion.¹¹¹ Gandhi's immediate feelings were those of sadness, as he cabled the *News Chronicle* to say that the Governor-General's proposals widened the gulf between Congress and Britain.¹¹² Nehru was also quick to be dismissive as he concentrated on the references in the White Paper to dominion status before rejecting it out of hand in favour of complete independence.¹¹³ By contrast, the Muslim League registered no immediate opposition, and was prepared to wait before issuing any statement.

Amery's speech in the debate in the House of Commons on 14 August 1940 was eloquent, and perhaps rarely for Amery, was concise. Rather than make any kind of prediction as to the nature of any constitution that might be

¹⁰⁹ Amery diary, 6 and 7 August 1940, AMEL 7/34. In particular Amery canvassed representatives of the *Hindustan Times* and the *Statesman*.

¹¹⁰ Governor-General, statement 8 August 1940, *India and the War*, HMSO, Cmd. 6219.

¹¹¹ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 93.

¹¹² Gandhi, *News Chronicle* 14 August 1940, quoted by Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India*, p. 245.

¹¹³ Nehru, *Hindustan Times* 12 August 1940, quoted by Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 159.

produced after the war, he concentrated on the communal differences within India, and the country's unsuitability for a system in which government was responsible to an elected legislature. Amery was given a respectful, and generally consensual reception by all sides of the House, although many members had already detected the unwillingness of Congress to accept Linlithgow's constitutional proposals, or to participate in plans for the Executive Council and the new War Advisory Council.¹¹⁴ Amery believed that his speech had been well received in the USA and also outside Congress in India, a view reinforced by Sir Feroz Khan, Indian High Commissioner in London, who assured him of the approval of Muslims and the Hindu Mahasabha.¹¹⁵

Churchill and his Lasting Distrust of Amery

Unfortunately, at this time Amery had also incurred the Prime Minister's displeasure on another matter. Perhaps remembering the efficient wartime administration of Lloyd George, that he had witnessed at first hand in 1917 and 1918, he wasted little time on taking office in trying to persuade Churchill to undertake a radical overhaul of the machinery of government. He also acted as the champion of young Conservative politicians such as Harold Macmillan and Robert Boothby, and wrote to Churchill on 18 June asking for them to be included in a new Milneresque system of government.¹¹⁶ Amery's proposals for groups of departments, led by senior ministers were anathema to Churchill, who wanted only an administration in

¹¹⁴ *Hansard*, 14 August 1940, vol. 364, cc870 – 924.

¹¹⁵ Amery diary, 14 and 15 August 1940, AMEL 7/34.

¹¹⁶ Amery to Churchill, 16 June 1940, AMEL 2/2/4.

which he made the major decisions, after reasonable, but not overlong discussion.¹¹⁷ Churchill's irritation with Amery was finally made clear at a meeting on 18 June during which he asked him to confine his activities to his department.¹¹⁸

There is little doubt that after three months in office, Amery had managed to incur the displeasure of Churchill, and generate suspicion from Linlithgow. In terms of constitutional reform he had perhaps tried to move too quickly, although it could be argued that his initiatives did not attempt to reverse his predecessor's policies. What is evident from the voluminous papers is that he was impetuous, and even naive, but there is little evidence that this episode showed him to be Machiavellian, as Louis has suggested.¹¹⁹

Indian Armed Forces, Military Supply and the Need for an Indian Aircraft Industry

Away from the issue of Indian constitutional reform, Amery had a much more productive relationship with Linlithgow. They cooperated particularly well on a number of matters related to the Indian war effort, with initiatives coming not only from Amery, but also the supposedly reactionary and ponderous Viceroy. During the first few days of Amery's period in office, both men were obliged to react quickly to Churchill's request for the transfer of eight battalions of regular troops from India to assist in the defence of Britain. Amery balanced

¹¹⁷ Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, p. 89. Cited by Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*, p. 125.

¹¹⁸ Amery diary, 18 June 1940, AMEL 7/34. Note also the comment by Churchill's Private Secretary, John Colville, in connection with 'Amery's tiresome behaviour'. John Colville, *The Fringes of Power, Downing Street Diaries 1939 – 1955*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1985, p. 164.

¹¹⁹ Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*, pp. 128 – 129. Louis refers to Amery's studies in politics at All Souls, and deduces that he put forward his constitutional plan, safe in the knowledge that it would be rejected by Congress, thereby prolonging Britain's control over India.

this transfer by securing the movement of twelve territorial battalions, under training to be sent, as soon as possible, to India.¹²⁰

Amery was even more ambitious with his ideas for improving India's industrial war effort. A meeting with Harold Macmillan, parliamentary under-secretary at the Ministry of Supply, and George Lloyd, Colonial Secretary, convinced him that there could at least be British cooperation in utilising India's military supplies to the full.¹²¹ Indeed, his optimism led him to write to Linlithgow hoping that 'India would soon be humming from end to end with productive activity to meet the needs of large numbers of newly enlisted troops'.¹²² Three main issues concerning India's industrial efficiency occupied both Secretary of State and Viceroy during 1940, and the early months of 1941; an attempt to establish an Indian aircraft industry, a technical mission to India to improve the manufacture of military goods, and an initiative to create a coordinated system for the distribution of supplies and ordinance throughout the Eastern and Southern parts of the British Empire.

The Abortive Search for an Indian Aircraft Industry

From the beginning of powered flight at the start of the twentieth century, Amery had been quick to grasp the military and strategic value of air power, whether in relatively local operational terms, or as part of a global network to protect the British Empire.¹²³ Although war had not yet broken out

¹²⁰ War Cabinet conclusions, 19 May 1940, CAB 65/7/24.

¹²¹ Amery diary, 30 May 1940, AMEL 7/34.

¹²² Amery to Linlithgow, 30 May, AMEL 2/3/22.

¹²³ J. Fisher, 'British Forward Defence in Asia during World War I', *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2003), p. 84. Fisher quoted the full version of the theory that was outlined in Amery's letter to the Australian Prime Minister, William Hughes on 12 October 1917, AMEL 1/3/37. In essence, Amery envisaged a chain of British controlled aerodromes across the world from Africa to the Antipodes via the Middle East and India.

with Japan when Amery took office in May 1940, the need for aircraft production on the subcontinent had already become apparent. Without any factories in India the demand for aircraft had to be met by teams of Royal Air Force engineers, who repaired damaged aeroplanes that had just managed to fly to that country from the Middle East, normally via Afghanistan.¹²⁴

Linlithgow had already raised the matter of an independent Indian aircraft industry while Zetland was still in office. He had written to the India Office on 6 April 1940, suggesting that research be carried out into the feasibility of such a project, but almost two months later, having received no reply, wrote pessimistically to Amery.¹²⁵ In fact Amery had already written to Linlithgow on 20 May in a prematurely bullish tone, stating that he was 'stirring up the Air Ministry' to start the manufacture of aircraft in India.¹²⁶

Amery first made an informal approach to Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production, on 6 June 1940, but had a predictably disappointing response. Beaverbrook, almost certainly reflecting Churchill's attitude to this matter, flatly rejected Amery's request for British aeronautical experts to be sent to India, and while not objecting in principle to help from the USA, asked for a delay while fighting was still taking place in France.¹²⁷ By the time Amery was in a position to submit proposals to the War Cabinet, he was only able to offer a modest scheme that provided for the transfer of aircraft production from a factory in Loiving, China, to an enterprise in Mysore,

¹²⁴ Conversation with RAF Sergeant Ronald Hill, 2 September 2012. Sergeant Hill, who had been an airframe engineer, explained that the aircraft he repaired were generally older, and nearer to obsolescence, than those used at the time in the European theatre of war.

¹²⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 24 May 1940, Amery Papers, AMEL 2/3/23.

¹²⁶ Amery to Linlithgow, 20 May 1940, Amery Papers, AMEL 2/2/23.

¹²⁷ Amery diary, 6 June 1940, AMEL 7/34.

funded by a Bombay businessman, Walchand Hirachand.¹²⁸

Although Arthur Greenwood, the Labour Minister without Portfolio had written a long memorandum in support of an Indian aircraft industry, Churchill pre-empted War Cabinet discussion of the matter by writing a trenchant letter to Amery stating that Britain's air defences could not be weakened by the diversion of aircraft, spares and personnel to India.¹²⁹ There is no doubt that the failure to establish an aircraft industry in India was a great disappointment to Amery, who was far sighted in realising its strategic value, especially in the event of Japan attacking Burma. The fact that he devoted only three pages to this subject in his draft memoirs is perhaps the best evidence of this.¹³⁰

Sir Alexander Roger's Mission and the Eastern Supply Conference

Amery first mentioned the need to locate new sources of military supplies within weeks of taking up office. In particular he cited the need to call on India, South Africa and Australia if India were to enter the war, and close the Eastern Mediterranean.¹³¹ The matter also became urgent as plans were being made for a rapid increase in the size of the Indian Army, with the consequent need for equipment and ordinance.¹³² Linlithgow responded with enthusiasm to Amery's comments, moving quickly to a wider strategic

¹²⁸ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 21 August 1940, CAB 67/8/19. Once Japan had entered the war, Britain discontinued the manufacture of aircraft at Mysore, and used the factory only for repair purposes.

¹²⁹ A. Greenwood, Cabinet memorandum, 31 August 1940, CAB 67/8/31.

¹³⁰ Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, AMEL pp. 32 – 34, 8/85.

¹³¹ Amery to Linlithgow, 20 May 1940, AMEL 2/3/22.

¹³² Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, AMEL p. 14, 8/85. Amery's staff calculated that Indian divisions could be recruited and equipped for a fifth of the cost of British divisions, a calculation that he found difficult to justify to the War Office and Ministry of Supply.

perspective whereby India would not only improve its own production of munitions, but also act as a clearing house for military equipment in India, and other parts of the British Empire in the Southern Hemisphere.¹³³

The first real progress was made when Amery decided to reverse Linlithgow's initial idea of sending a technical mission to Britain, and, instead, assemble a team to visit India.¹³⁴ Amery needed a strong leader for what would inevitably be an exacting tour of India's factories, and after obtaining Churchill's approval for the whole project secured the release of the experienced Scottish businessman, Sir Alexander Roger.¹³⁵ Linlithgow was surprised that Roger's mission contained as many as twenty five members, whose specialisms covered the whole field of military engineering.

Although Roger eventually made a series of detailed reports on individual Indian industries, he strayed into the area of macroeconomics, hoping to find a willing listener in Churchill who during the war had great faith in the ability of businessmen to rejuvenate industrial production.¹³⁶ Although contributing in large measure to the creation of the Eastern Supply Conference, he made the mistake of persisting with an abrasive, voluble style of negotiation that irritated Linlithgow, who most certainly was not in thrall to the potential of businessmen in the public service.¹³⁷

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1940 Linlithgow worked

¹³³ Linlithgow to Amery, 7 June 1940, AMEL 1/6/12. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 18 June 1940, AMEL 1/6/12.

¹³⁴ Amery diary, 2 June 1940, AMEL 7/34.

¹³⁵ Amery diary, 30 June 1940, AMEL 7/34. Sir Alexander Roger had spent some time as Chairman of the Tanks Board, but on winding up his work was permitted to join the mission by the Minister of Supply.

¹³⁶ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, p. 73.

¹³⁷ Linlithgow to Amery, 30 October 1940, AMEL 2/3/23.

assiduously, inviting technical, military and political delegates to Delhi to discuss the use that could be made of coordinating the supply of vital war materials. Amery offered little more than a supporting role, but as a confirmed strategist himself appreciated Linlithgow's argument that the looming threat from Japan made a necessity of intra-Imperial coordination.¹³⁸

Amery was relieved when the Eastern Supply Conference recommended the establishment of an Eastern Group Supply Council staffed by delegates from India, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.¹³⁹ He was especially pleased that instead of the disruptive Sir Alexander Roger, he was able to announce that the Council would be chaired by Sir Archibald Carter, formerly of the India Office, but in January 1941, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Admiralty.¹⁴⁰ The Council operated successfully for two years, procuring goods to the value of £174 million, and only lessened in influence when Australia and the USA formed a separate supply council, as the war in the Pacific developed.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 23 October 1940, AMEL 2/3/23.

¹³⁹ Sir Zafrullah Khan was a senior member of Linlithgow's Supply Department, and a politically shrewd choice to chair the Conference.

¹⁴⁰ Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, p. 26, AMEL 8/85.

¹⁴¹ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, p. 81.

CHAPTER IV

FROM *SATYAGRAHA* TO THE ATLANTIC CHARTER

Introduction

Barnes and Nicolson, the editors of the second volume of Amery's diaries, have stated that the year to October 1941 saw little movement in India's internal political situation.¹ While it is true that during this period there was very little discernible progress towards any form of constitutional settlement, Amery remained active, and relatively optimistic in putting forward new initiatives, most of which still encountered resistance from Linlithgow and Churchill. There were also differences between Viceroy and Secretary of State over the measures needed to counter the civil disobedience campaign by Congress that followed the rejection of the August offer.

However despite the constitutional stalemate, the strategic relevance of India to the conduct of the war became far more important as the increasing threat from Japan grew, while the military situation in the Middle East and Balkans remained no less precarious.

Measures to Combat Civil Disobedience and Seditious

In addition to their earlier misunderstandings over Indian constitutional change, Amery and Linlithgow were also at odds over the nature and use of legislation to

¹ Barnes and Nicholson (eds.), *The Empire at Bay, The Leo Amery Diaries 1929 – 1945*, p. 648.

combat sedition and civil disorder. Two separate sets of counter-insurgency provisions had already been made available when Amery became Secretary of State. The more draconian legislation was drafted in early 1937 by Linlithgow, his legal staff in Delhi, and the provincial governors, at a time when it seemed likely that Congress would refuse to take up local office, except on terms unacceptable to Britain. Known as the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance these widely drawn measures were guided through the Cabinet by Zetland in 1937, but following the outbreak of war were given an unashamedly political character.² From the outset, the Cabinet was too cautious to delegate these powers unconditionally to Linlithgow, and insisted that it should be consulted again, before any implementation.³

The much milder Defence of India rules were introduced by Linlithgow, immediately following the declaration of war in September 1939, and corresponded closely, in form and substance, to the provisions of the English Emergency Powers (Defence) Act. By comparison with the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance, these rules were principally designed to combat actions by individuals and small groups participating in civil disobedience, deemed to be injurious to the Indian war effort.⁴

During his first few weeks of his time at the India Office, Amery obtained

² Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 162. Rizvi cited the details of the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance, prepared by the Viceroy's Home Department, and now filed in the India Office Records at L/P & J/8/585, ff.

³ Cabinet conclusions, 27 October 1937, CAB 23/90A.

⁴ Zetland, War Cabinet memorandum, 12 September 1939, CAB 68/68/1/5.

approval from the War Cabinet for the Viceroy to employ the rules of the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance, after consulting only the Secretary of State.⁵ However, a cautious Amery hoped that the Defence of India rules would be sufficient to deal with individuals and small groups engaged in peaceful civil disobedience.⁶ Linlithgow was only partly reassured by Amery's telegram, although he accepted that if the protests amounted only to peaceful *satyagraha*, the use of the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance would be inappropriate.

Amery was even more circumspect during September 1940, when he proposed to refrain from authorising the use of the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance until there was irrefutable evidence of impending corporate sedition by Congress. He needed to remain calm in making this recommendation as he had been shown recent intercepts of Congress telegrams suggesting that there would soon be a call for all out resistance to the Raj.⁷ With members such as Clement Attlee and Sir John Anderson taking very different views on the need to employ the tougher legislation, Amery was fortunate that Churchill was prepared, albeit grudgingly, to support him.⁸

By November 1940, Linlithgow was still seeking the sole discretion to employ the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance, in order to proclaim Congress without the need to identify specific acts of sedition.⁹ On 21 November 1940, Amery

⁵ War Cabinet conclusions, 1 June 1940, CAB 65/7/46.

⁶ Amery to Linlithgow, 2 June 1940, AMEL 1/6/18.

⁷ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 14 September 1940, CAB 67/8/37.

⁸ War Cabinet conclusions, 16 September 1940, CAB 65/9/12.

⁹ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum of 14 September 1940, CAB 67/8/37.

showed Linlithgow's latest description of a deteriorating security situation to the War Cabinet, and managed to convince his colleagues, including Churchill, that unless Gandhi could be shown to be considering imminent serious disorder, the Viceroy should not be given sole responsibility for applying the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance.¹⁰ Linlithgow did not provide the details requested by the War Cabinet, although his highly legalistic, if also bellicose, telegram to Amery on 1 December 1940 warned of larger crowds at *satyagraha* meetings, and also repeated the administrative advantages of proclaiming Congress as a whole.¹¹

Once again Amery asked the War Cabinet to be cautious, warning in particular of the political disadvantages of the excessive use of force.¹² Following the War Cabinet meeting on 10 December, he was authorised to tell Linlithgow that, notwithstanding any procedural problems, the machinery should only be used to proclaim errant Congress committees, rather than the entire organisation.¹³

Congress Reaction to the August Offer

After Amery's statement to the House of Commons on 14 August 1940, the Indian reaction to the proposals became clearer. At a meeting in Wardha from 18 to 22 August 1940, the Congress Working Committee recorded their formal rejection of the Viceroy's proposals, stating that they demonstrated the British

¹⁰ War Cabinet conclusions, 21 November 1940, CAB 65/10/13.

¹¹ Amery to Linlithgow, 1 December 1940, MSS. EUR. F. 125/19.

¹² Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 5 December 1940, CAB 66/14/6.

¹³ War Cabinet conclusions, 10 December 1940, CAB 65/10/23.

Government's 'determination to hold India by the sword'.¹⁴ At an emergency session of the All India Congress Committee on 15 September 1940, earlier disagreements within the party over its attitude to the war, had been set aside. Such different figures as Nehru and Rajagopalachari, who had previously recommended cooperation with the British, now realised that another approach was required.¹⁵ Accordingly, Azad asked Gandhi to resume his leadership of Congress with the aim of launching a campaign of civil disobedience.

The resolution passed at this session expressed admiration for Britain's courage in the face of danger, and promised not to cause embarrassment, provided that Congress was 'free to pursue its policies'.¹⁶ Gandhi clarified this statement by claiming for Congress the right to state freely what it felt about the war. In particular he wanted 'the liberty to go through the streets of Bombay, proclaiming that he wanted to have nothing to do with the war as he did not believe in it'. If Britain did not make this concession, Congress would commence *satyagraha*.¹⁷

However, before embarking on the campaign of civil disobedience, Gandhi met Linlithgow on 27 and 30 September in an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate an arrangement allowing mutually acceptable freedom of speech. Linlithgow explained the rules for dealing with conscientious objectors in Britain, and pointed out, that while general demonstrations of pacifism were tolerated, it

¹⁴ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 94.

¹⁵ Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj, 1929 – 1942*, p. 151.

¹⁶ Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India*, p. 247.

¹⁷ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 95.

would be forbidden to attempt to persuade industrial workers or soldiers to abandon the war effort. Gandhi could not accept this policy, and wanted to reserve the right of Congress to ask Indians to desist from helping the war effort.¹⁸

The Satyagraha Campaign

The resulting campaign of civil disobedience was, at the request of Gandhi, extremely cautious, almost certainly because he feared the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance, and the potential destruction of Congress.¹⁹ On 13 October 1940, the Congress Working Committee accepted Gandhi's plan to launch an incremental programme based on individual *satyagraha*.²⁰ Since Gandhi chose individuals to make speeches against the war effort, the campaign could not be proved to be revolutionary, and therefore receive the full weight of the stronger legislation.²¹ The first person to be chosen, Vinobha Bhave, a dedicated follower of Gandhi, was arrested on 17 October, after making anti-war speeches, and sentenced to three months imprisonment.²² The second phase, involving the arrest and conviction of senior Congress leaders such as Azad and Rajagopalachari began on 17 November 1940 and ended on 4 January 1941, by which date nearly six hundred *satyagrahas* had been convicted, although not all were imprisoned. From 5 January 1941, local Congress committees prepared lists

¹⁸ Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India*, p. 246.

¹⁹ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, p. 55.

²⁰ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 100.

²¹ Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 166.

²² Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India*, p. 248.

of *satyagrahas* to speak out against the war. Although many Hindu provinces responded, and the total arrests by April 1941 grew to several thousands, there were few arrests in Muslim provinces such as Bengal.²³ The final category of *satyagrahas* chosen by Gandhi were the rank and file of Congress, the 'four-anna members', but although their arrests swelled the total to twenty thousand, the majority were fined, rather than imprisoned.²⁴ Throughout the summer of 1941, the campaign lost impetus, by which time most *satyagrahas* had been released.

The Arrest and Conviction of Nehru

One important arrest and conviction of a famous Congress politician did not fall strictly into the category of *satyagraha*. On 30 October 1940, Nehru was arrested in the United Provinces before he could make an anti-war protest, although he had already made speeches critical of Britain. Fearing that he would go further than Gandhi, the authorities chose to charge him, still under the Defence of India rules, but with the more serious charges of sedition and fomenting agrarian discontent. When he was found guilty, a local magistrate gave him an openly deterrent sentence of four years imprisonment.²⁵ The War Cabinet had wanted the case to be heard in open court with a punitive sentence, rather than

²³ Ibid, p. 249.

²⁴ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, p. 56.

²⁵ Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru A Biography, Volume I*, pp. 268 – 270. In fact the severity of the sentence became clearer when it was realised that Nehru was actually found guilty on three separate charges. The sentence on each count was sixteen months, but the magistrate directed that they be served consecutively.

house arrest, or detention without trial.²⁶ Despite the view in Delhi and London that Nehru's activities were damaging to the war effort, there is little doubt that there was widespread dismay over the severity of the sentence.²⁷

Labour MPs and supporters also became increasingly anxious that Nehru had been unjustly treated. In the House of Commons on 7 November 1940, Amery faced especially firm questioning from Emmanuel Shinwell, who tried without success, to combine the issues of Nehru's sentence with a renewed initiative on constitutional reform.²⁸ Amery also concealed his real feelings over the sentence, when he wrote that Nehru was enjoying better conditions in confinement than prisoners in Germany or Russia.²⁹

Muslim Reaction to the August Offer

Although the Muslim League had finally turned down the August Offer, their process of rejection was complicated, with Jinnah playing a typically scheming part. He met Linlithgow on 11 and 13 August, before Amery made his statement in the House of Commons, and without making any commitments, asked for clarification on a few points.³⁰ Although the Muslim League Working Committee was encouraged by Amery's promise not to promote any system of government that denied representation to significant groups in India, Jinnah and his senior

²⁶ War Cabinet conclusions, 29 October 1940, CAB 65/9/41.

²⁷ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 30 October 1940, CAB 67/8/79. Also, Amery diary, 8 November 1940, AMEL 7/34.

²⁸ *Hansard*, 7 November 1940, vol. 365, cc1443 – 1444. Emmanuel (Manny) Shinwell (1884 – 1986) was a left-wing Jewish Labour MP and Chairman of the Labour Party from 1942.

²⁹ Amery to Viscountess Davidson, 23 November 1940, AMEL 2/1/31.

³⁰ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 93.

colleagues read too much into this section of the August Offer. In particular, they believed that it gave them both a veto over unwelcome constitutional developments and tacit approval for the Pakistan scheme.³¹

On 24 September, Jinnah began a sequence of interviews and correspondence with Linlithgow in an attempt to establish control by the Muslim League over the composition of the proposed expanded Executive Council. In particular, Jinnah believed that the Muslim League should decide, in the event of Congress offering to cooperate, whether its representatives should be permitted to join the Executive. He also wanted the Viceroy to agree that if the defence portfolio was not awarded to a Muslim, it should not be allocated to any other Indian.³² When Linlithgow refused to give any assurances, the Working Committee decided on 28 September that, despite their earlier declaration of support for the war effort, they were now unable to accept the August Offer.³³

Jinnah was shrewd enough to realise that he was in a favourable position vis-à-vis the Raj. If he could persuade Britain to concede parity between Congress and the Muslim League, he believed that this would signify acceptance of the Muslim claim to be a separate nation. Furthermore, if Britain agreed that Muslims represented a distinct nation, it would be *de facto* support of the concept of Pakistan.³⁴

³¹ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, p. 53.

³² Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, pp. 96 – 97.

³³ Ibid, p. 98. The Muslim League statement also expressed regret that Muslim non-official (i.e. not ICS) advisers had not been appointed in the Section 93 provinces.

³⁴ Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936 – 1947*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.64.

Jinnah's relationship with other Muslims was less straightforward. In September 1940 it was imperative that he should maintain his personal profile in order to keep Muslim League control over the Muslim provinces, especially the Punjab and Bengal, where loyalty to the war effort remained strong, and antipathy to the August offer was less vehement. In the Punjab the prime minister, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, enjoyed such personal popularity that it was difficult for Jinnah to overturn his commitment to Indian unity, and by consequence his opposition to the idea of Pakistan.³⁵ Fazlal Huq enjoyed a less secure position as Prime Minister of Bengal, but remained constant in supporting the war effort, and that in the event of a conflict he would retain the support of his local administration.³⁶

Differences in British Enthusiasm for the Viceroy's Council and the War Advisory Council

There were important, if subtle differences between Amery and Linlithgow in their approaches to persuading Congress and the Muslim League to participate in the reforms outlined in the August offer. Until well into 1941, Amery was to prove more persistently optimistic than Linlithgow in his desire to implement the proposed reforms, although he remained as critical as Linlithgow of the behaviour of Congress and the Muslim League. As early as 14 August 1940, when Azad had already publicly repudiated the Viceroy's offer, Amery urged a

³⁵ Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman, Jinnah the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, pp. 63 - 64. Hyat Khan was a member of the Muslim Unionist party, and led a provincial government that included Hindus and Sikhs.

³⁶ Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India*, p. 64.

balanced approach to dealing with Congress. He did not want Britain to be seen to be 'running after' Gandhi but also did not favour the door being closed, provided that Congress did not close it themselves by actively creating mischief.

Whatever their different levels of belief in the outcome of the detailed reforms, both Linlithgow and Amery quickly developed a shared and marked distrust of Jinnah. While Linlithgow was in the course of a series of meetings with Jinnah, Amery expressed his thoughts in a long and passionate letter. After dismissing Jinnah's intention of establishing more control over the Muslim League, he gave an apocryphal prediction of the consequences if India were to be partitioned, and drew parallels with the division of Ireland into Eire and Ulster. Employing his favoured geopolitical reasoning, he believed that the absence of natural internal boundaries would lead to a divided subcontinent, vulnerable to a Prussian brand of militarism.³⁷

Linlithgow was more concerned with Jinnah's cunning and duplicity. He believed that during their meetings, he had given Jinnah all the information that he was in a position to supply, and that further requests were being made just to be difficult. Despite Jinnah saying that most Muslims hated the British, Linlithgow still wanted Muslim League representatives on the Executive Council.³⁸

Linlithgow was already losing faith in Jinnah when he wrote by telegram to Amery on 22 September 1940, setting out three options if the reforms became impossible. The three choices which subsequently formed the bases of War

³⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 16 September 1940, AMEL 2/3/22.

³⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 19 September 1940, AMEL 2/2/23.

Cabinet memoranda by Amery can be summarised,

- (1) To go ahead with the expansion of the Executive by including Mahsabha, Scheduled Castes, Sikhs, and a couple of Muslims, who were not in the League.
- (2) To go ahead as above, but with no Muslims at all.
- (3) To abandon, or postpone the idea of expansion.

Although Linlithgow attempted to put a fair case for all options, he feared that all plans for expansion might need to be put into abeyance.³⁹ Amery's early reply showed no such reserve as he pressed for the first option which, he felt, at least showed Britain's positive intent to promote constitutional change.⁴⁰

Amery's feelings about Jinnah

Before Amery could send Linlithgow's three options to the War Cabinet, he was informed, on 28 September 1940, that the Muslim League had decided not to participate in the reforms. Amery once again chose the longer format of a letter to express his feelings, stating that 'the miserable Jinnah has run out, as we thought he would', and that he had only prolonged his negotiations with Linlithgow in order to establish control over the Muslim provincial premiers, and in the rare outcome of an expanded Viceroy's Executive, to be 'the shadow behind the throne.' Amery once again urged Linlithgow to go ahead, although he had been asked by Churchill, first to canvass the views of Anderson, Halifax and

³⁹ Linlithgow to Amery, 22 September 1940, AMEL 1/6/12.

⁴⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 24 September 1940, AMEL 1/6/12.

Simon, who all had experience of India.⁴¹ All three gentlemen believed that Linlithgow should proceed immediately with his first option.⁴² Indeed Anderson, a former Governor of Bengal, was particularly bullish in the need to face down Jinnah, whom he believed did not truly reflect Muslim feeling about the war effort.⁴³

Before Amery took the matter of the expanded Executive Council and a new War Advisory Council to his Cabinet colleagues, he took stock. Although still very much in favour of expanding the Executive, he feared that Churchill would oppose the scheme, and that much would depend on Linlithgow's attitude. With typical immodesty, he claimed that if he had been on the spot, and with a free hand to negotiate, matters would have already been decided.⁴⁴ However, he showed far less optimism in sending a sombre, realistic, but surprisingly even-handed analysis to Smuts whom he trusted in delicate matters of imperial management.⁴⁵

Amery finally sent his memorandum to the War Cabinet on 3 October, enclosing his correspondence with Linlithgow and putting a robust and floridly worded case for making the reforms with or without the support of either Congress, or the Muslim League.⁴⁶ He soon received a detailed telegram from Linlithgow who having seen the Muslim League resolution of 28 September, and

⁴¹ Amery to Linlithgow, 30 September 1940, AMEL 2/3/22.

⁴² Amery diary, 29 September 1940, AMEL 7/34.

⁴³ Amery to Linlithgow, 3 October 1940, AMEL 1/6/12.

⁴⁴ Amery diary, 2 October 1940, AMEL 7/34.

⁴⁵ Amery to Smuts, 2 October 1940, AMEL

⁴⁶ War Cabinet memorandum, 3 October 1940, CAB 67/8/52.

more importantly, evidence that Jinnah now had control over Muslim elements, recommended that the whole business of the Executive Council and the proposed War Advisory Council should be put into cold storage.

Although Amery had written to Linlithgow on 5 October begging him to hold his nerve, this was the last letter that he wrote in such terms.⁴⁷ He reluctantly accepted Linlithgow's recommendation of 8 October 1940, and on 11 October 1940 sent the Viceroy's telegram to the War Cabinet accompanied by his own memorandum. Amery deplored the need to capitulate to the unreasonable behaviour of Congress and the Muslim League, but felt that he reluctantly had to agree with Linlithgow's proposal.⁴⁸

The Restatement of the August Offer in November 1940 and Amery's Attempts to Keep Political Reform Alive

Amery and Linlithgow regarded the postponement of the constitutional reforms differently. Linlithgow would have been quite happy just to proceed with India's war effort, especially bearing in mind the relative successes of the Roger Mission and the Eastern Group Supply Council. Amery's frustration with the deadlock was illustrated by his firm stance towards the Viceroy over the matter of the restatement of the August offer in November 1940. After the War Cabinet had conceded that the expansion of the Executive Council and the establishment of the War Advisory Council had to be postponed, both Amery and Linlithgow agreed that a fresh pronouncement should be made regarding the Indian

⁴⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 5 October 1940, AMEL 2/3/22.

⁴⁸ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 11 October 1940, CAB 67/8/60.

response to the August offer.

Amery was ruthless in rejecting Linlithgow's attempt at drafting a new statement, chiefly on the grounds that it failed to distinguish between the 'immediate proposals and the longer term policy embodied in the declaration of 8 August'. Amery had more than British public opinion in mind when he edited Linlithgow's draft, being particularly concerned that Americans should be made aware of Britain's even handedness towards Indian constitutional reform.⁴⁹

Amery also sent a telegram to Linlithgow explaining why he was not prepared to agree to the Viceroy's request for a detailed account to be published of the reasons why each of the parties in India had chosen to reject the August offer. Amery had no objection to stating why Congress had refused to cooperate, but felt strongly against any attempt to explain the rejection by the Muslim League.⁵⁰ On 15 November 1940, the War Cabinet approved Amery's new statement, and accepted his rationale for the amendments to Linlithgow's draft. It is significant that Churchill who was lukewarm about the need for a fresh declaration, was absent from this meeting that was chaired by Attlee.⁵¹ On 20 November 1940, the statement was presented to the Indian Central Legislature by the Viceroy, and while regretting the refusal of Congress and the Muslim League to respond to the two constitutional proposals, he laid great stress on the worldwide expressions of approval that had been made about the

⁴⁹ War Cabinet memorandum, 13 November 1940, CAB 67/8/97.

⁵⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, AMEL 1/6/12

⁵¹ War Cabinet conclusions, 15 November 1940, CAB 65/10/9.

fairness of the British proposals.⁵²

Amery was more forthcoming about the reasons for the failure of the double reforms, when he spoke on 20 November 1940 in a long debate in the House of Commons about India, Burma, and the overall colonial war effort. A number of speakers representing a wide range of political opinion pressed him to speak in some detail on the constitutional deadlock, and he duly replied at length.

Although inside the India Office he may have continued to look for more discrete ways to make political progress, his winding up speech conceded that while the door had not been closed to Congress and the Muslim League, it was completely impractical to hand over the entire machinery of government, as some members had suggested. While he was prepared to countenance a majority of Indians on the Executive Council, he insisted that this body should be responsible to the Viceroy, and not to the legislature, an outcome that would only have favoured Congress.⁵³

Amery's draft memoirs record that despite the unfavourable reporting of his speeches in radical Indian newspapers, he continued to make a series of appeals in a doomed attempt to persuade Indians to bury their differences in the interests of Indian unity.⁵⁴ The Muslim League was particularly incensed by an address that Amery made to a Foyles Luncheon Club on 12 December 1940 in which he, once again, linked the realities of geopolitics and the principles

⁵² *India and the War*, Command Paper 20 November 1940, Cmd. 6235, HMSO.

⁵³ *Hansard*, 20 November 1940, vol. 365, cc1988 – 200.

⁵⁴ Amery, draft memoirs, Volume IV, Chapter VII, AMEL 8/84.

of Magna Carta in an appeal to the patriotism of all Indians to put unity before communal interests; a thinly disguised attack on the concept of Pakistan.⁵⁵

Amery's Search at All Souls College for New Thinking on Constitutional Reform

Even before the proposed reform had been deferred, Amery was considering new ways of making progress on constitutional reform. As early as 5 August 1940 he had written to Lionel Curtis evoking the spirit of Milner's Kindergarten, following the South African War. It was typical of Amery's committee centred approach to promoting change that he recommended 'a small band of pioneers.....bringing people together in study groups'.⁵⁶ Amery also had encouragement from an unlikely source when Lord Reith, the severe, and conservative Chairman of the BBC, urged him to 'rekindle the spirit of the Round Table'.⁵⁷ To assist in the implementation of the provisions of the 1935 Government of India Act, the post of Reforms Commissioner had been created as part of the Viceroy's staff. When Hawthorne Lewis, left the post in late 1940, Amery gave serious thought to the sort of candidate he wanted as a replacement. His frequent visits to All Souls brought him into contact with a young economics fellow and Round Table member, Henry (Harry) Hodson, who already had considerable experience of imperial affairs, and since the start of the war had been serving as a temporary civil servant at the Ministry of

⁵⁵ Amery, 'India First', address to Foyles' Luncheon Club, 12 December 1940, reproduced in *India and Freedom*, pp. 33 – 38.

⁵⁶ Amery to Curtis, 5 August 1940, AMEL 1/6/18.

⁵⁷ Amery diary, 4 February 1941, AMEL 7/35.

Information.⁵⁸

Linlithgow's response to Amery's promotion of Hodson was cautious at best. On 16 December he wrote to Amery stating that although the Indian Chief Justice, Sir Maurice Gwyer, had supported Hodson's candidature, he believed that the post required greater practical legal experience. He also gave considerable weight to the doubts expressed by Sir Jeremy Raisman, a senior member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, who advocated the termination of the office of Reforms Commissioner on the grounds of economy.⁵⁹ Amery's urgings for Linlithgow to accept Hodson became increasingly forceful throughout the early months of 1941. On 6 February he told Linlithgow that India was confronted with one of the greatest constitutional problems of all time, and needed some fresh ideas, explained with clarity, if it was going to be saved for the British Empire.⁶⁰ Soon after, Amery also dismissed Raisman's objections, and said bluntly that the kind of creative thinking required for a Reforms Commissioner could not come from a career ICS official.⁶¹ Linlithgow took some time to agree to Hodson's appointment, revealing a prickliness about the entire matter that was apparent from his strict condition that Hodson would only be allowed to make public statements, after obtaining approval.⁶²

Although Amery was ultimately disappointed that he could not establish a

⁵⁸ Wade-Gery, 'Hodson'.

⁵⁹ Linlithgow to Amery, 16 December 1940, AMEL 2/2/23.

⁶⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 6 February 1941, AMEL 2/2/24.

⁶¹ Amery to Linlithgow, 18 February 1941, AMEL 2/2/24.

⁶² Linlithgow to Amery, 1 March 1941, AMEL 2/2/25.

direct line of communication to Hodson, he had considerable early optimism for the work that he would be able to do.⁶³ He was still hopeful some months later, when he thought that Hodson's memoranda on political reform were 'fulfilling the objects for which he had been sent out', especially the stimulation of creative thought in the Viceroy's office.⁶⁴ Although Hodson remained in India for the Cripps mission, he soon resigned his post and was back in England before the winter of 1942/43.

The detailed reasons for the failure of the appointment are not given in Amery's draft memoirs, but a coded diary entry for November 1942 referred to a meeting at the India Office with Hodson, who, without bitterness, confirmed that he had not been able to establish a proper rapport with Linlithgow.⁶⁵ Robert Wade-Gery, the author of Hodson's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, was much more explicit, laying the blame squarely on Linlithgow and his staff, especially the Viceroy's private secretary, Gilbert Laithwaite, who had little time for outsiders.⁶⁶ Presumably, as evidence that his opinion only related to Hodson, Linlithgow indicated that he wanted to retain the post of Reforms Commissioner, and award it to V. P. Menon, a long time insider in the Delhi administration.⁶⁷

⁶³ Amery diary, 5 March 1941, AMEL 7/35. This particular entry also shows Amery to have been well aware that his selection of men to visit India, with a brief to facilitate constitutional reform, could well be interpreted as 'All Souls mutual jobbery'.

⁶⁴ Amery diary, 28 October 1941, AMEL 7/35.

⁶⁵ Amery diary, 26 November 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁶⁶ Wade-Gery, 'Hodson'. Wade-Gery wrote with the authority of someone who had been British High Commissioner to India.

⁶⁷ Linlithgow to Amery, 11 August 1942, AMEL, 2/3/27.

Amery's other nominee to promote new ideas on constitutional change in India was Reginald Coupland, who was much older than Hodson, although also a committed Round Tabler. For many years he had successfully combined the prestigious post of Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford University with the authorship of books on imperial history, and service on a number of royal commissions.⁶⁸ Indeed, Amery was particularly impressed by Coupland's drafting work in 1937 on the report of the Royal Commission on Palestine, an imperial problem that the Secretary of State believed had similarities with the issues in wartime India.⁶⁹

Amery had intended to ask Coupland to succeed Lewis as Reforms Commissioner, but he was unwilling to be in India for four years and lose his Beit Professorship. Instead he was prepared to write a three part account of India's constitutional problems, 'as an informal royal commission of one'.⁷⁰ He obtained financial support of £800 for his project from Nuffield College, Oxford, although the authorities there stipulated that the title of the study should omit all reference to 'constitutional deadlock in India'.⁷¹

There is little record of Linlithgow's initial reaction to Coupland's visit. However, when Amery wrote that 'he might be putting too many cooks into the

⁶⁸ Alex May, 'Coupland, Sir Reginald (1884 – 1952)', *ODNB*, OUP, 2004, online edition, 2005.

⁶⁹ Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, Chapter VIII, AMEL 8/84, p. 41. Amery's original version stated that the problems in Palestine were essentially the same as those in India. Francis Turnbull, Amery's former Private Secretary at the India Office, who had agreed to proof read Amery's account, corrected this description so as to suggest that the similarities were capable of exaggeration.

⁷⁰ Amery diary, 28 November 1940, AMEL 7/34.

⁷¹ Coupland to Amery, 23 March 1941, AMEL 2/2/6.

Indian broth', he must have feared that Coupland's visit might attract the same spiteful response already expressed by the Viceroy about Hodson.⁷² Coupland arrived in Delhi in early December 1942, and stayed at the official residence of the Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer, before touring the country to meet representatives of all political interests.⁷³

Coupland surrendered a little of his academic independence when he was asked by the India Office to act as an adviser during the Cripps Mission in March and April 1942. At this point, he had already incurred Linlithgow's displeasure when he suggested that dominion status could not be awarded to British India, without the princely states.⁷⁴ When Coupland had just returned to England with Cripps following the failure of the negotiations, Linlithgow was more explicit in his criticism. He explained to Amery that Coupland's approach had not been sufficiently professional, especially as he believed that he had underestimated the difficulties in India.⁷⁵

Although Coupland had been asked to produce an independent report, there is considerable evidence that Amery had attempted to influence the choice of constitutional matters for him to consider. In May 1941 Amery suggested to Coupland that he should take the Swiss system as a template for constitutional reform, especially as he saw similarities with India as both countries apparently had to contend with the difficulties of having three languages and two different

⁷² Amery diary 15 February 1941, 7/35.

⁷³ Coupland to Amery, 2 December 1941, AMEL 2/2/6.

⁷⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, 23 January 1942, AMEL 2/3/27.

⁷⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 14 April 1942, AMEL 2/3/27.

religions.⁷⁶ Later, Amery asked him to turn his attention to the princes, and the possibility of decentralisation as a formula for change.⁷⁷ Coupland, on his arrival in India was far from convinced, asserting that the unitary and centralised structure of the Indian National Congress was a parallel version of the Government of India, thereby reversing the effect of the Montagu/Chelmsford reforms, increasing tension between Hindus and Muslims, and making change based on decentralisation more difficult.⁷⁸

When Coupland eventually published his recommendations as Part III of his *Report* in 1943, they were radical, and complicated.⁷⁹ The proposals envisaged a division of India into four regions, three of which corresponded to the major river basins, and the fourth being peninsular India. There was also a communal balance, that commended it to Amery. Bearing in mind his attachment to the Swiss constitution, he approved Coupland's plan for a centre that was not responsible to the legislature, and confined its responsibilities to foreign affairs, defence and fiscal matters. Unfortunately it proved to be a brave initiative that failed to gain support from opposing factions in the country.⁸⁰

Amery's Request for Reform Initiatives within the India Office

Soon after the decision had been made to postpone the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Amery asked his three London based Indian advisers

⁷⁶ Amery to Coupland, 20 May 1941, AMEL 2/2/6.

⁷⁷ Amery to Coupland, 22 September 1941, AMEL 2/2/6.

⁷⁸ Coupland to Amery, 2 December 1942, AMEL 2/2/6.

⁷⁹ Coupland, *The Future of India*, pp 110 – 125.

⁸⁰ Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, Chapter VIII, AMEL 8/84, pp. 41 – 44.

to produce their own plans for constitutional reform.⁸¹ Representing three different perspectives were, Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, a Bengal Muslim, Sir Samuel Ranganadhan, a Madras Christian, and Dr Ragahavendra Rao, a Hindu from the Central Province. By February 1941, two separate schemes had been drafted, reflecting the beliefs of their authors. Rao and Ranganadhan produced a report, more or less on liberal Hindu lines, while Suhrawardy chose a version of Jinnah's Pakistan project that gave immediate dominion status to the Muslim provinces.⁸²

Amery returned the drafts and insisted that a single set of proposals had to be agreed between the advisers. Although the authorship of the final version was scarcely unanimous, there was an innovative attempt to combine the best of the British and American constitutions. The result was a complicated set of institutions created partly by direct elections, partly by nomination, but in Amery's view providing insufficient protection for Muslims and the princely states. At no stage did the proposals find favour with Linlithgow.⁸³

Sapru's Proposals and the British Reaction

In the spring of 1941 an abortive initiative to promote constitutional reform was led by the veteran Indian Liberal politician and lawyer, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. It was to prove a short, but difficult episode for Amery, who ultimately emerged with little credit, in Britain, or in India. Sapru, aged sixty five in March 1941, was

⁸¹ Amery diary, 19 December 1940, AMEL 7/34.

⁸² Amery draft memoirs, Volume IV, Chapter VIII, AMEL 8/84, p. 45. For a summary of the two schemes at this stage, see also Amery, diary 25 February 1941, AMEL 7/35.

⁸³ Linlithgow to Amery, 1 July 1941, AMEL 2/3/25.

a Kashmiri Pandit from Allahabad, and had been a liberal Congressman for the first twenty five years of his adult life. In 1918, after breaking away from the Gandhian element of Congress he formed the National Liberal Federation in order to help the implementation of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. His service of four years as a legal member of the Viceroy's Executive, established his credentials as a nationalist, who favoured incremental change rather than civil disobedience. Although angered by the composition of the Simon Commission, he later attended the Round Table conferences and the Joint Select Committee, that preceded the 1935 Government of India Act; actions that led to his ostracism by Congress.⁸⁴

In March 1941 he chaired a non-party conference in Bombay that was attended by less than forty delegates, mainly Hindu Liberals, but also a few minor Muslims, Sikhs, and members of the Mahasabha.⁸⁵ The resolutions passed at this conference invited Britain to make a promise of dominion status within a fixed interval after the end of the war, and in the interim, to transfer all central government portfolios to non-official Indians.

Sapru envisaged that this newly reformed central executive would be responsible to the Crown, instead of the existing central legislature that he did not regard as an adequately representative body.⁸⁶ This, of course, would have

⁸⁴ D. A. Low, 'Sapru, Sir Tej Bahadur (1875 – 1949)', *ODNB*, OUP, 2004, online edition, 2008. Sapru in fact served on the Indian alternative to the Simon Commission, its proceedings being chaired by Motilal Nehru.

⁸⁵ Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India, Volume II*, pp. 255 – 256.

⁸⁶ D. A. Low, 'The Mediator's Moment: Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Antecedents to the Cripps Mission to India, 1940-42', *JICH*, Volume 12, No. 22 (1984), pp. 152 – 153.

meant that the defence and finance departments would be, for the first time, under Indian control. In an attempt to placate British opinion, the position of the Commander-in-Chief, India would not be prejudiced, and the members of the new executive would be chosen by the Viceroy.⁸⁷

Amery's dismissive response to the appointment of an Indian Defence Minister was a serious misreading of moderate opinion, especially as he later made a damning analysis of the remainder of Sapru's proposals.⁸⁸ While he accepted that some expansion of the Executive Council, and the establishment of a War Advisory Council were within the parameters of the August 1940 declaration, he did not feel that 'Sapru or any other well-meaning body' had the political weight to make their reforms work.⁸⁹ A couple of weeks later he had second thoughts, and suggested to Linlithgow that if Jinnah and the Muslim League were to come in, Congress could be bypassed in order to satisfy Sapru's demand for an-Indian Executive Council.⁹⁰

Amery's optimism was sharply interrupted by an angry intervention from Churchill, who sent him a curtly worded minute on 8 April, deploring the attempt to enlarge the Executive and possibly offer the Defence and Finance portfolios to Indians.⁹¹ Amery's diary for the same day showed his annoyance at Churchill's 'petulant protest', and made the almost certainly correct judgement that the

⁸⁷ Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 167.

⁸⁸ Amery to Linlithgow, 14 March 1941, AMEL 2/3/24.

⁸⁹ Amery to Linlithgow, 19 March 1941, AMEL 2/3/24.

⁹⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 5 April 1941, AMEL 1/6/12.

⁹¹ Churchill to Amery, 8 April 1941, AMEL 1/6/21.

Prime Minister had never believed in the offer made in August 1940. He was also prophetic in telling Churchill that Sapru's resolutions had stirred up matters to the extent that he would find it difficult to defend the policies of his department, in India, or in the House of Commons.⁹²

Sapru discussed his plan with a sceptical Linlithgow at a lengthy meeting in Delhi on 7 April, and attempted to show his fairness by indicating that there should be no communal or Anglo-Indian difficulties as regards membership of an enlarged Executive Council.⁹³ Linlithgow pressed him vigorously as to whether, once chosen by the Viceroy, a member of the new Executive Council could be removed. Sapru's disingenuous response that this would not be necessary, as all appointees would be reasonable men, contributed to Linlithgow's outright rejection of the whole scheme as being unworkable.⁹⁴

Churchill gratefully endorsed Linlithgow's abrupt dismissal of Sapru's ideas, and left Amery in an exposed position by warning him not to have any dealings with the Indian Liberals.⁹⁵ Amery's plight was evidenced from the variety of opinions expressed in his correspondence with colleagues who had previous responsibilities in connection with India. On 9 April, Amery wrote to his old confidant, Lord Halifax, ostensibly to discuss Sir Firoz Khan Noon, India's first

⁹² Amery diary, 8 April 1941, AMEL 7/35.

⁹³ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 107.

⁹⁴ Note of a meeting between the Viceroy and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, New Delhi, 7 April 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/136. Cited by Low, 'The Mediator's Moment', p. 154. For a much more detailed and graphic account of the meeting see, Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism, The Imprint of Ambiguity*, pp. 322 – 324.

⁹⁵ Churchill to Amery, 10 April 1941, AMEL 1/6/21.

High Commissioner in Washington, but in reality to express his despair at wishing to respond to Sapru's initiative, but being frustrated by Churchill and Linlithgow.⁹⁶ Samuel Hoare, writing from the British Embassy in Madrid passed a damning judgement on Sapru and his colleagues despite praising their intellectual qualities. Linking the Indian Liberals with their English counterparts he deplored the lack of countrywide backing that they needed in order to become a credible political force.⁹⁷

On 22 April, Amery addressed the House of Commons emphasising that Sapru wanted his proposals to lead to an exclusively Indian Executive Council that could be treated as a dominion, responsible to the Crown. In rejecting Sapru's recommendations he chose not to respond in detail to every point, but concentrated on the communal difficulties that would arise if the scheme were to be implemented. Despite giving qualified praise to Sapru, his rather magisterial delivery seemed very patronising.⁹⁸ Furthermore, members on all sides of the House of Commons were disappointed that he had seemed to settle too readily for the *status quo*, and overstate the obstacles to progress.⁹⁹

While British newspapers shared their politicians' disappointment, the most predictable criticism came from Gandhi who wrote that Amery had insulted Indian intelligence by stressing divisions in his country, for which Britain had been responsible, and also by wanting to remain, in order to maintain its

⁹⁶ Amery to Halifax, 9 April 1941, AMEL 2/1/31.

⁹⁷ Hoare to Amery, 15 April 1941, AMEL 2/1/31.

⁹⁸ *Hansard*, 22 April 1941, vol. 321, cc 47 – 117.

⁹⁹ Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, pp. 324 – 325.

imperial position.¹⁰⁰

Amery also emerged with very little credit from Sapru, whose letters to his colleagues contained comments that varied from the dry and humorous to those of outrage and disappointment. Writing to Shiva Rao on 2 May 1941, he said that he could 'expect nothing with Amery at the helm'.¹⁰¹ Once the significance of Amery's parliamentary statement became known, Sapru accused Amery of being 'unable to distinguish between friend and foe' and throwing Hindus 'on the tender mercies of Mr Jinnah'.¹⁰² Almost certainly Amery had been forced to defend a policy in which he did not believe, but he wryly recognised that his attitude in the House had won him few friends.¹⁰³

Linlithgow's Eventual Expansion of his Executive Council and the Establishment of the National Defence Council

Surprisingly, the deadlock following the British rejection of Sapru's proposals lasted less than a few weeks. It might be supposed that the impetus for a fresh initiative came from Amery, especially after he had discussed Indian reform in some detail with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang.¹⁰⁴ However, the impetus to expand the Viceroy's Executive, and establish the War Advisory Council, came from Linlithgow. He was surprisingly attracted to an alternative to

¹⁰⁰ *Indian Annual Register*, 1941, 1, 327, National Archives of India Library, New Delhi. Cited by Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India, Part II*, p. 259.

¹⁰¹ Sapru to Shiva Rao, 2 May 1941, Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p.314.

¹⁰² Sapru to Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, 6 May 1941, *Ibid*, p. 316.

¹⁰³ Amery diary, 5 May 1941, AMEL 7/35.

¹⁰⁴ Amery diary, 13 May 1941, AMEL 7/35. The normally conservative Lang believed that Linlithgow should be unequivocal in his appeal to Indians to support the war effort by enabling them to participate in the government of the country.

the Sapru proposals put forward by two of his Executive Council, Zafrullah Khan and Ramaswami Mudalior, who both wanted the Viceroy's discretionary powers surrendered to central government.¹⁰⁵

On 22 May 1941 Linlithgow, working within the twin constraints of the August offer and the blunt rejection of Sapru's proposals, sent details of his own scheme to Amery. The entrenched positions taken by Congress and the Muslim League had forced the Viceroy to recommend the selection of three additional non-official Indians without rigid party affiliations, but with proven records in public service. In all, he envisaged the creation of three additional places on the Council and the establishment of new portfolios.¹⁰⁶

Linlithgow's plan for a new War Advisory Committee took account of the difficulties with both Congress and the Muslim League, as he proposed to select the members himself, after consultation with his Council. Linlithgow hoped that his reforms would appeal to some Indian politicians, but recognised that they did not go as far as Sapru's supporters wanted, let alone the principal opponents of the August offer.¹⁰⁷ Although Amery publicly welcomed the Viceroy's enterprise, he privately deplored the turgidity of his prose, and the superfluity of detail that would 'bewilder the War Cabinet'.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless his

¹⁰⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 3 May 1941, AMEL 2/3/25. The two Council members represented different communal interests, and were in fact seeking the removal of the Viceroy's veto.

¹⁰⁶ Linlithgow to Amery, 22 May 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/20. Linlithgow proposed to separate the Law and Supply Departments and to create new Departments of Information and Manpower and Labour.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Amery diary, 23 May 1941, AMEL 7/35.

interim reply to Linlithgow on 24 May offered complete moral support, and only disagreed in principle with the Viceroy's suggestion that the announcement of the changes to the Council could be accompanied by a widespread release of *satyagraha* prisoners.¹⁰⁹

Amery regretted that, once more it would be necessary to persuade a sceptical Churchill that the proposed constitutional changes, however minor, were urgently needed.¹¹⁰ His apprehension was justified because the latter, having seen Linlithgow's explanation of his proposals, had drafted an intemperate and disapproving telegram for the Viceroy. Amery successfully canvassed Attlee's support in persuading Churchill to moderate his language, although their eventual meeting was stormy.¹¹¹ Churchill's amended telegram, although now more restrained, revealed his annoyance that the 'embers of controversy were being stirred up in India, and in the House of Commons', to the detriment of the war effort.¹¹²

Once Churchill had been persuaded to be more reasonable, Amery's next telegram to Linlithgow was designed to assuage the Viceroy's worries before he replied to the Prime Minister, in advance of the meeting of the War Cabinet on 9 June.¹¹³ Linlithgow's reply to Churchill was brave and realistic, emphasising the

¹⁰⁹ Amery to Linlithgow, 24 May 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/20. Amery's principal objection to a general release of Congress prisoners was the likelihood of a strong reaction from Muslims who, whatever their other views, had supported law and order so far during the war.

¹¹⁰ Amery to Churchill, 23 May 1941, AMEL 2/2/4.

¹¹¹ Amery diary, 30 May 1941, AMEL 7/35. Amery told Churchill that, were it not for the parlous war situation, he would have resigned on account of his interference.

¹¹² Churchill to Linlithgow, 1 June 1941, enclosed with Amery's War Cabinet memorandum, 7 June 1941, CAB 67/9/59.

¹¹³ Amery to Linlithgow, 1 June 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/20.

need to persuade liberal Indians that Britain really intended to end the constitutional stalemate, but also conceding that his measures could only be expected to buy a few months peace.

When Amery put the Viceroy's proposals to the War Cabinet on 9 June 1941, they were approved with very little dissent.¹¹⁴ His account of this meeting is more colourful than the official minutes, containing, even for him, an unusual degree of immodesty. He praised his own role in facing up to Churchill, and forcing him to change his mind, claiming that when the Prime Minister was confronted, and made to think again, he invariably later made the correct conclusion.¹¹⁵

Unfortunately, in July 1941 Linlithgow's progress in assembling his Executive Council was suddenly interrupted by a dispute with the provincial government of the Punjab. On the strength of a rumour that a non-Punjabi would be given the Defence portfolio in the expanded Council, the provincial government, fully supported by the Prime Minister, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, had threatened to resign. Furthermore, they were aggrieved that the expanded Council would not include any members from the Punjab.¹¹⁶ With the preservation of the war effort in mind, Amery felt that it would be necessary to make immediate concessions to these Punjabi demands.¹¹⁷ Consequently, his instructions to Linlithgow on 15 July were unambiguous, and stressed the need to appease Sikander. Amery

¹¹⁴ War Cabinet conclusions, 9 June 1941, CAB 65/18/37.

¹¹⁵ Amery diary, 9 June 1941, AMEL 7/35.

¹¹⁶ Amery diary, 14 July 1941, AMEL 7/35.

¹¹⁷ Amery diary, 16 July 1941, AMEL 7/35.

suggested that, in addition to the selection of a Punjabi Muslim, another Hindu member should be found (i.e. a net increase of two in the Council).¹¹⁸ When Amery put the matter before the War Cabinet on 17 July 1941, both the proposals to elect five, instead of three non-official Indians, and to create a National Defence Council, were approved with no dissent.¹¹⁹

Although both Amery and Linlithgow continued to maintain that the National Defence Council performed a useful function in keeping the provinces in touch with the Central Government, its early days were damaged by a dispute with Jinnah. Muslim provincial prime ministers had been elected to the National Defence Council, but Jinnah, angry that they had been chosen without his approval, took action. He seized on the wording of a letter of invitation sent by Sir Roger Lumley, Governor of Bombay (acting for the Viceroy) who invited premiers, not in their official capacities, but as representatives of the Muslim community.¹²⁰ Three of these premiers, Sikander in the Punjab, Huq in Bengal, and Saadullah Khan in Assam, were subjected to intense pressure to resign by a resentful Jinnah, and within a few weeks had duly done so.

Amery was able to do little more than express his distaste for Jinnah's 'skilful exploitation of the wording of Lumley's invitation to the Premiers', although it became clear that his cunning had helped him to strengthen his position with

¹¹⁸ Amery to Linlithgow, telegram 15 July 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/10.

¹¹⁹ War Cabinet conclusions, 17 July 1941, CAB 65/19/7. The National Defence Council was the title given to the previously named War Advisory Council.

¹²⁰ Lumley to Jinnah, 20 June 1941. Cited by Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India 1936 – 1937*, pp. 66 – 67.

leading Muslims.¹²¹ In a defiant performance in the House of Commons on 11 September 1941, Amery stuck to his view that the Prime Ministers had been invited as representatives of the Muslim Community, and not as members of the Muslim League.¹²²

The Release of the *Satyagraha* Prisoners

Although not the intended subject for the debate on the expanded Council in the House of Commons on 1 August 1941, the fiercest argument concerned a possible widespread release of *satyagraha* prisoners, a measure favoured by some members who felt that this would be seen by the United States as a generous gesture. However, in his summing up, Amery dismissed such an amnesty, without an assurance by Congress politicians that they would be prepared to cease their campaign of civil disobedience.¹²³

However, during November 1941 this issue changed from a hypothetical matter to a crisis of practical politics, both in Britain and India. On 1 November 1941, Linlithgow first alerted Amery to the issue of prisoner releases, advising him that three Indian members of his Executive Council, Aney, Sarkar and Rao, had urged him to take immediate action, but only in the cases of Nehru and Azad, who had both been in prison for over a year. Linlithgow was undecided, and anxious to learn Amery's opinion, especially as his colleagues in Delhi had expressed the need to placate opinion both in the USA, and the British

¹²¹ Amery to Linlithgow, letter 27 August 1941, AMEL 2/3/25.

¹²² *Hansard*, 11 September 1941, vol. 374, cc283 – 285.

¹²³ *Hansard*, 1 August 1941, vol. 373, cc1680 – 758.

Parliament.¹²⁴ A later telegram on 7 November 1941 reported that another member of Council, Joshi, had now asked for the release of all Satyagraha prisoners to be debated in Delhi.¹²⁵

Amery replied to the Viceroy on 8 November confirming that he supported the prisoner releases, especially after consultations had shown only two provincial governors, Sir Maurice Hallett in the United Provinces and Sir Arthur Hope in Madras, as opposing the plan. He did not feel unduly influenced by the need to appease American opinion, but he believed that it was imperative to get a favourable reaction in India. This would be best achieved by stressing that the releases were acts of clemency following the failure of the civil disobedience campaign.¹²⁶

During the meeting of the War Cabinet on 12 November 1941, proceedings were interrupted by an angry intervention by Churchill. Bridges' minutes merely recorded that Amery was asked to emphasise to Linlithgow that no commitments should be made regarding the release of political prisoners until the matter had been thoroughly discussed by the War Cabinet.¹²⁷ However, Amery's diary provided a fuller account showing that Churchill's anger arose from a close examination of the telegrams between London and Delhi that appeared to smack of British defeatism, and in fact represented 'surrender at the moment

¹²⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, 1 November 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/21.

¹²⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 7 November 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/21.

¹²⁶ Hallett to Linlithgow, 9 November 1941. Also Hope to Linlithgow, 10 November 1941. Enclosed with Bridges, War Cabinet memorandum, 14 November 1941, CAB 66/19/44. Also, Amery to Linlithgow, 8 November 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/21.

¹²⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 12 November 1941, CAB 65/20/5.

of victory'.¹²⁸

Before the next War Cabinet meeting, Amery prepared a memorandum summarising the background to Linlithgow's proposals, especially the legal issue of whether responsibility for any releases should be with the Government of India,, or with the provinces. However, the main thrust of his argument was the need to support Linlithgow and his newly reconstructed Executive Council. If the prisoner releases were not approved by the War Cabinet, there could be serious consequences in the form of resignations from the Executive Council.¹²⁹

At that War Cabinet meeting, Amery put the case assiduously for the releases, but was unable to persuade his colleagues that the Viceroy's plan should be put into action without delay. Anderson's argument that the provinces should have autonomy to make their own decisions persuaded Churchill that the matter should be further investigated by a small sub-committee, chaired by Attlee.¹³⁰ This group met on 18 November 1941, and according to Amery's diary quickly concluded that, in the peculiar circumstances of war, Delhi's responsibility for law and order outranked provincial authority.¹³¹ Their report, drafted for the War Cabinet by Sir David Monteath, Permanent Under-Secretary at the India Office, proved to be was a masterpiece of official legalese.¹³²

¹²⁸ Amery diary, 12 November 1941, AMEL 7/35.

¹²⁹ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 17 August 1941, CAB 66/19/46.

¹³⁰ War Cabinet conclusions, 17 November 1941, CAB/65/20/8. In addition to Attlee, this sub-committee included Amery, Anderson and Simon. Apart from Amery, all had experience of political work in India.

¹³¹ Amery diary, 18 November 1941, AMEL 7/35.

¹³² Lord Privy Seal (Attlee), War Cabinet memorandum, 18 November 1941, CAB 66/19/48.

At the War Cabinet meeting on 20 November 1941, the supremacy of the Central Government was confirmed. Unfortunately Amery, and later Linlithgow, were both dismayed that Churchill, while reluctantly consenting to the releases, had insisted that no public announcement should be made in Delhi on the matter, but that appropriate instructions should be communicated in confidence to provincial Governors.¹³³

For Linlithgow, the matter of a public announcement of the releases became a critical issue regarding the status of his Executive Council. He explained to Amery that Indian public interest in the releases was high, and if it appeared that responsibility for publicity now rested with the provinces, the Central Government would seem to have been overruled.¹³⁴ Amery realised that he was in a difficult position since, on the one hand he deplored Churchill's Victorian view of India, and on the other hand he realised that Linlithgow's tetchiness invited interference.¹³⁵ Accordingly he prepared a further memorandum for the next War Cabinet meeting on 24 November 1941, recommending that while the prisoner releases should be publicly announced in India, this should be done in a bland manner, eschewing any element of triumphalism.¹³⁶ The War Cabinet realised the delicacy of the situation, and was particularly nervous in considering the matter, after Churchill had made it clear that he regarded the entire handling of the matter (by Amery and Linlithgow) as unfortunate. Not surprisingly, there

¹³³ War Cabinet conclusions, 20 November 1941, CAB 65/20/9.

¹³⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, 22 November 1941, MSS. EUR. F. 125/21, IOR.

¹³⁵ Amery diary, 22 November 1941, AMEL 7/35.

¹³⁶ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 22 November 1941, CAB 66/20/5.

was an unwillingness to approve Amery's plan.¹³⁷

Churchill made one last attempt to persuade Linlithgow to deal with the matter by discreet instructions to the provinces, prefacing his suggestion with a warning 'that it would be a mistake to make a flag day out of this small unwelcomed gesture of reconciliation'.¹³⁸ When Linlithgow stood his ground, the War Cabinet finally agreed the draft announcement that Linlithgow had sent to Churchill on 27 November 1941, albeit now with some recognition of the part played by the Executive Council.¹³⁹ The prisoner releases, including those of Nehru and Azad, began, almost immediately on 3 December 1941.

Throughout this intense period Amery and Linlithgow had different perspectives on the prisoner releases. In early November Amery revealed his anxiety, and needed to be sure that the Government of India was taking such a drastic step from a position of strength, and not weakness.¹⁴⁰ From the more tranquil standpoint of his draft memoirs, he claimed 'that he saw very little in the merits of the question either way'.¹⁴¹ Although Linlithgow expressed his general distaste for further constitutional reform, his commitment to his new Executive Council remained paramount.¹⁴² He was grateful for Amery's

¹³⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 24 November 1941, CAB 65/20/11.

¹³⁸ Churchill to Linlithgow, 26 November 1941, enclosed with Bridges, War Cabinet memorandum, 29 November 1941, CAB 66/20/16.

¹³⁹ War Cabinet conclusions, 1 December 1941, CAB 65/20/15. Linlithgow's telegram to Churchill, 27 November 1941, enclosed with Bridges' War Cabinet memorandum, 29 November 1941, CAB 66/20/16.

¹⁴⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 6 November 1941, AMEL, 2/3/25.

¹⁴¹ Amery, draft memoirs, Chapter IV, AMEL 8/85, p. 20.

¹⁴² Linlithgow to Amery, 20 October 1941, AMEL 2/3/26. This is stressed in more detail by his son, John Glendevon in his work, *The Viceroy at Bay*, p. 210.

continued support, but was highly critical of such Cabinet members as Anderson and Simon, who had attempted to exercise control over policy in India, without the detailed knowledge of a delicate situation.¹⁴³

Neither Amery nor Linlithgow were optimistic that the prisoner releases would produce a positive reaction from Congress, although credit was given to the Hindu and Muslim members of the Executive Council who had put the policy forward. Nehru, on leaving prison remained defiant, saying that nothing had changed and duly ordered Amery to 'get out of India'.¹⁴⁴ Gandhi, also was not mollified, and believed that his campaign of civil disobedience should continue.

Indian Liberals were also unimpressed by Britain's release of the prisoners. Sapru while exhorting Gandhi and Nehru to be more moderate, regretted that there were dangers in having a Secretary of State, such as Amery, with a 'supreme gift for rubbing people up the wrong way'.¹⁴⁵ Writing a few days later to Kunwar Saleb, he went even further, stating that recent difficulties were not with Linlithgow, who had changed his attitude for the better, but with Amery who 'belonged to the Milner school of thought', and accordingly wanted an Indian constitution based on nomination, and not democracy.¹⁴⁶

Amery, India and the Atlantic Charter

For many years, Amery had feared the possible effect of American economic

¹⁴³ Linlithgow to Amery, 24 November 1941, AMEL 2/3/26. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 15 December 1941, AMEL 2/3/26.

¹⁴⁴ Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India, Part II*, p. 264.

¹⁴⁵ Sapru to Sir Sultan Ahmad, 28 November 1941, Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p. 348.

¹⁴⁶ Sapru to Kunwar Saleb, 2 December 1941, Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p. 349.

expansion on his cherished principle of imperial preference. After the Lease-Lend arrangement between Britain and the USA had been settled in March 1941, his anxiety worsened as he realised that its stringent conditions could well leave the British Empire without the protection of tariffs.¹⁴⁷ Once Churchill and Roosevelt had signed the Atlantic Charter on 14 August 1941, he was given further cause for concern. The joint declaration that became known as the Atlantic Charter contained eight points, of which the third had considerable significance for Amery's responsibilities at the India Office. This declared,

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

Anticipating that even this bland statement would draw an immediate response in India, Amery produced War Cabinet papers that were masterpieces of obscure official drafting, both in their interpretation and the amplification of Point III. He considered that it had no direct relevance to the development of independence in India and maintained that the crucial steps to achieve self-determination had been in place since the August offer of 1940.¹⁴⁸

At the War Cabinet meetings on 4 September 1941 and 8 September 1941 it was decided that Churchill would make a statement in the House of Commons on the relevance of the Atlantic Charter to India, Burma, and the remainder of the

¹⁴⁷ Amery diary, 9 August and 11 August 1941, AMEL 7/35. Amery had no illusions that he would be supported by his colleagues in the War Cabinet if he attempted to defend Imperial Preference. Above all, he believed that the technical aspects of the matter were completely beyond Churchill.

¹⁴⁸ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 29 August 1941, CAB 67/9/85.

British Empire.¹⁴⁹ At this stage, Amery now believed that it was necessary to be more specific in public about the consequences for India, and tried, without success, to persuade Churchill to supply further details.¹⁵⁰ Churchill's statement on 9 September therefore only confirmed that Point III was primarily intended for countries that were currently occupied by Nazi Germany, and had no special significance for dependencies in the British Empire that were seeking self-government.¹⁵¹ Once Amery had been informed by Churchill that the 'prior arrangements in India' ruled out the direct application of Point III, he chose not to put a gloss on Churchill's terse parliamentary statement to make it more acceptable to Indian opinion.¹⁵² Accordingly, on both occasions his answers to questions on this matter in the House of Commons were no more than repetitions of Churchill's statement on 9 September 1941.¹⁵³

This interpretation of the Charter produced a strong reaction amongst Congress politicians.¹⁵⁴ Linlithgow reported that much of the criticism in the Indian newspapers came from a view that Britain was going back on the limited promises contained in the August offer. The only good he could see in the situation was that malign attention had been diverted from Amery and himself.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Amery, War Cabinet Memoranda, 4 September 1941 and 8 September 1941, CAB 65/19/25 and CAB 65/19/27.

¹⁵⁰ Amery diary, 8 September 1941, AMEL 7/35.

¹⁵¹ *Hansard*, 9 September 1941, vol. 374, cc68 – 69.

¹⁵² Churchill to Amery, 22 August 1941, M. 812, Churchill Papers 20/36. Cited by Martin Gilbert, *Finest Hour, Winston S. Churchill 1939 – 1941*, London, Heinemann, 1983, p. 1163.

¹⁵³ *Hansard*, 11 September 1941, vol. 374, cc286 – 287. Also, *Hansard*, 9 October 1941, vol. 374, cc1104 – 1105.

¹⁵⁴ Coupland, *Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, p. 261

¹⁵⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 19 September 1941, AMEL 2/3/26.

In the case of Amery, this was untrue, as he had been condemned for dishonesty, and making his comments about Indian freedom in ambiguous language.¹⁵⁶ Sapru was even more trenchant than usual in his criticism of Amery for failing to clarify the essential differences between the terms of the August offer, and Point III of the Atlantic Charter.¹⁵⁷

Linlithgow's Second Extension of Office

In October 1940, Churchill had persuaded Linlithgow to serve for an extra twelve months from his projected retirement date of April 1941. Bearing in mind his difficulties with the Prime Minister in the period leading to the August offer, Amery wisely chose not to make an issue of the matter. Although since August 1940 there had been differences between Viceroy and Secretary of State over a number of matters, there had not been the serious breach of trust that had occurred in their early days of working together.

Nevertheless, Amery was not in favour of Linlithgow's term of office being extended to April 1943. Despite the Viceroy's steadfast qualities, especially in his stewardship of the Indian war effort, Amery had little real respect for his intellectual qualities. As late as November 1954, Amery was frank in his recollection of what he really thought about Linlithgow. His letter to Hodson, who also had little reason to think well of Linlithgow, was a damning criticism of the Viceroy. In particular, he cited his unwillingness to support independent studies

¹⁵⁶ *Hindustan Times*, 15 September 1941. Cited by Coupland, *Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, p. 261.

¹⁵⁷ Sapru to Kunwar Saleb, 17 September 1941, Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p. 341.

of alternative forms of government, and more importantly his bias in favour of Jinnah and the idea of Pakistan.¹⁵⁸

Amery's diaries show that in July 1941 he offered initial resistance to Churchill's insistence that Linlithgow should continue for another year, and also made a doomed attempt to persuade Churchill to send Hoare to Delhi.¹⁵⁹ On 1 August 1941, he reluctantly gave way on the whole matter, and sent Linlithgow a graciously worded telegram, enclosing the Prime Minister's invitation for him to continue.¹⁶⁰

Summary

In terms of constitutional progress the period for Amery from the August offer until the Japanese entry into the war was one of deep frustration that tested even his resilience. Many of his initiatives, whether realistic or otherwise, were unsuccessful, often because they found little favour with either Churchill or Linlithgow, but also because the complexity of Indian political affairs observed from a metropolitan standpoint, made it difficult to make progress. Soon the picture would become more clouded by the Japanese threat to India, increasing interest by the British Labour Party in Indian reform, and unsubtle pressure from a United States that disliked colonialism. Amery would only have got partial compensation from a burgeoning Indian military and industrial war effort.

¹⁵⁸ Amery to Hodson, 29 November 1954, AMEL 1/6/18.

¹⁵⁹ Amery diary, 28 July 1941, AMEL 7/35.

¹⁶⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 1 August 1941, AMEL 1/6/15.

CHAPTER V

THE CRIPPS MISSION

Introduction

This chapter will initially be concerned with the circumstances that led to the decision to send Stafford Cripps to India in an attempt to broker a constitutional settlement, and will then consider the course of the visit and its eventual failure. In particular, an assessment will be made of the amount of influence that Amery was, or was not able to exercise, at all stages of the mission. A downbeat personal audit of his progress at the India Office during 1941 had made no reference to any fresh constitutional initiatives, and had just relied on Linlithgow's newly reconstructed Executive Council to provide broader based government.

While he believed that his speeches had identified the sticking point as regards reform, he was in no doubt that, in doing so, he had incurred the 'contempt and indignation of Indian politicians and newspaper leader writers'.¹ A number of factors can be adduced to explain why, in early 1942, the British Government moved rapidly from passive acceptance of the constitutional *impasse* to an almost frenetic promotion of change.

The Labour Party and a Forward Policy in India

Firstly, in January 1942, the Labour Party, inspired by the return of Stafford

¹ Amery diary, 31 December 1941, AMEL 7/35.

Cripps, from his highly regarded spell as Ambassador to the Soviet Union, began to agitate for fresh initiatives on reform in India.² Amery regarded this new policy with scepticism, especially as he thought that Labour ministers such as Arthur Greenwood and Herbert Morrison were 'feeble creatures' who had failed to support him in the War Cabinet against Churchill's tirades.³

The Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin was Amery's socialist War Cabinet colleague whom he respected for his resolve, if not his trade union sympathies.⁴ As early as 24 September 1941, Bevin had written a long and urgent letter to Amery requesting a more forward policy in India, stating that for over twenty years, promises to Indians over self-government had been so hesitant, that the latter would welcome a British defeat in the East. Dismissing as 'divide and rule', Amery's view that nothing could be done without agreement between Hindus and Muslims, he maintained that short term measures to promote Indian cooperation in the war effort, would not have the same effect as a radical step towards Indian independence.⁵ Bevin was unwilling to let matters rest, and forcibly expressed his arguments at the War Cabinet on 19 December 1941. With Amery absent, and Attlee in the chair, he linked the democratic case for constitutional reform with the need to improve industrial production in

² Amery, draft memoirs Chapter VIII, p. 3, AMEL 8/85.

³ Amery diary, 17 November 1941, AMEL 7/35. Amery's diaries for this period are full of such derogatory comments, even to the extent of phrases such as 'Labour mice'.

⁴ Earlier in 1941, Amery and Bevin had cooperated, through their respective departments, to enable a number of young Indian engineers to travel to England in order to undertake theoretical and practical training. This experiment was a success, and repeated several times. The relevant correspondence between Amery and Bevin is at AMEL 2/3/11. Further details can also be found in Amery's draft memoirs at AMEL 8/85.

⁵ Bevin to Amery, 24 September 1941, AMEL 2/3/11.

India.⁶

Matters became still more formal when the Labour Party leader, Clement Attlee, requested a meeting with Amery about the Indian situation, in response to increasing pressure from his backbenchers, who wanted Britain to take fresh constitutional initiatives. Amery replied that he would need more support from Labour ministers at War Cabinet meetings, but remained convinced that their view of Indian matters 'was based on a poorly informed sympathy with Congress, and a failure to recognise the existence of the Muslim element'.⁷

Congress Working Committee Meeting at Bardoli

Secondly, in late December 1941, soon after the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbour, the Congress Working Committee met at Bardoli, and decided that it could offer support to the war effort in return for independence.⁸ Nevertheless, interpretations of these proceedings vary in terms of the perceived willingness of the Congress Working Committee to cooperate with Britain. Sir Roger Lumley, Governor of Bombay, detected very little cause for optimism, and believed that there should be a sceptical attitude towards reports in the Congress newspapers speaking of 'an olive branch being handed to Britain'.⁹

Sixty years later, a similar view was taken by Peter Clarke in *The Cripps Version*, where he concluded that the Congress Working Committee had acted

⁶ War Cabinet conclusions, 19 December 1941, CAB 65/20/24.

⁷ Amery, diary, 20 December 1941, AMEL 7/35.

⁸ Brown, *Gandhi*, pp. 332 – 333.

⁹ Sir Roger Lumley to Linlithgow, 3 January 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/6.

'either through cunning or disingenuousness', although his analysis did at least concede that Congress might yet be prepared to cooperate in the war effort.¹⁰ By contrast, Coupland, at the time undertaking academic research in India for Amery, recalled that the Congress Working Committee, in recognising the new peril from Japan, both in military and propaganda terms, chose to have the option of military resistance. Nevertheless, while moderate politicians such as Rajagopalachari hoped that a mutual military arrangement between Congress and the British might possibly lead to political reform, Coupland was clear that those influenced by Nehru remained opposed to any form of cooperation.¹¹

Amery's view of the Bardoli resolution, was unambiguous since he explained to Linlithgow that it was absurd to regard Congress as having 'opened the door to cooperation'. He was particularly severe on politicians and officials in London and Delhi who saw an opportunity for meeting Congress half-way, fearing that such an approach would attract the censure of Jinnah and the Muslim League, who so far had offered fair support in the war effort.¹²

A New Initiative by Sapru and the Hindu Liberals

In December 1941 Sapru reacted vigorously to both the Japanese threat and the Bardoli resolution. He regarded Nehru's exhortation to Amery to 'get out' as particularly mischievous, when Indians needed British war machinery and military training.¹³ Sapru's proposals eschewed a detailed long term consideration of the

¹⁰ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 277.

¹¹ Coupland, *Indian Politics, 1936 – 1942*, pp. 265 – 266.

¹² Amery to Linlithgow, 5 January 1942, AMEL 2/3/26.

constitutional position in favour of immediate measures that would involve as many Indians as possible in the war effort. Above all, he stressed that 'India should no longer be treated as a dependency to be ruled from Whitehall', but regarded as any other unit in the British Commonwealth (i.e. a dominion). To achieve this, he envisaged the conversion of the Viceroy's Executive Council into a genuine national government, with departments led by non-officials drawn from all political parties, and responsible only to the Crown.¹⁴ A wily and experienced politician, Sapru ensured that his proposals received the best possible press coverage in Britain and the USA.¹⁵

American Pressure for Political Reform in India

The final factor pushing Britain to make new initiatives in early 1942 was leverage from the USA. Although this would intensify as Cripps conducted his negotiations in India, there was earlier evidence that senior American public figures were concerned at the lack of progress towards constitutional reform. The US Ambassador in London, John G. Winant, and the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, expressed such sentiments, but it was not until after the signing of the Atlantic Charter in August 1941 that the American attitude to the British in India became a source of real tension.¹⁶ There is little evidence that Churchill

¹³ Sapru to M. R. Jayakar, 20 December 1941, Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 350 – 351.

¹⁴ Sapru to Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, (Linlithgow's Private Secretary), 2 June 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 123/124. Sapru was in fact suggesting a system of cabinet government in which the Viceroy would have played a much smaller part.

¹⁵ Sapru to Venkatarama Sastri, 6 January 1942, Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 355 – 356.

¹⁶ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, p. 98.

and Roosevelt quarrelled about India during the meetings that produced the Charter, but the President's son, Elliott, recalled that, at the time, his father indicated that he was 'not prepared to help England so that she could ride roughshod over colonial peoples'.¹⁷

Although the USA made little public comment over the policy of Churchill and Amery to exclude India from Article III of the Atlantic Charter, Roosevelt was irked that Britain had also chosen to omit India from the signatories to a United Nations Declaration.¹⁸ Although Britain soon gave way on this matter, Churchill reacted strongly to Roosevelt's apparently uninformed comments about India, when they met in Washington in December 1941.¹⁹

The First Reluctant Attempts to Instigate Change

In the first week of January 1942, Churchill had no thought of Indian constitutional change. While in Washington he responded to the minutes of the War Cabinet meeting on 19 December 1941, when Bevin had pressed for a new initiative. He wrote a strongly worded telegram to Attlee, copied to Amery, regretting that there had been talk of 'constitutional changes in India at a moment when the enemy was at the frontier'.²⁰ Attlee's response to Churchill's

¹⁷ Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It: The Story of the World Conferences of F. D. R.*, New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946, pp. 24 -25. Cited by M. S. Venkataramani and B. K. Shrivastava, *Quit India, The American Response to the 1942 Struggle*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House PVT Ltd, 1979, p. 43.

¹⁸ Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India*, p. 45.

¹⁹ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume IV, The Hinge of Fate*, London, Cassell, 1951, p. 183. Churchill was careful to state that Roosevelt never verbally raised the issue of India again with him. As was to be the case, later in 1942, the same could not be said of telegrams or memoranda.

²⁰ Churchill to Attlee (via Naval Cypher), 7 January 1942, L/PO/6/106a: f 8.

telegram was typically quiet, but firm, and suggested that, without some progress on Indian reform, there could be difficulties with the Parliamentary Labour Party.²¹ Although he had scant regard for Indian Liberals, Churchill was realistic, and asked Amery to draft a reply to the latest proposals that had been sent to him by Sapru and his colleagues.

At this stage, Amery had not moved from his opinion that Indians wanted independence, not democracy, and that any move towards dominion status should be under the present system of government. Like Attlee, he foresaw difficulties with both the War Cabinet and Parliament over Sapru's plan, whereby an Indianised Executive would function as a national government.²² However, he believed that the spirit of Churchill's reply to Sapru needed to be as conciliatory as possible, without in any way infringing the terms of the August offer. Above all, he needed to draft a compromise that Churchill was prepared to sign, but would still uphold Britain's commitment to minority communities in India.²³

Accordingly, Amery was uncharacteristically cautious over his draft, showing it to both Simon and Attlee, and having more consultations than usual with his officials at the India Office.²⁴ Consequently, the draft that was shortly to become the catalyst for frantic diplomatic activity, was overlong. After an introduction in replica Churchillian prose, Amery devised elaborate arguments for rejecting Sapru's schemes for a national government based on a reformed Viceroy's

²¹ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 51.

²² Amery diary, 8 January 1942, AMEL 7/36.

²³ Amery diary, 15 January 1942, AMEL 7/36.

²⁴ Amery diary, 16 January 1942, AMEL 7/36.

Executive, but attached most weight to the difficulties in making changes when India was under a military threat from Japan.²⁵

Linlithgow's telegrams to Amery on 21 January 1942 showed that he was even more resistant to change, as he repudiated both the Bardoli resolution, and Sapru's proposals. Using blunter language than Amery, he stressed the need to support, not only the August declaration, but also the framework and philosophy of the 1935 Government of India Act. In terms which would antagonise Attlee, he deplored the influence of the Labour Party over Indian affairs, and emphasised that if Britain really wanted to stay in India, unpopular decisions would need to be taken.²⁶ Amery was alarmed by such language, and feared for the modest constitutional amendments agreed in the summer of 1941.²⁷

Attlee's Refusal to Accept a Policy of Inaction

Amery, Linlithgow and Attlee produced detailed memoranda for consideration when the War Cabinet discussed the Indian situation on 5 February 1942. In their different ways, Amery and Linlithgow rejected any radical action, especially any measures that were designed to placate Congress.²⁸ By contrast, Attlee felt the need to reflect the state of opinion in his own party. Already, the Chairman of the India League, Agatha Harrison, had been told by the pro-

²⁵ Amery, draft reply, 16 January 1942, L/PO/6/106a: ff 64 – 7.

²⁶ Linlithgow to Amery, 21 January 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 21 January 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125. Amery had long since realised that the provisions of the 1935 Act were no longer the basis of a viable settlement in India.

²⁷ Amery diary, 25 January 1942, AMEL 7/36.

²⁸ Linlithgow, War Cabinet memorandum, 28 January 1942, CAB 66/12/23. Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 28 January 1942, CAB 66/21/22.

Congress Labour MP for Leyton, Reginald Sorenson, that his colleagues wanted Cripps to go to India armed with powers to effect a settlement.²⁹

Attlee's paper was uncompromising in its criticism of Amery and Linlithgow, as well as being perceptive in its awareness of changing Asian geopolitics. He regarded Amery's preference for doing nothing as a 'hand to mouth policy that did not amount to statesmanship'. He also suspected that Linlithgow had attempted to justify his position by asserting that India was a conquered country that had no affinity with Britain, but nevertheless found it convenient to remain under British protection. Following the suggestions of his party colleagues, his solution was to send someone to speak to the leaders of all political parties. Quoting the precedent of Lord Durham and his reforms for Canada, he stressed that such an emissary should be entrusted with the authority to reach an agreement within broad limits.³⁰

Amery had expected his colleagues to endorse his draft response to Sapru, but was disappointed. Bridges' minutes merely recorded the conclusion that it was considered too dangerous to adhere to the *status quo* without making every possible attempt to break the constitutional deadlock. The compromise reached by the War Cabinet was that a reply to Sapru should be deferred, and that Amery should prepare a fresh draft statement reflecting the mood of the meeting.³¹ Amery's diary for 5 February 1942 provided more missing detail,

²⁹ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 54.

³⁰ Attlee, War Cabinet memorandum, 2 February 1942, CAB 66/21/39.

³¹ War Cabinet conclusions, 5 February 1942, CAB 65/25/16

particularly Bevin's insistence that the War Cabinet should follow Attlee's lead, and send a negotiator to India.³²

Amery's Attempts to Draft Churchill's Defence Council Scheme

The bare comment in the War Cabinet minutes mandating Amery to prepare a new statement, did not mention his role in a radical, but short lived initiative by Churchill, who proposed to expand the Defence Council into an elective body of one hundred persons, representing the provincial assemblies and the princes. Such a reformed Defence Council would discuss the war effort, but more significantly, after the cessation of hostilities, frame the new constitution.

Amery's initial enthusiasm for Churchill's plan soon cooled, when his early discussions with Attlee and Anderson revealed a deep schism over the proposed method of election to the Defence Council. A sceptical Amery could not persuade his colleagues that the proposed arithmetical direct elections to this new body by members of the provincial legislatures would alarm minorities, fearful of majority Congress rule.³³

Amery's uncertainty over the value of an expanded Defence Council was apparent when he visited Chequers on 7 February 1942 to review the scheme with Churchill. He did not say whether he wanted the idea to be aborted, but did suggest to Churchill that it might not be good for his reputation, as

³² Amery diary, 5 February 1942, AMEL 7/36. Amery did not oppose the idea of sending someone out to bring Indians together, especially if it made the task of post-war constitutional reform easier.

³³ Amery diary, 6 February 1942, AMEL 7/36.

Prime Minister, if an initiative so closely identified with him, collapsed.³⁴

The dispute between Amery and Attlee over elections to an enlarged Defence Council soon became more entrenched. After consulting Simon and his Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir David Monteath, Amery produced a detailed plan for both the composition and functions of the Defence Council, underlining the importance of the Viceroy being empowered to make appointments, if only to placate the Muslims and the princes.³⁵ When these details were sent to Attlee he reacted angrily, warning that if the Viceroy were to be given the power to select members of the Defence Council, it would have an adverse effect on the pledges to minorities made in August 1940.³⁶

The Demise of the Defence Council Scheme and Cripps' First Appearance

Significantly, when Amery went to 10 Downing Street on 11 February 1942 to discuss this matter, and prepare a script for Churchill's broadcast, he found Cripps in attendance. His appearance during these discussions was almost certainly evidence of Churchill's intention to bring him into the War Cabinet, and capitalise both on his popularity, and also on the reputation that he had earned as British Ambassador during a difficult period in Moscow. Furthermore, as he was aware of Cripps' longstanding interest in Indian matters he wanted to include him in the Government.³⁷

³⁴ Amery diary, 7 February 1942, AMEL 7/36.

³⁵ Amery to Churchill, 9 February 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 481 – 483.

³⁶ Attlee to Amery, 10 February 1942, L/PO/6/106b: f 480.

³⁷ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 280.

When Amery wrote to Linlithgow explaining Churchill's plans for the Defence Council, matters were already difficult for the Viceroy. Singapore was about to fall to the Japanese forces, and General and Madame Chiang Kai-shek were in the course of a potentially troublesome and unwelcome visit to India. The tone of Amery's enciphered telegram was necessarily sheepish as he was presenting the Viceroy with a *fait accompli*, and informing him that the new proposals would be broadcast to India by Churchill.³⁸ Some tension ought to have been removed when Churchill decided to postpone his broadcast to India, but at this stage, Linlithgow had already expressed his disappointment that matters had gone so far without a consideration of his views.³⁹ Before sending his interim comments on the scheme, he sent an angry telegram to Amery, complaining that he had been 'ill-used', and trusting that, in future he would get better protection from his Secretary of State.⁴⁰

Linlithgow's first detailed response largely confined itself to a sombre prediction of the consequences of forming such a revised Defence Council, whether in respect of its existing members, or in the wider matter of protecting minority groups.⁴¹ Before letting Amery see his full comments on Churchill's proposals, he made a coded criticism of politicians in London by reminding the Prime Minister that, with Halifax away in Washington, there was no one in London with any real experience of central government in India. In these

³⁸ Amery to Linlithgow, 11 February 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 472 – 474.

³⁹ Linlithgow to Amery, 12 February 1942, AMEL 1/6/16.

⁴⁰ Linlithgow to Amery, 13 February 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

⁴¹ Linlithgow to Amery, 13 February 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

circumstances, he claimed particular credibility for his own judgement that the Indian Army would suffer a loss of morale if the Defence Council were to be awarded constitution framing powers.⁴² In summary, he could not accept that a Defence Council elected on a politically representative basis, would settle for merely giving advice, and would really want to run the war.⁴³ Amery realised the power and logic of these arguments, and told Churchill that it would be unwise to override the Viceroy's strong feelings. This effectively marked the end of the Prime Minister's Defence Council scheme.⁴⁴

Cabinet Committee on India

After nothing came from the Defence Council scheme, Churchill formed a Cabinet Committee charged with 'preparing a statement to clarify what Britain had promised to India, and to indicate whether any constitutional advance was feasible at this particular time'.⁴⁵ The India Committee, that for practical purposes soon replaced the full War Cabinet as the policy making body on Indian affairs, was chaired by Attlee, now Deputy Prime Minister, and consisted of Anderson, Cripps, Amery, and Sir John Grigg.⁴⁶ Whether Churchill had intended it, or not, the political composition of the India Committee turned out to be more

⁴² Linlithgow to Churchill, via India Office, 14 February 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

⁴³ Linlithgow to Amery, 16 February 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

⁴⁴ Amery to Churchill, 16 February 1942, L/PO/6/106b: f 422.

⁴⁵ War Cabinet Committee on India conclusions, 26 February 1942, I (42), L/PO/6 106b: ff 332 – 3. Thereafter to be called India Committee.

⁴⁶ In the Cabinet reshuffle in February 1942, and immediately following his return from Moscow, Cripps had been appointed Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House. Anderson, a former Governor of Bombay was Lord President of the Council, Simon, Chairman of a Royal Commission on India was Lord Chancellor, and Grigg, a former Finance member of the Viceroy's Executive had just been appointed as Secretary of State for War.

to Attlee's liking than might have been expected ⁴⁷

The pressure on Britain to encourage political reform in India that had been evident throughout the early weeks of 1942, intensified following the fall of Singapore. Amery had very little to do with the visit of Chiang Kai-shek, and his wife, to India during February 1942, but had been kept well informed by Linlithgow, who, while concerned that they might have had too much contact with Nehru, had been relatively sanguine about his visitors' impressions of the country.⁴⁸ With an eye to the safety of China, Chiang Kai-shek wanted reassurance that the Indian war effort would be energised, primarily by Britain taking real steps in awarding self-government. Significantly, he did not address these views in the first instance to Churchill, Amery, or Linlithgow, but to Britain via Cripps. A similar message was sent to Washington.⁴⁹ Roosevelt responded quickly, and mandated Averell Harriman, his Special Representative in London, to underline an unlikely connection between the vexed issue of the Lend-Lease Agreement, and Britain's responsibilities regarding political reform in India.⁵⁰

Consequently, the first meeting of the India Committee took place on 26 February 1942 in an atmosphere of expectation, although the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Edward Bridges merely recorded that no decisions were taken.⁵¹ Amery's

⁴⁷ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 281. The composition of the India Committee was interesting. Apart from Amery, there were no mainstream Conservative members, and he certainly could not be regarded as part of the diehard tendency over Indian constitutional matters.

⁴⁸ Sir Maurice Hallett to Linlithgow, 21 February 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/105. Amery read a copy of the telegram by Hallett, who was Governor of the United Provinces.

⁴⁹ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 280.

⁵⁰ Avril Harriman to Roosevelt, 26 February 1942, *FRUS*, 1942, 1, 608. Cited by Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 63.

⁵¹ India Committee conclusions, 26 February 1942, I (42), L/PO/6/106b: ff 332 – 3.

diary provided a much fuller account of a meeting that he found to be far from satisfactory, and which this time saw Churchill in the chair. If the object had been to begin the drafting of a fresh declaration on reform, and not merely record the aims of the India Committee, then Amery, in frustration, lamented that no headway had been made in a session lasting two hours. His remarks about his colleagues were critical, blaming Attlee, Cripps and Anderson for still being in favour of Churchill's discarded scheme for an expanded Defence Council, and Grigg for wanting to do nothing. However, his most damning judgment was reserved for Churchill, whom he possibly thought was in the early stages of the kind of terminal mental decline that both Asquith, and Birkenhead had suffered.⁵²

The India Committee met a further seven times in the next eleven days, but with Attlee in the chair instead of Churchill made far better progress.⁵³ For the second meeting on 27 February, Amery had produced alternative draft declarations that were long and somewhat pompous, presumably on the premise that they were to have formed the script for Churchill's broadcast.⁵⁴ The meeting made the critical decision that, in addition to an address by Churchill a short declaration should be prepared specifying the circumstances in which provinces could opt to stay out of the new India, and also secede from the Commonwealth.⁵⁵

⁵² Amery diary, 26 February 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁵³ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 282.

⁵⁴ Amery diary, 27 February 1942, AMEL 7/36. Also, Amery diary, 27 February 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁵⁵ India Committee conclusions, 27 February 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 310 -2.

Cripps' Increasing Influence in the India Committee

At this point, Cripps also drafted his own declaration for consideration by the India Committee, in the process consulting his Labour colleague, Agatha Harrison, who explained that while she had no misgivings over making promises for the future, more needed to be offered to Indians in the short term. Her reluctant acceptance only came when Cripps admitted that he had gone as far as he could.⁵⁶

When the India Committee next met on 28 February, the drafts produced by both Amery and Cripps were considered. No original version of Cripps' version has survived, but beyond a more conciliatory final paragraph regarding Indian cooperation during the remainder of the war, it is unlikely that it differed greatly in substance from Amery's effort.⁵⁷ Amery did not seem concerned that the Committee preferred to work from Cripps' plan, and conceded that it 'put the more sensational points into the foreground'. Nevertheless, he described the drafting as 'looser in thought and language than he would have liked', as well as admitting to belated reservations over permitting India to leave the British Empire.⁵⁸

After taking some time to assess Cripps' activities since his return from Moscow, Amery expressed fears that he might produce excessively pro-Congress ideas for reform that Churchill would not be sufficiently informed to

⁵⁶ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 64.

⁵⁷ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 282.

⁵⁸ Amery diary, 28 February 1942, AMEL 7/36.

contest. However, when he had discussed Indian matters with Cripps at his home in Eaton Square, he was reassured that his new Labour colleague would be a healthy influence, especially with his realistic knowledge of the Indian Army.⁵⁹

His draft memoirs that recalled his early dealings with Cripps were less complimentary, and although admitting that he was talented, stated that he had 'swallowed all Nehru's views on his visit to India in 1939'. Interestingly, his sweeping statement that Cripps regarded Muslims as a nuisance, and the princes as an anachronism, was emphatically rejected by Turnbull, the proof reader of his memoirs.⁶⁰

However, it must be said that Amery had only an incomplete knowledge of Cripps' dealings with Indian politicians. Cripps had already disapproved of British policy towards India at the start of the war, when he made a private visit to India in December 1939 *en route* to China. He was able to show proposals to the Congress President, Maulana Azad that provided for an immediate reconstitution of Linlithgow's Executive, with the Viceroy's powers reduced to those of a constitutional monarch. It was to prove unfortunate that Azad believed that this very tentative offer was being repeated by Cripps in April 1942, an error or judgement that would have serious consequences.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Amery diary, 22 February 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁶⁰ Amery draft memoirs, Chapter VIII, pp. 6 – 8, AMEL 8/85. Note the manuscript alterations by Turnbull.

⁶¹ Eric Stokes, 'Cripps in India', Review of N. Mansergh and E. W. R. Lumby (eds.), *Constitutional Relations between Britain and India. The Transfer of Power 1942 – 7, Volume I, The Cripps*

From 28 February until a meeting of the India Committee on 3 March, there were a number of amendments to the draft declaration. During this short period, no radical alterations were made, but any changes of emphasis, or meaning almost certainly reflected the opinions of Cripps rather than the Secretary of State. In terms of Indian participation in the management of the war effort, Amery was to be especially disappointed, having wanted a specific clause inserted whereby any short term reforms would only be made within the framework of the existing Indian constitution.⁶² The responsibility for this looser invitation to Indians to cooperate almost certainly lay with Cripps and Agatha Harrison.⁶³

The amendments to Amery's earlier drafts may appear relatively trivial, but there is little doubt that he was becoming increasingly uncomfortable at the way in which policy was being made in London. On 1 March, he wrote to Churchill in forthright terms, warning that the future of the British Empire was at stake. In particular he suspected that he was being rushed by Cripps and Attlee over the wording and date of the declaration, and feared that Linlithgow would be similarly alarmed. Whatever the Viceroy's failings as a subtle and imaginative negotiator, Amery had considerable respect for his dedication to the British Empire.⁶⁴ Furthermore, his diary recorded his fear that he would not be

Mission January 1942 – April 1942, The Historical Journal, Volume 14, No. 2 (January 1971), p. 430.

⁶² Amery, India Committee memorandum, 28 February 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 313 – 5.

⁶³ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 68.

⁶⁴ Amery to Churchill, 2 March 1942, L/PO/6/106B: ff 282 – 3.

supported against Attlee and Cripps, chiefly because of Churchill's ignorance of the intricacies of the Indian situation.⁶⁵

Linlithgow, Firoz Khan and their Reservations

Linlithgow's initial reaction to the draft declaration was surprisingly phlegmatic.⁶⁶ His telegram to Amery on 2 March demonstrated his approval of its philosophy and detailed contents, especially the contrast between the clear promises for the post-war period, and the lack of specificity for the immediate future. With the performance and morale of his Executive in mind, his only concern was that if Congress and the Muslim League accepted the declaration they would want all the portfolios on the Executive to be filled by political appointees.⁶⁷

Sir Firoz Khan Noon, the former Indian High Commissioner in London, and at this time, a member of the Viceroy's Executive, was a respected and moderate Muslim. He warned Amery that Sapru and his colleagues were agents of Congress, in the guise of liberals, and warned that if Britain conceded complete Indianisation of the Executive, a Hindu Raj would be the only outcome. This would disadvantage Muslims who, for the first time in the war, would resort to protest, and possibly civil disorder.⁶⁸ At this stage Amery had sufficient belief that the declaration would provide adequate safeguards for Muslims, and asked Linlithgow to assure Noon that his worries would be calmed by the clause

⁶⁵ Amery diary, 1 March 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁶⁶ Amery diary, 2 March 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁶⁷ Linlithgow to Amery, 2 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

⁶⁸ Sir Firoz Khan Noon to Amery, via Linlithgow, 28 February 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 291.

providing for the option of Pakistan.⁶⁹

The much altered declaration was reviewed by the War Cabinet on 3 March, and only minor changes were recommended, the draft being finally completed at a meeting of the India Committee, later that day.⁷⁰

To provide Linlithgow with some guidance on the implementation of the final paragraph covering the immediate wartime position, a separate set of instructions was drafted by Attlee. These requested the Viceroy to use his judgement in the allocation of posts on the Executive Council, subject to the 'needs of defence and good government during the present critical time'.⁷¹ The War Cabinet approved the declaration on the following day.⁷²

The Thoughts of Amery, Ministers and the 1922 Committee on the Declaration

It is worth discovering Amery's early opinions of the declaration that would form the basis of Cripps' visit to India. In correspondence he chose his words with uncharacteristic restraint. Writing to a potentially hostile Linlithgow, he suggested that 'the bark of the new declaration was worse than its bite', and agreed that, in many respects it dealt effectively with such difficulties as Muslim aspirations and rights, as well as the need to supply an alternative to Sapru's

⁶⁹ Amery to Linlithgow, 2 March 1942, L/PO/6/106b: f 285. This was not an example of Amery supporting the idea of partition; that did not come until much later.

⁷⁰ War Cabinet conclusions, 2 March 1942, CAB 65/25/27. Also, India Committee minutes, L/PO/6/106b: ff 230 -2.

⁷¹ Ibid, Annex, draft instructions to Viceroy.

⁷² War Cabinet conclusions, 4 March 1942, CAB 65/25/28.

proposals.⁷³ His detailed minute to Churchill on 4 March 1942 was more guarded, although he did agree that Britain should go ahead with the declaration.

His private views were franker. His diary for 4 March 1942 recorded his loss of temper at a meeting of the India Committee over the issue of providing adequate explanatory material to accompany the declaration. He took exception to Attlee's comment that, on this matter, the entire India Committee was against him, and asserted that, as Secretary of State, he had a right to stand out, especially as it would be the Viceroy and himself who would have to implement its provisions. Recalling the events many years later, Amery remained sanguine about the declaration as finally revised, but deplored its effects upon Churchill. Using the colourful metaphor of a maiden prepared to marry an odious suitor in order to repair her family's finances, he judged that the Prime Minister had been forced by the need for domestic unity and American good will to espouse policies to which he was fundamentally opposed.⁷⁴

Amery had been told by Cripps that the publication of the declaration should go hand in hand with the removal of Linlithgow from office.⁷⁵ Amery was not in favour of this, but whatever his feelings on the declaration, and any consequent negotiations, it was evident that, up to this point, he and Churchill had not been able to prevent Attlee and Cripps from shaping its content according to themselves.⁷⁶

⁷³ Amery to Linlithgow, 2 March 1942, AMEL 2/3/26.

⁷⁴ Amery, draft memoirs, Chapter VIII, pp. 12 – 13, AMEL 8/86.

⁷⁵ Amery, diary 19 and 28 February 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁷⁶ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 283.

Amery was present at two meetings on 5 March when there was heated discussion of the declaration, in particular the right to secede from the British Empire, and the provincial opt-out. At a lunchtime meeting of all ministers in the Prime Minister's room at the House of Commons, those who were not members of the War Cabinet were given their first opportunity to examine the declaration, as well as Sapru's manifesto. The minutes of this meeting showed that there was widespread disagreement, both over the need to make a declaration, and also its details, in particular the likely damage to military morale that could arise from the right to leave the Commonwealth.⁷⁷ Later on 5 March, Amery also addressed the Conservative 1922 Committee on the wording and purpose of the declaration, and endured an even more rancorous reception from discontented backbenchers. Some members felt that any form of constitutional settlement was impossible, others believed that Sapru's proposals should have been accepted, while many others did not want Labour's support for Congress to result in disappointment for Muslims.⁷⁸ However, the greatest concern was that India would choose to leave the British Empire, and that all influence there would be lost.⁷⁹

The Decision to Send Cripps to India

The idea of sending a member of the War Cabinet to India to discuss a scheme

⁷⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 5 March 1942, CAB 65/57.

⁷⁸ Amery to Churchill, 5 March 1942, L/PO/1066: f 226.

⁷⁹ R. A. Butler to Hoare, 6 March 1942, Templewood Papers, University Library Cambridge, cited by Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 70.

agreed in London, largely coincided with a growing sense that prior publication of the declaration might be unwise. Writing in 1979, Moore suggested that the idea of sending an emissary to India was first suggested by Cripps, in a detailed note that he composed for the War Cabinet on 8 March 1942.⁸⁰ However, Amery's diary for 7 March 1942 recorded that, at a War Cabinet meeting on that day, Cripps proposed that someone should go to India to attempt to break the political deadlock, and offered to travel himself. Amery's partial deafness led him to miss this suggestion, with the result that he was unable to express his objections during the meeting. Nevertheless, once the proceedings were over, he lost no time in telling Churchill that Cripps was completely unsuitable for such a delicate mission, chiefly because Muslims regarded him 'as an out and out Congress man'. Not surprisingly, he told the Prime Minister that he should be the man to go to India, although no record can be found of a response.⁸¹

On 8 March, Amery was at Chequers with Cripps, when Churchill accepted the latter's offer to discuss the declaration with Indian leaders. His perceived slight at the likelihood of Cripps conducting negotiations in India, rather than himself, was considerable. Churchill was shrewd enough to suggest to Amery that Cripps, as a left wing politician, was better placed to put forward an 'essentially pro-Muslim and reasonably Conservative policy'. Amery reluctantly

⁸⁰ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 73. Also, note by Cripps, 8 March 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 99 – 103.

⁸¹ Amery diary, 7 March 1942, AMEL 7/36.

saw some merit in this argument, but remained apprehensive that Linlithgow might well offer his resignation on hearing of Cripps' visit.⁸²

The likelihood of the Viceroy's resignation was made stronger when a telegram from Linlithgow was delivered to Amery at this meeting of the War Cabinet. This telegram stated in forthright terms that if the declaration were to be published in its current form, he would resign. His concerns were wide ranging, whether making specific points such as the effect on the fighting capacity of the Indian Army, or condemning the entire declaration 'as a flop'. He was almost certainly not playing a devious game of bluff, because most of the contents of the telegram concerned the arrangements for his leaving office.⁸³

Churchill replied to Linlithgow's drastically worded telegram, and writing with surprising calmness, explained that a public announcement of the declaration had been shelved, and that Cripps would be coming out to 'put it across on the spot'. Somewhat as a hostage to fortune, he proposed that Cripps would be bound by the terms of the declaration, as finally drafted.⁸⁴

The Preparation and Delivery of Churchill's Speech in the House of Commons on 11 March

Once it was decided that Churchill would make an announcement in the House of Commons about Cripps' impending visit to India, Amery sought to influence the contents of his speech. As the statement was to be made on 11 March, there

⁸² Amery diary, 8 March 1942, AMEL 7/36. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 8 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22, Nos. 558, 559 and 568.

⁸³ Linlithgow to Amery, 9 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/158.

⁸⁴ Churchill to Linlithgow, via the India Office, 10 March 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 70 – 72.

was little time for preparation. The first draft was written by Cripps on 8 March, and while not including anything likely to worry Amery or Churchill, was too wordy, and not suitable for an excited House of Commons.⁸⁵ Amery's detailed amendments were minor and self-explanatory, but his advice to the Prime Minister over Cripps' negotiating tactics was enigmatic. On the one hand, he favoured Cripps working to a definite plan, and on the other hand, he was anxious not to 'fetter the Cabinet's emissary's discretion'.⁸⁶

Churchill soon took over the redrafting of his proposed statement, and invited Amery to review the result, early on 11 March, the day on which the announcement was to be made. Amery's diary recorded that he considered this draft to be poor, and that he needed Monteath's assistance to produce a further version. The Prime Minister's eventual announcement to an initially quiet, but later raucous, House of Commons, was much briefer than the drafts prepared by Cripps and Amery, and certainly in terms of tone and ambition, did not go as far as the declaration, or indeed the negotiating instructions produced by the India Committee.⁸⁷ Cripps' mandate was confined to short term reform, in particular the licence to offer posts to Indians in the Executive Council, provided the state of negotiations were favourable.⁸⁸

Before Cripps left for India on 14 March, Amery attempted to ensure that

⁸⁵ Note by Cripps, 8 March 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 99 – 103.

⁸⁶ Amery to Churchill, 9 March 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 83 – 90.

⁸⁷ *Hansard*, 11 March 1942, vol. 378, cc69 – 71. Also, India Committee conclusions, 9 March 1942, L/PO/106b: ff 122 – 123.

⁸⁸ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 79.

Linlithgow was as content as possible with the forthcoming negotiations, as well as being informed about the exact brief given to Cripps. With predictable pedantry, Amery sent a number of telegrams to Linlithgow on 10 March 1942. Initially, Amery tried to persuade the Viceroy that the declaration was an essentially Conservative policy, although he conceded that Muslims could well be prejudiced against Cripps. Above all, he expressed his regrets that in composing the declaration, Linlithgow had barely been consulted at all.⁸⁹ He then chose to portray Cripps' mission as one which, even in the probable event of failure over the long term constitutional issues, would demonstrate Britain's good faith to the outside world.⁹⁰ His third short telegram was a less than convincing prediction that Cripps would be prepared to face unpopularity with his left wingers by adopting a policy that 'fell so short of their crude ideas'.⁹¹

His fourth telegram, issued on 10 March, was a much longer, yet closely argued justification for the thinking in Britain that had produced the declaration. With a touch of false modesty, he also provided a full explanation why Cripps could well be preferable to himself as an emissary, possibly because a member of the British left might speak more effectively to Congress.

Whether Cripps really accepted the constraints of the terms of reference envisaged by Amery and the War Cabinet, would remain unanswered, even after the end of his mission. Moore made the clear point that Cripps did not feel the

⁸⁹ Amery to Linlithgow, 10 March 1942, L/PO/6/106b: ff 76 – 7.

⁹⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 10 March 1942, R/30/1/1: ff 20 – 1.

⁹¹ Amery to Linlithgow, 10 March 1942, L/PO/6/106b: f 61.

need for close consultation with Linlithgow over the reconstruction of the Viceroy's Executive. As a consequence, he probably convinced himself that he could negotiate with Indian party leaders 'within limits that Linlithgow might feel unable to accept'.⁹²

Clarke's account of the Cripps mission concluded that Amery, by flattering Linlithgow, and stating that the declaration did not unpick the 1940 offer, was being Machiavellian.⁹³ Amery was certainly capable of intrigue and devious conduct, but at this time, the exasperated and anxious tone of his correspondence and diary point to a man not in control of events. His fanciful and self-deluding diary entry for 11 March would seem to confirm this judgement, as he claimed that he had exerted considerable influence in the drafting of the declaration, that had been the end product of the education he had given his colleagues in India matters, over the last two years.⁹⁴

Once Linlithgow learned that Cripps was coming, he realised that he would have to cooperate. Nevertheless, he immediately asked Amery to ensure that his position of authority in India would not be undermined by Churchill's statements, or by any instructions given to Cripps by the War Cabinet.⁹⁵

⁹² Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 80.

⁹³ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 288.

⁹⁴ Amery diary, 11 March 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁹⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 10 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/158. Note that the full text of the declaration that Cripps took to India is reproduced at Appendix II.

Important Correspondence and Opinions before the Start of the Mission

Before Cripps commenced work, Amery corresponded regularly with Linlithgow. The Secretary of State's telegrams initially concerned the practical arrangements for Cripps' visit, including his offer to loan his Private Secretary, Frank Turnbull, to the Lord Privy Seal for the whole of his time in India. Of more significance for the conduct of the mission was Amery's support for Cripps' suggestion that, after two days of meeting with Linlithgow, his Executive Council, and some provincial governors, he should move with his entourage to a separate house in Delhi, where he could interview Indian politicians.⁹⁶ Amery would have gained a little comfort from the fact that Coupland, in Delhi conducting his constitutional research, was added to the team assisting Cripps.⁹⁷ Similarly he realised that Hodson, his appointee as Reforms Commissioner, would be present in the Linlithgow camp throughout the negotiations.

Amery soon became aware that there could be difficulties with paragraph (e) of the declaration, which stated that, 'His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear responsibility for Indian defence'. As this phrase concerned a likely area of immediate reform, its interpretation was more than mere semantics. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Kingsley Wood, sought clarity from Amery, fearing that, at a time of rapidly worsening sterling balances with India, implementation of the declaration could increase Britain's financial commitments,

⁹⁶ Amery to Linlithgow, 12 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

⁹⁷ The group helping Cripps became known by the collective noun, 'Crippery'.

as well its political and military responsibilities.⁹⁸ Amery, one of the few ministers to understand the technicalities of Britain's financial relationship with India was alarmed by Wood's concern, and immediately put the matter in the hands of his senior officials, Monteath and W.D. Croft. Their two detailed minutes of 16 March and 17 March reassured Amery that the wording of the declaration referred only to strategic and military issues, and recommended that Cripps should be briefed to this effect.⁹⁹ Amery reflected for a few days on this advice from the India Office, but while accepting that Britain would not be contracting any more financial obligations, explained to Wood that any mention of the matter to Cripps could jeopardise 'the bargaining atmosphere'.¹⁰⁰

As the start of Cripps' negotiations approached, Amery looked forward with suspicion and sober realism, rather than optimism, suspecting that British left wing newspapers were poised to denounce the mission as a Conservative ploy to use Cripps to advance the policies of Churchill and Amery. He was especially sombre, when he admitted that his speeches had received a poor reception from Hindu politicians, and with uncharacteristic humility conceded that in the eighteen months since the August offer, he had not been able to make a significant contribution to a political settlement in India.¹⁰¹

Once Churchill had announced the mission, Linlithgow was able to report a

⁹⁸ Sir Kingsley Wood, note 14 March 1942, L/PO/6/106c: J 14.

⁹⁹ Monteath minute, 16 March 1942, L/PO/6/106c: f 144. Croft minute, 17 March 1942, L/PO/6/106c: f 143.

¹⁰⁰ Amery to Wood, 21 March 1942, L/PO/6/106c: f 139.

¹⁰¹ Amery diary, 22 March 1942, AMEL 7/36.

variety of responses from Indians. Nehru and Jinnah chose to say nothing until they had been given more time, but Azad, Rajagopalachari and Sapru all gave qualified approval to the forthcoming negotiations.¹⁰² Similarly, representatives of the Sikhs, Scheduled Castes, and the Chamber of Princes provided cautious support.¹⁰³

Cripps' Meetings with the Viceroy's Executive Council

A scrutiny of Amery's diary, and both his private and official correspondence, reveal that he was told little about Cripps' first few days in India. On 24 March, Cripps differed with Linlithgow over the responsibility for making appointments to an Executive Council, reconstructed within the terms of the declaration. Cripps had handed the Viceroy a list of the members of a completely new Council, made up entirely of nominated Hindus and Muslims. Not surprisingly, Linlithgow demurred.¹⁰⁴ Cripps merely replied that whatever he or Linlithgow did, final responsibility for the selection of personnel in the Executive remained with the War Cabinet.¹⁰⁵

Before Cripps had discussions with anyone else, he issued a statement to the press, which although revealing no details of the declaration, gave an effusive account of his affection for India, and an expression of his desire for a short visit, with no long-winded meetings. In admitting his previous close association

¹⁰² Linlithgow to Amery, 12 March 1942, L/P & J/8/510: f 638.

¹⁰³ The Nizam of Hyderabad to Linlithgow, 12 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/124. Linlithgow to Amery, 14 March 1942, L/P & J /8/510: ff 634 – 635.

¹⁰⁴ Hodson, *The Great Divide*, p. 98. This incident was witnessed by Hodson.

¹⁰⁵ Cripps note, 23 March 1942, L/P & J/10/4: f 11.

with Congress politicians, he asserted that he would be speaking to representatives of other parties and faiths with an open mind.¹⁰⁶

When Cripps read out the declaration to the Executive Council he swore the members to secrecy, but did agree to answer questions, which bearing in mind the diverse nature of his audience, were wide ranging. Although Cripps responded to enquiries relating to both the immediate and post war situations, it would later emerge that many Council members felt slighted by their treatment.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, one of Amery's few early actions was to confirm to Linlithgow that, although he would prefer three official members to remain on the Executive, the difficulties in even appointing an Indian unofficial Finance or Defence member were not insuperable.¹⁰⁸

Cripps and the First Meetings with Indian Politicians

In truth, Cripps had been impatient to speak to Indian politicians, and after brief meetings with provincial governors, spent the next few days away from the Viceregal palace, conducting interviews, on his own, with a large number of Indian politicians.¹⁰⁹ Although, at this stage, the details of the declaration had not been officially divulged, he had been sufficiently explicit to invite responses to both the long term plans for constitutional reform, and also the possible

¹⁰⁶ Cripps, press statement, 23 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/141.

¹⁰⁷ Notes on Executive Council Meeting, 24 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/141. Also, Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay*, pp. 28 – 229.

¹⁰⁸ Amery to Linlithgow, 25 March 1942, L/PO/6/106c: ff 119 – 120. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 25 March 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹⁰⁹ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 294.

changes that could be made immediately.¹¹⁰ The minority groups such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikhs rejected the proposals, the former chiefly because they disliked the provincial opt-out, and the latter because they feared the partition of the Punjab.¹¹¹

However the first meetings with Azad, the Congress President, and Jinnah, representing the Muslim League, held out more hope of a settlement. Cripps' account of his meeting with Azad was a matter of fact record of the Congress desire to have an Indian in charge of the defence of the country.¹¹² Azad, whose grasp of English was not perfect, believed that Cripps had offered full Indianisation of the Executive Council, and more importantly, the end of the Viceregal veto.¹¹³

The proceedings of his interview with Jinnah were less obscure, as the Muslim leader showed surprise at the apparent progress towards meeting his case for Pakistan, and was even prepared to consider any interim arrangements that gave proper representation to his people in a Viceroy's Executive that would operate as a cabinet.¹¹⁴ When Cripps met Gandhi on 27 March, he found the Mahatma polite, but opposed to the declaration, on the joint grounds that the princely states were still too undemocratic, and that insufficient safeguards for the unity of India had been provided.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Cripps note, 25 March 1942, L/P & J/10/4: ff 15 – 6.

¹¹¹ Rizvi, *Linlithgow in India*, p. 188.

¹¹² Cripps note, 25 March 1942, L/P & J/10/4: ff 15 – 6.

¹¹³ *India Wins Freedom*, p. 57. Cited by Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 84.

¹¹⁴ Cripps note, 25 March 1942, L/P & J/10/4: ff 17 – 8.

¹¹⁵ Cripps note, 27 March 1942, L/P & J/10/4: ff 26 – 30.

Cripps and the Press Conference on 29 March

Cripps took the initiative when, having obtained the permission of the War Cabinet, he made the contents of the declaration public at a press conference on 29 March.¹¹⁶ As Cripps realised that the true sticking point for his mission was the matter of responsibility for the defence of India, he chose his words carefully, but nevertheless went further than Linlithgow or Amery would have wanted. Although he still emphasised that the defence of India was the joint responsibility of the British Government and the Government of India, he conceded that the conventions of the constitution could be altered in such a way as to permit the Executive Council to become a Cabinet.¹¹⁷ When Amery saw the approbation that the proposals had received in the British press, he did not appear to notice Cripps' gloss on the machinery of government in India, and indeed remarked with some irony, that none of the coverage had linked him with the declaration.¹¹⁸

Cripps' optimism did not last long. A friendly, but fruitless conversation with Nehru on 30 March convinced him that, while the defence issue was the specific area of disagreement, Gandhi and his pacifistic colleagues on the Congress Working Committee were still opposed to the declaration on general grounds.¹¹⁹ Cripps attempted to rescue the situation when he wrote to Churchill, via Amery

¹¹⁶ Coupland, *The Cripps Mission*, London, Oxford University Press, 1942, pp. 26 – 27. Coupland, by now a member of the 'Crippery', gave unreserved praise for the confident performance of the Lord Privy Seal.

¹¹⁷ Proceedings of a press conference held by Cripps, 29 March 1942, L/P & J/10/3: ff 45 – 51.

¹¹⁸ Amery diary, 29 March 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹¹⁹ Cripps note, 30 March 1942, L/P & J/10/4: ff 57 – 8.

and Linlithgow, and in stressing how dangerous matters had become, still believed that there could be an Indian responsible for defence, without compromising the operational freedom of the Commander-in-Chief.¹²⁰ Amery lost no time in supporting Cripps by writing to Churchill, endorsing this suggestion, an opinion that he repeated at a meeting of the War Cabinet, later that day.¹²¹

Cripps certainly had cause for pessimism, as on the day after his appeal to Churchill he was obliged to send him a further telegram, after a meeting with Nehru and Azad. They had brought a resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee that rejected the proposals in the declaration, especially those relating to the control of defence, which were described as 'vague and incomplete'.¹²²

Amery's view prevailed at the meeting of the War Cabinet on 2 April, and it was agreed that Churchill should indicate to Cripps how far he could go in his negotiations with Congress over the role that an Indian could play in defence.¹²³ The telegram to Cripps authorising him to go ahead was drafted by Churchill, but finally amended by Amery, so as to be helpful, yet wary of the intentions of Congress. Above all, Cripps was told that he could not agree anything with Azad

¹²⁰ Cripps to Churchill, via Viceroy and India Office, 1 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹²¹ Amery to Churchill, 2 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c: f 76. Also, Amery diary, 2 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹²² Cripps to Churchill (via Viceroy and India Office), 2 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22. Also, Coupland, *The Cripps Mission*, p. 44.

¹²³ War Cabinet conclusions, 2 April 1942, CAB 65/26/1.

and Nehru, without obtaining War Cabinet approval.¹²⁴

The next two days brought evidence to Amery that Linlithgow was becoming anxious about Cripps' activities. The Viceroy felt that he needed to acquaint the War Cabinet with his own worries and those of the Commander-in-Chief.¹²⁵

Initially, he was willing to show any such telegrams to Cripps, but later suggested that provided Churchill agreed, they should be sent directly to London.¹²⁶

Cripps' Search for Help in Finding a Defence Formula

By the time Cripps wrote to Churchill on 4 April, he had already sought fresh assistance in finding a politically acceptable formula concerning India's wartime role.¹²⁷ He asked Shiva Rao, the Congress politician and journalist, to assemble a small sub-committee to produce a solution that might appeal to both sides. Aided by V. P. Menon, who was working in the Reforms Office, Sapru, Rajagopalachari, and B. N. Rau, he drafted a plan recommending that Executive Council members should operate under collective responsibility, and also that the War Cabinet would always have the final say in the defence of India. As a gloss to this latter point, the Indian Defence Minister, and the British Commander-in-Chief would cooperate fully, although each would have their own clearly defined areas of

¹²⁴ Churchill to Cripps, 3 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹²⁵ Amery diary, 4 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹²⁶ Linlithgow to Amery, 2 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 3 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹²⁷ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 307.

responsibility.¹²⁸

There was some evidence of these ideas, when, Cripps wrote to Churchill on 4 April, setting out a number of options regarding the functions and responsibilities of an Indian responsible for defence. His preference was for the riskier step of awarding the Defence portfolio to an Indian, subject to a convention, providing that in matters relating directly to the prosecution of the war, the Commander-in-Chief would have primacy. With a sense of realism, he suspected that this option would not commend itself to Wavell, the incumbent, and also proposed that an Indian, who held the defence portfolio would only be allocated functions that the Commander-in-Chief felt that it was safe to transfer.¹²⁹

Amery's Opinions on a Change of Function for the Viceroy's Executive Council

The expressions of disapproval in Amery's diary referred to Cripps' suggestion for changing the constitutional position of the Executive Council, but made no detailed mention of the various choices put forward for Indian involvement in defence.¹³⁰ It was not long before Linlithgow echoed Amery's general misgivings. On 5 April, he told Amery that, while he had substantial concerns about offending the Muslim League and the princes if Cripps' negotiations became too protracted, he was prepared to do his best to reach a compromise on the

¹²⁸ Shiva Rao, 'India 1935 – 47', Phillips and Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India*, pp. 430 – 431.

¹²⁹ Cripps to Churchill, via Viceroy and India Office, 4 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹³⁰ Amery diary, 4 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

defence issue.¹³¹ His telegram on the following day, addressed to both Churchill and Amery, was far more sombre in tone, and although still conceding that a division of defence responsibilities was still theoretically possible, remained adamant that any form of quasi-cabinet government was out of the question. In particular, he insisted that he must retain his veto over the Executive Council, and still be finally answerable to the British Parliament.¹³²

Surprisingly, Amery was unclear about the meaning of Cripps' proposals for the operation of the Viceroy's Executive. When Churchill telephoned him from Chequers, he was unable to give him more than the vague opinion that the outcome of Cripps' constitutional proposals was simply the addition of a few non-official Indians to the Executive Council.¹³³

When Cripps' latest ideas were put to the India Committee and the War Cabinet on 6 April, members were also made aware of the trenchant views of a former colleague, as well as erstwhile enemy, Jan Smuts, the South African Prime Minister. Smuts used the importance of India to the defence of the British Empire to underline the dangers of dividing military control, and stressed the need to keep all responsibility with the Commander-in-Chief.¹³⁴ Amery had quickly recovered his focus on the constitutional difficulties that would arise if the Executive Council became a quasi-Cabinet, in which the Viceroy had no power of

¹³¹ Linlithgow to Amery, 5 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹³² Linlithgow to Amery and Churchill, 6 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹³³ Amery diary, 5 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹³⁴ Amery to Linlithgow, 5 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c: f 51, IOR. This telegram enclosed Smuts' letter that had been sent to the Dominions Office, via the South African High Commissioner in London.

veto, and showed that he had mastered the subtleties of the Indian defence options put forward by Cripps. His memorandum on these matters survived two meetings of the India Committee as well as a War Cabinet meeting, without serious amendment, and formed the basis of a telegram that he was told to send to Cripps, via Linlithgow. Amery accepted that Cripps was prepared to respect the Viceroy in Council as responsible to the Secretary of State, and asked him to list the defence functions that could be transferred to a representative Indian.¹³⁵

As the British press were anxious to learn more about the latest constitutional position in India, Brendan Bracken, Minister of Information, persuaded Amery to conduct a press conference. On 7 April, he answered a large number of questions with his usual circumlocution, speaking on many more matters than the present state of Cripps' negotiations. As usual he sought to place the latest declaration as the logical development of the August offer, and was careful to spend more time on the rights of Muslims and the Princes than he had done in his correspondence with Cripps and Linlithgow. He was also frank in his prediction that Congress was likely to use its members' dislike of Cripps' proposals for an Indian Defence Minister, as an excuse for rejecting the complete declaration. In his view, Congress had become so entrenched in their position that nothing short of the immediate transfer of the entire governance of the

¹³⁵ Amery, India Committee memorandum, 6 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c: ff 43 – 5. Also, India Committee conclusions, 6 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c: ff 40 -1. Also, India Committee conclusions, 6 April 1942, L /PO/6/106c: ff 32 – 4. Also, War Cabinet conclusions, 6 April 1942, CAB 65/26/3. Also, Amery to Cripps, via Viceroy, 6 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c: ff 38.

country to Indians would suffice.¹³⁶

Cripps Final Attempt to Reach a Settlement

From 7 April until 10 April, when Congress announced its final rejection of all parts of the declaration, Amery could only play a reactive role in London.

Cripps was encouraged to produce a last suitable formula for settlement soon after 3 April, when Colonel Louis Johnson, Roosevelt's personal representative, arrived in Delhi.¹³⁷ The grounds for renewed optimism came from a meeting that Johnson had on 5 April with Nehru and Azad, during which the American believed that he had persuaded them to accept the plans for an Indian defence representative put forward by Cripps on 4 April.¹³⁸

Congress politicians were well aware of Roosevelt's desire for a settlement that would galvanise India's war effort, and buoyed by this knowledge, Cripps wrote to Azad on 7 April proposing that the Commander-in-Chief should remain on the Viceroy's Executive Council with the title, War Member. He also suggested that an Indian representative would be added to the Executive Council to take over the functions that could be separated from the Commander-in-Chief, and also to lead the Defence Coordination Department, at that time still

¹³⁶ Treasury report 7 April 1942, Ministry of Information Press Conference, L/I/1/751: ff 339 – 52.

¹³⁷ Coupland, *The Cripps Mission*, p. 44. Johnson, who was in his early fifties, carried the rank of Colonel, and had earlier been a successful lawyer. From 1937 he had been Assistant Secretary of War. Although his official duties in April 1942 were as Head of the American Economic Mission to India, it soon became clear that his other brief was to keep Roosevelt informed about Indian constitutional reform; crucial in any American judgement about potential military resistance to Japan.

¹³⁸ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, p. 106.

under the direct control of the Viceroy.¹³⁹

When Nehru met Johnson, later on 7 April, he indicated that he would not be able to persuade the Congress Working Committee to accept Cripps' proposal, but promised that he could give half a day's grace before a final rejection of the declaration was issued.¹⁴⁰ Without consulting the Viceroy, or the India Office, Johnson had a further meeting with Cripps on 8 April. Hodson was also present when Johnson explained that he had produced a new formula on the allocation of responsibilities for defence that Nehru told him Congress would accept. This simple idea, readily accepted by Cripps was, in effect an inversion of the proposal sent to Azad on the previous day.¹⁴¹ In an attempt to convince Congress that they were not being offered an inferior option, Johnson and Cripps proposed that the defence portfolio should be offered immediately to an Indian, with responsibility for operational matters retained by the Commander-in-Chief.¹⁴²

Although this was not sent formally to Congress, a copy in Cripps' handwriting was sent immediately, and unofficially to them.¹⁴³ The Congress Working Committee used the Johnson-Cripps formula as the basis for a revision of their own, that further strengthened the powers of the Indian Defence Minister, and only provided for the Commander-in-Chief to be an extraordinary

¹³⁹ Cripps to Azad, 7 April, Cmd. 6350. Copy to Amery, via Viceroy, 7 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹⁴⁰ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, pp. 107 – 108.

¹⁴¹ Hodson, *The Great Divide*, pp. 99 – 100.

¹⁴² Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, pp. 312 – 313.

¹⁴³ Hodson, *The Great Divide*, pp. 100 – 101.

member of the Executive Council.¹⁴⁴ Cripps was able to negotiate a partial softening of this Congress amendment, that would enable the Commander-in-Chief to be a full member of the Executive Council, and retain control of the Indian armed forces.¹⁴⁵

Only at this point, late in the evening of 8 April, did Cripps show the new defence formula to the Viceroy. Linlithgow was surprisingly phlegmatic about this final redraft, and asked for more time in which to consider it. However, on the issue of protocol, he left Cripps in no doubt as to his anger at the 'manner in which he and the Commander-in-Chief had been passed over'.¹⁴⁶

Final Congress Rejection

Immediately after his meeting with Cripps, Linlithgow sent a number of telegrams to Amery, enclosing the text of the latest Johnson-Cripps formula, but making little comment on the division of responsibilities between the Commander-in-Chief and a putative Indian defence minister. Nevertheless, he left Amery under no illusion about his sense of grievance, because Cripps, aided by Johnson, had effectively negotiated with Congress without consulting him. Although he expressed his willingness, to work with any proposals approved by the War Cabinet, he made it clear that he could not take responsibility for any detailed problems that might arise from a flawed settlement that had been made

¹⁴⁴ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 128. At this time, Menon was working under Hodson, in the office of the Reforms Commissioner.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.129.

¹⁴⁶ Linlithgow, note 8 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/141.

over his head.¹⁴⁷ Amery was full of suspicion when he read these telegrams, deploring the new formula as well as both the subterfuge employed by Cripps, and the involvement of Johnson. Unsurprisingly, after he had spoken to Churchill the whole matter was put before the India Committee and the War Cabinet.¹⁴⁸

Before any decision was made as to whether Cripps could proceed with negotiations over this latest amendment, Amery sought the legal and constitutional opinions of his officials at the India Office. Somewhat to his surprise, Major-General Lockhart, a military adviser and P.J. Patrick, an Assistant Under-Secretary, saw little in the proposed arrangements that was objectionable in administrative or military terms.¹⁴⁹ Monteath's legal analysis endorsed the proposed division of defence duties, but underlined the constitutional impropriety if the executive authority of the Viceroy in Council were to be amended.¹⁵⁰

The War Cabinet meeting on 9 April deprecated Cripps' tactics as well as the intervention of Johnson. The latest formula regarding defence was not ruled out, but it was felt that matters had moved too far away from the text of the declaration, especially paragraph (e) concerning the immediate future.¹⁵¹

Amery recorded that the members of the War Cabinet, although unhappy at events in Delhi, were still confused as to what had been offered to Congress. For

¹⁴⁷ Linlithgow to Amery, 9 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22, 956-7. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 9 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22, 957-7. Also, Linlithgow to Amery 9 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22, 958-S. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 9 April 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹⁴⁸ Amery diary, 9 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Monteath minute, 9 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c: f 26.

¹⁵¹ War Cabinet conclusions, 9 April 1942, CAB 65/26/6.

his own part, he feared that Cripps had offered all the posts on the Executive Council to non-official Indians.¹⁵² As a consequence, two separate telegrams were drafted by Amery and Simon, and sent on behalf of the War Cabinet to Cripps. These asked for clarification on both the overall constitutional position, as well as the more detailed issue of the division of defence responsibilities.¹⁵³

By the time Churchill had written to Cripps ostensibly offering him a vote of confidence, but in reality chiding him for having exceeded his brief, Congress had already decided it could not accept provisions in the declaration.¹⁵⁴ Azad's letter of 10 April to Cripps, setting out the grounds for rejection, ran to almost five pages. Using the context of an imminent invasion by the Japanese, Azad repeated the arguments that had been employed in the unpublished Congress Working Committee resolution sent to Cripps on 2 April, but with the addition of the reasons for dissatisfaction over the recent negotiations over the defence issue. Despite the concessions offered by Cripps and Johnson, Azad was adamant that Indians were still not being given a proper say in the defence of their country.

This argument was reinforced by Congress disappointment over British reluctance to transform the Viceroy's Executive Council, by the use of a convention, rather than legal changes, into a national government and a cabinet in which the Viceroy was merely a constitutional head. Of particular interest to

¹⁵² Amery diary, 9 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹⁵³ War Cabinet to Cripps, via India Office and Viceroy, 10 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c F 16. Also, War Cabinet to Cripps, via India Office and Viceroy, 10 April 1942, L/PO/106c: ff 14 – 5.

¹⁵⁴ Churchill to Cripps, via India Office and Viceroy, 10 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c: ff 6 – 7.

Amery would have been the comment that the failure to bring a new psychological approach to the governance of India was characterised by the continuance of the India Office, which had been a 'symbol of evil to Congress'.¹⁵⁵

In many ways, Jinnah and the Muslim League were little more than observers when these frenzied negotiations were taking place between Cripps and Congress. However, they had been watching matters closely and also chose to issue their own rejection of the provisions in the declaration. On 11 April a detailed resolution was published, appreciating that the opt-out provisions in the declaration envisaged the possibility of Pakistan. However, the Muslim League believed that Britain regarded this as only a theoretical possibility, rather than something practical and attainable, as they had allowed for no debate on the electoral arrangements by which a separate state of Pakistan might be achieved.¹⁵⁶

The Reactions of Churchill, Amery and Linlithgow to the Failure of the Mission

Churchill wasted little time, not in castigating Cripps, but in telling him that the effect of his mission in Britain and the United States 'had been wholly beneficial'. He believed that the breakdown occurred over broader issues, rather than the small print of the allocation of defence duties, and that therefore, by implication, Congress would be regarded as intransigent in the face of a fair

¹⁵⁵ Azad to Cripps, 10 April 1942, Cmd. 6350. When Amery received the full text of this letter, it had been sent by Linlithgow as telegram 1068-S of 16 April 1942, L/I/1/751: ff 297 – 9.

¹⁵⁶ All-India Muslim League Working Committee, resolution 11 April 1942, Cmd. 6350.

offer.¹⁵⁷ His war memoirs, written some nine years later, were cryptic in the extreme about his feelings over the failure of the mission, and admitted only that he was philosophical about an outcome that he always thought probable.¹⁵⁸

By contrast, Amery offered far more in the way of his opinions, both in his diary, draft memoirs, and correspondence. Initially he believed Cripps had been close to offering a Sapru type of national government to Congress, and that he had been spared the ignominy of having to withdraw any offer of a convention that would be used to adjust the constitution.¹⁵⁹ He was also unwilling to take, at face value, Cripps' assertion that 'the matter of a national government had been sprung on him' at the last minute by Nehru and Azad. Furthermore, he suspected that Cripps had been prepared to hand over all posts on the Executive Council to non-official Indians, against the wishes of the Viceroy. In summary he recorded that 'we are well out of the wood, and can go ahead with the war with a clear conscience'.¹⁶⁰

Amery's unpublished memoirs deal in greater detail with the possible difficulties with the Muslim League that had been avoided by the failure of the mission, but some years after the events, there was new material regarding the responsibility for the final breakdown of the negotiations. Instead of making a general condemnation of the Congress Working Committee, Amery believed that a two hour telephone conversation between Gandhi and his colleagues had

¹⁵⁷ Churchill to Cripps, via India Office and Viceroy, 11 April 1942, L/PO/6/106c: ff 4 – 5.

¹⁵⁸ Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume IV, The Hinge of Fate*, p.192.

¹⁵⁹ Amery diary, 10 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

turned the possibility of acceptance into certain rejection.¹⁶¹

Amery's first letter to Linlithgow offered little sympathy. Indeed, he largely blamed Linlithgow for having kept Whitehall in the dark, almost as much as he suspected that Cripps had done. With an eye to any future negotiations, he asked the Viceroy bluntly how far he would have been prepared to go in making concessions to Congress. Linlithgow's manuscript comments in the copy of this telegram were terse, and showed exactly what he thought about Amery's questions. In particular he underlined how much he had been bypassed by Cripps, and misled over the issue of complete Indianisation of the Viceroy's Executive that he was informed had been agreed in London.¹⁶²

American Reaction to the Breakdown of the Negotiations

As soon as Roosevelt learned that Congress had rejected the proposals in the declaration he sent an urgent message to Churchill, via his special envoy, Harry Hopkins, who, at the time was in London. Roosevelt stated firmly that public opinion in the United States did not believe that 'the negotiations had broken down on general and broad issues'. It was the President's view that Americans blamed the British Government for being unwilling to hand self-government to Indians during the war, when it was apparently prepared to grant independence at the end of hostilities. He implored Churchill to keep Cripps in India in order to

¹⁶¹ Amery, draft memoirs, Chapter VIII, pp. 26 – 28, AMEL 8/86. As this information came from police intelligence, presumably by means of phone tapping, Turnbull advised Amery to excise this comment, if and when the memoirs were published.

¹⁶² Amery to Linlithgow, 11 April 1942, AMEL 2/3/26.

a have a final attempt at arriving at a settlement, although with the chilling comment that if India fell to the Japanese, Americans would lay considerable blame with the British.¹⁶³

Churchill regarded Roosevelt's comments with some disdain, and before sending a short telegram declining to keep Cripps in Delhi, discussed the matter with Hopkins. Although it is improbable that Amery would not have been consulted about the content of Churchill's reply, there is surprisingly no reference to the matter in his papers. In any event, Churchill informed Roosevelt that as his telegram had been addressed to him as 'the Former Naval Person', the whole matter would remain private, and not be put before the War Cabinet.¹⁶⁴ For the remainder of the war, India did not appear on the agenda of any of the wartime conferences attended by the two leaders.

The Parliamentary Debate on the Cripps Mission

Before the debate on the Cripps Mission in the House of Commons on 28 April, there was correspondence between Linlithgow and Amery that concentrated as much on what was going to be said in the debate, as on conducting a post-mortem on the failed negotiations. Before Cripps had returned to London, Amery marshalled his thoughts on the constitutional developments and initiatives that had taken place since his appointment in May 1940. Despite his hope that the

¹⁶³ Roosevelt to Former Naval Person (via Hopkins), 12 April 1942, R/30/1/1: ff 5 – 8. It should be remembered that at this time there had been substantial Allied shipping losses in the Bay of Bengal. Once the Japanese fleet left the area, they did not return.

¹⁶⁴ Former Naval Person to Roosevelt, 12 April 1942, R/30/1/1: ff 2 – 4.

drafting of the latest declaration would end the deadlock created by his earlier insistence that unity was the prerequisite for any reform, he regretted that the different communities had not even spoken to each other when Cripps was in India. Nevertheless, he stressed that the offer had not been withdrawn, and at some point there would be an Indian responsible for defence.¹⁶⁵

Before the debate, the British Government had issued a White Paper that reproduced in full the major documents relevant to the Cripps Mission. Starting with Churchill's announcement of the mission to the Commons on 11 March 1942, and the text of the original draft declaration, there were also the responses of all groups, as well as the correspondence between Cripps and Azad. Although this constituted excellent briefing for members wishing to contribute to the debate, there was nothing included in the way of review or analysis by the War Cabinet, or the India Office.¹⁶⁶

In the event Cripps made a lengthy, but straightforward speech, with very little to annoy either Linlithgow or Amery, although the latter admitted to having needed to exercise some minor influence in a sub-editing capacity.¹⁶⁷ In a speech that was free of rancour, if not sadness, Cripps stressed that whatever else may have been concluded, he did not seek a settlement that was outside the boundaries of the Indian constitution, even at the eleventh hour when

¹⁶⁵ Amery, note on the Indian situation, 24 April 1942, L/P & J/10/2: ff 28 – 32.

¹⁶⁶ Government White Paper, India (Lord Privy Seal's Mission) April 1942, Cmd. 6350.

¹⁶⁷ Amery diary, 23 April 1942, AMEL 7/36. Amery admitted that he was not successful in persuading Cripps to alter his statement that, in a new union the princes would not be subject to the paramountcy of the Crown.

attempting to overcome Congress objections over the defence portfolio.

After a number of speeches which praised the gallantry of Cripps, but not necessarily his judgement, or that of the London and Delhi administrations, Amery was able to respond. He did not give any indication that Cripps might have exceeded his brief by offering to give away all posts on the Viceroy's Executive, and laid the blame squarely with Congress, who wanted a national government that was accountable to no one.¹⁶⁸

An Assessment of Amery's Influence before and during the Cripps Mission

The logical starting point for any appraisal of Amery's role in the Cripps mission must be in Louis' book, *In the Name of God, Go!*. There, the point is made that Amery was not 'baffled and blown about by the storm of policy battlefields', and played an important role as conciliator.¹⁶⁹ If being a conciliator meant arbitrating between the main players, this was certainly not his function. However if his behaviour can be described as a prolonged attempt to soothe Linlithgow's wounded feelings, then this probably did amount to conciliation.

It cannot be doubted that Amery took some time to suppress his suspicions of Cripps, especially in respect of the latter's long, and previously friendly relationships with Nehru, and other Congress members. Nevertheless, whatever his dislike of the pressures that had led to a mission that could only

¹⁶⁸ *Hansard*, 28 April 1942, Vol. 379, cc 826 – 917.

¹⁶⁹ Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*, p. 153. Cited by W. H. Morris, *Political Quarterly*, Volume 4 (January – March 1973), p. 94.

distract the Viceroy's attention from the Indian war effort, he needed to be certain that the venture, at least initially, had Churchill's support.

If there had been a campaign by Linlithgow and Churchill to sabotage the negotiations during their latter stages, it was certainly not enjoined by Amery. Moore suggested that an organised axis of Churchill and Linlithgow had deliberately ensured the failure of the mission, but the pattern and content of all the telegrams between London and Delhi indicates that, although both men were ultimately relieved by the breakdown, there was little, or no collusion between them.¹⁷⁰ Considering Amery's predilection for intrigue, and the position of the India Office *vis-à-vis* London and Delhi, it is highly likely that he would have been involved if there had been any clandestine planning to ruin Cripps' negotiations.

¹⁷⁰ Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, pp. 115 – 132. The main area of common ground between Churchill and Linlithgow was their dislike of a quasi-cabinet system for the Viceroy's Executive Council.

CHAPTER VI

'QUIT INDIA', GANDHI'S FAST AND SOCIAL REFORM IN INDIA

Introduction

Although from May 1942 until June 1943 there was not as many constitutional reform initiatives as during the early years of the war, there were nevertheless a number of important issues, both in relations between the British and Indians, and also in the conduct of the war. The threat of a military invasion by Japan remained for several months, and provided the context for a worsening of relations between Congress and the British that found its expression in the 'Quit India' movement. This was a protest that went far beyond the milder civil disobedience of the 1940/41 *Satyagraha* campaign, and was firmly suppressed by the Government of India. As the campaign lost impetus, Gandhi commenced his fast, which proved to be all the more troublesome for Britain as both China and the USA sought to exercise some form of influence over events in India.

Apart from their acrimonious exchanges on the technically complicated, but politically difficult aspects of Britain's rapidly growing adverse sterling balances with India, Amery spent a good part of the next twelve months on better terms with Churchill.¹ Their fundamental differences continued over the role and status of the British Empire, but they were far more united in terms of the action required to suppress the Congress insurrection, and also the response to

¹ The issue of Britain's sterling balances with India will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Gandhi's fast.² Each shared considerable impatience at attempts by China and the USA to interfere, both as regards the imprisonment of Congress leaders, especially Gandhi, and also in the promotion of attempts to set up a national government in India.

It had already been apparent during the latter part of the Cripps mission that Amery's influence on events in Delhi had begun to ebb away. Furthermore, he often did his authority and reputation at the India Office few favours with his unwelcome interventions on matters outside his remit. In particular, he spoke critically about both the civil and military organisation of the war effort, often reflecting with some nostalgia on the nature of governance during the final two years of the Great War.³

Further Expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council

Considering the degree of disappointment felt in Britain at the end of Cripps' negotiations, Amery was able to tell Linlithgow that, apart from the debate in the House of Commons on 28 April, there had been little retrospective consideration of the mission.⁴ Nevertheless, there was a feeling in London and Delhi that 'the situation was not, and could not be as though Cripps had never been to India'.⁵

Accordingly, in an attempt to improve the Indian war effort without the cooperation of Congress, Linlithgow proposed to increase his Executive Council

² Amery diary, 10 May 1942, AMEL 7/36.

³ Amery diary, 20 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁴ Amery to Linlithgow, 6 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11. Linlithgow's manuscript comment next to the relevant paragraph in Amery's letter was the single Urdu word *Shabash*, or 'congratulations!'

⁵ Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, p. 206.

to fifteen members, and also asked provincial governors about the feasibility of introducing non-official advisers into the operation of local governance. The matter of enlarging the Executive Council had been approved at the meeting of the War Cabinet on 2 February 1942, but had not been implemented while Cripps was still in India.⁶ Linlithgow sent his detailed, but provisional proposals to fill five vacancies on his Executive Council to Amery on 3 May 1942, and his long carefully argued telegram stressed the need for communal balance. His most important recommendation was that the respected Muslim, Firoz Khan Noon, should fill the new post of Defence Coordinator that had been at the centre of Cripps' negotiations.⁷

Although Amery fully commended the Viceroy's plans to the India Committee that met on 11 May 1942, his own view was that more British members were required on the Executive in order to block any request by the Muslim League for parity of membership with Hindus.⁸ However, at this meeting, discussion centred on the merits of a split Defence portfolio, a matter that had been such a source of recent controversy. The somewhat disingenuous conclusion of the India Committee was that the Viceroy should be asked to confirm whether the suggested arrangements for Defence had been put forward for political or administrative reasons. If the latter situation applied, the India Committee would give their approval subject to the agreement of Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief,

⁶ War Cabinet conclusions, 2 February 1942, CAB 65/25/14.

⁷ Linlithgow to Amery, 3 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/27. The five vacancies consisted of two replacements, in addition to the three new posts.

⁸ Amery, India Committee memorandum, 6 May 1942, L/P & J/8/537: ff 298 – 305. Also, Amery diary, 30 April 1942, AMEL 7/36.

India.⁹ A disgusted Amery immediately remarked that these attempts to reform the Defence portfolio were 'political eyewash'.¹⁰

Linlithgow responded in the most trenchant terms on 20 May 1942, leaving the Secretary of State in no doubt that, whatever their constitutional relationship, it could only be in exceptional circumstances that he should not get his way over appointments to his Executive Council. Although he conceded that dividing the Defence duties was a political measure, he had no qualms because Wavell as Commander-in-Chief, had readily agreed to work in partnership with Firoz Khan Noon.¹¹

Amery had been sufficiently shaken by the strength of Linlithgow's resolve to have separate discussions with Cripps and Attlee, and managed to persuade them that the Viceroy's grievances should not be discussed at another meeting of the India Committee, but should be put directly to the War Cabinet.¹² Amery's decision to bypass the essentially hostile India Committee in order to support the Viceroy proved to be wise. The War Cabinet minutes for 26 May 1942 recorded that, although certain members had reservations about Linlithgow's proposals, it was felt nevertheless that his responsibility for running his Council should not be undermined.¹³ Amery's exultant diary entry made it clear that it was only his appeal to Churchill to support the beleaguered Viceroy that had finally decided

⁹ India Committee conclusions, 11 May 1942, L/P & J/8/544: ff 92 – 94.

¹⁰ Amery diary, 11 May 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹¹ Linlithgow to Amery, 20 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

¹² Amery diary, 21 May 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹³ War Cabinet conclusions, 26 May 1942, CAB 65/26/24.

the matter.¹⁴

Following his experiences as Assistant Cabinet Secretary during the Great War, Amery was receptive to Linlithgow's suggestion that a member of his Executive Council should be invited to meetings of the Pacific Council and the War Cabinet.¹⁵ Eventually, two Indians were chosen, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar from the Executive Council and the Maharajah Jam Saheb of Nawangar, a representative of the princes. When Churchill disagreed, Amery sought specialist advice from Monteath before sending a firm note to the Prime Minister, explaining why there were no constitutional impediments to both Indians attending the War Cabinet. By way of humour, he forecast that both men were likely to be taciturn, and not be 'a couple of brown Earl Pages'.¹⁶ Churchill's cryptic minute of acceptance merely prophesied that 'we shall have to take the Albert Hall for our War Cabinet meetings'.¹⁷

Congress Response to the Failure of the Cripps Mission

Whatever the inadequacy of the offer that Congress believed had been made by Cripps, the final breakdown brought bitter disappointment, especially as their leaders thought it unlikely that British and Indian troops would be able to defend the vulnerable potential points that could be attacked by Japanese forces.¹⁸

¹⁴ Amery diary, 26 May 1942. AMEL 7/36.

¹⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 3 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/27.

¹⁶ Minute by Monteath, 6 June 1942, L/P & J/ 8/560: f 159. Also, Amery to Churchill, 6 June 1942, L/P & J/ 8/560: ff 157 – 158 . Earl Page, a former caretaker Prime Minister of Australia, had been appointed as Resident Australian Minister in London from December 1941.

¹⁷ Churchill to Amery, 7 June 1942, L/P & J/8/560: ff 156.

¹⁸ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, pp. 139 – 145.

Although Jinnah and the Muslim League had not seen enough encouragement regarding their aspirations for Pakistan, their commitment to the war effort continued. By contrast, the Congress response was fractured, particularly in the first few weeks following Cripps' departure from India.¹⁹

On the one hand, the Congress President, Azad, recognised that his party was ill-perceived by world opinion, both for its rejection of Cripps' proposals, and also for contributing to communal strife. He was also very aware that it was necessary to develop both national and local strategies in the case of Japanese incursions into the eastern parts of the country. In conceding that even amongst his senior colleagues there was confusion and misunderstanding on all matters, he convened meetings of the Congress Working Committee and the All India Congress Committee, to run consecutively at Allahabad from 27 April to 2 May.²⁰ On the other hand, Rajagopalachari, took a much more cross-party line, having wanted to accept Cripps' offer, and accepted some responsibility for the damage caused by Congress to communal harmony.²¹ Indeed, on 23 April he had already asked his own party members in the Madras Legislature to approach the Congress Working Committee in order to persuade them to consider the Muslim claim for separation.²² His suggestion that this should lead to talks with the Muslim League earned him Gandhi's displeasure despite having enjoyed earlier support from Sapru.²³

¹⁹ Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942*, p. 287.

²⁰ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 70 – 73.

²¹ Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942*, p. 288.

²² R. K. Murti, *C. Rajagopalachari, The True Patriot*, New Delhi, Rupa and Co, 2003, p. 43.

²³ Sapru to Sir Jagdish Prasad, 19 April 1942, Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 377 – 378.

The lead in framing the Congress response to both the constitutional and military position was taken by Gandhi, who did not appear at Allahabad, but sent his draft resolution through a faithful follower, Mira Behn.²⁴ His extremely radical proposals provided the basis for the final version of the Congress resolution, although it is unclear whether he expected them to be approved in their entirety by the Working Committee.²⁵ His message was clear. Britain was now regarded as being incapable of defending India, and therefore in the likely event of a Japanese invasion, opposition would now only be provided through the tactics of non-violent non-cooperation that, in Gandhi's view could only work if Britain immediately abandoned India.²⁶ Only a last minute amendment by Nehru provided that an occupied India would not become a passive partner of the Axis powers.²⁷

A few days before, Linlithgow had sent Amery the substance of the All India Congress Committee resolution of 1 May, stressing that it had been approved by a turnout of just 180 members, barely half the number entitled to vote.²⁸ Out of deference to the pressing need to ratify Linlithgow's new Executive Council, Amery waited to comment on the news from Allahabad before informing the Viceroy that even such a pro-Congress British newspaper as the *Manchester*

²⁴ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, p. 146.

²⁵ Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942*, pp. 288 – 289.

²⁶ All India Congress Committee resolution, 1 May 1942, enclosed by Hallett to Linlithgow, 10 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/105. The complete text, together with full details of the amendments, had been intercepted by the local branch of the CID during a raid on the CWC premises at Allahabad.

²⁷ J. Nehru Papers, Post 1947, 1st Instalment, Subject File No. 819, Nehru Memorial Archives and Library, New Delhi. Cited by Brown, *Nehru*, p. 150.

²⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 2 May 1942, L/P & J/8/510: f 488.

Guardian 'had washed its hands of them'.²⁹ Amery's diary entry of 1 May placed the blame for the resolution squarely with Gandhi, and, with some smugness added that 'he had always believed that this would be the outcome'.³⁰

Nehru and Azad were both relieved when Gandhi modified his position to permit the retention of Allied troops in India if Britain were to grant self government. Nehru was anxious to avoid the alienation of American and Chinese opinion, especially if Japan attacked India.³¹ Azad felt that Japanese forces would only be encouraged by the withdrawal of British troops, even if they had only been able to offer token resistance.³² Although Gandhi recanted to the extent of admitting that an 'abrupt withdrawal of Allied troops might lead to the fall of both India and China', he still favoured a widespread non-violent protest that he conceded 'might not be foolproof'.³³

Although having failed to obtain any practical support for Indian independence from Roosevelt, and even Chiang Kai-shek, Gandhi continued with his plans by putting the matter before the Congress Working Committee that sat at Wardha from 6 July until 14 July. The Resolution, passed on 14 July was long and wide ranging, arguing at first that Indian political parties had only been created to meet the conditions imposed by British power, and that in the eventual absence of that imperial presence would cease to exist. Despite

²⁹ Amery to Linlithgow, 6 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12. Also, leading article *Manchester Guardian*, 6 May 1942.

³⁰ Amery diary, 1 May 1942, AMEL 7/36.

³¹ Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharal Nehru, A Biography, Volume One: 1889 – 1947*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1975, pp. 291 – 294.

³² Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 73 – 75.

³³ *Harijan*, 28 June 1942. Cited by Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942*, p. 291.

conceding that Allied forces could remain in India for protection against the Japanese enemy, the resolution concluded by stating that a British failure to hand over the government of the country would cause Congress to 'utilise all the non-violent strength it had galvanised since 1920 for the vindication of its prohibited rights and liberty'.³⁴

The final version of the resolution approved by the All India Congress Committee on 8 August made only two additions to the July resolution. These were designed to assuage world wide condemnation of their stance during the final stages of Cripps' mission, firstly by promising that the armed forces of a free India would be put at the disposal of the United Nations, and secondly by asserting that Congress was not seeking power for its own ends, but for the benefit of the entire Indian population.³⁵

Amery, Linlithgow and the Initial British Response to Gandhi's Campaign

On the evidence of forcibly expressed, but poorly detailed early reports from provincial Governors, Amery wrote to Linlithgow stating unequivocally that Congress was 'going steadily in the wrong direction under Gandhi's leadership', and that, in the event of a Japanese invasion, extreme steps would have to be taken against the Party.³⁶ He received further menacing, if still vague warnings

³⁴ Resolution of the Congress Working Committee, Wardha 14 July 1942. See, Government of India, *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances 1942 – 43*, White Paper March 1943, Cmd. 6430.

³⁵ The 'Quit India' Resolution, Text of the resolution adopted by the All India Congress Committee, 8 August 1942. *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances, 1942 – 43*, Cmd. 6430.

³⁶ Amery to Linlithgow, 15 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/105. Amery was writing after reading a report from Hallett to Linlithgow of 10 May 1942 that had been copied to him, MSS. EUR. F. 125/105.

in the next few weeks, not least when Linlithgow advised him that Gandhi, during a press conference in Bombay, had indicated his willingness to risk complete lawlessness in order to remove British rule.³⁷

Although reports obtained from the Intelligence Bureau of the Home Department in Delhi offered nothing more specific than a prediction that mass protests would start in Bombay and Bihar, Amery was cheered by a letter from Linlithgow who recounted an interview with Gandhi's secretary, Amrit Kaur, who described Congress as 'having been beaten to pulp', by the failure of the negotiations with Cripps.³⁸ His grim delight at this news was reinforced by a wish that Congress would disintegrate completely, and followed an assurance to the Viceroy that, in any appropriately serious circumstances he would not need to consult the India Office before arresting Gandhi or Nehru.³⁹

Amery's early bellicosity took on a more practical note when he asked Monteath to compose separate draft telegrams to Linlithgow, firstly stressing the need for members of the Viceroy's Executive Council to attack Gandhi's policy of non-violent non-cooperation by speaking publicly in support of the war effort, and secondly for some effective propaganda to be used in both Britain and the USA to combat the widely held view that the Mahatma was a senile and ineffective old man.⁴⁰

³⁷ Linlithgow to Amery, 18 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11.

³⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 26 May 1942, L/P & S/13/966 f 79.

³⁹ Amery to Linlithgow, 28 May 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11.

⁴⁰ Minute by Monteath, 29 May 1942, L/P & J/8/596: f 240. For the two resulting telegrams, see, Amery to Linlithgow, 30 May 1942, L/P & J/8/596: ff 238 – 239, and Amery to Linlithgow, 30 May 1942, L/P & J/ 8/596: ff 242 – 243.

During this period Linlithgow's concern for the seriousness of the situation with Congress varied considerably. He had been advised by Sir Roger Lumley, Governor of Bombay, that industrial production in the city had now revived after the early fears of a Japanese invasion, and that in the event of a call for mass action from Gandhi, there would be little response.⁴¹ While Linlithgow was careful not to underestimate Gandhi, he did not believe that, at this stage, he commanded enough support to start a new campaign of civil disobedience. For this reason he was unwilling to take any premature action that would serve only to produce recruits for Congress.⁴² On 11 June 1942 he was still sanguine, believing that documents seized during a police search of the offices of the All-India Congress Committee revealed deep differences within that organisation. He was also unsure that Gandhi now believed that Japan could successfully invade India, and accordingly he felt that there was no immediate case for hasty disciplinary measures against Gandhi.⁴³

Within four days the Viceroy had come to a very different conclusion, almost certainly because his latest intelligence reports confirmed that 'Nehru had given in to Gandhi', and therefore believed that the time had come to have nothing to do with Congress.⁴⁴ This new firmer stance hardened still more on reading the transcript of a long interview that Gandhi had given to a number of American journalists for publication in *Harijan*. Whether he was speaking primarily to the

⁴¹ Sir Roger Lumley to Linlithgow, 6 June 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/56.

⁴² Linlithgow to Twynham, 6 June 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/63.

⁴³ Linlithgow to Amery, June 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

⁴⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, 15 June 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/22.

USA, or not, he repeated his assertion that Britain should leave India, even without an agreement between Hindus and Muslims.⁴⁵

The First Interest of the War Cabinet in the Impending Insurrection

It was not until several weeks after the Allahabad resolutions that the War Cabinet began to take a serious interest in the aftermath of the failure of Cripps' mission. Not surprisingly, the military disasters in the Far East and the perilous Allied position in Libya, resulting in the fall of Tobruk on 21 June, were inevitably matters of more interest to British politicians than a possible further campaign of *satyagraha*. However, in the light of Linlithgow's newly increased concerns, Amery was given approval by the War Cabinet to circulate a memorandum that would give clear guidance to the Viceroy regarding any action that he could take, 'if it became clear that Gandhi was about to stir up trouble'.⁴⁶

Amery wanted Linlithgow to be sure that, despite possible adverse publicity in China and the USA, he had the War Cabinet's support if he chose not to give Gandhi preferential treatment.⁴⁷ His telegram to Linlithgow was at once cautious and bellicose. On the one hand, he advised against breaking off relations with Congress, if only to keep in touch with moderate politicians such as Rajagopalachari. On the other hand, he thought, whether seriously or not, that the best way to discipline Gandhi would be to deport him to Uganda by

⁴⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 15 June 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/29.

⁴⁶ War Cabinet conclusions, 15 June 1942, CAB 65/26/35.

⁴⁷ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 16 June 1942, CAB 66/26/35.

aeroplane.⁴⁸

Although Amery did not believe that Britain should flinch from draconian measures for fear of offending American opinion, he made Halifax aware that full details of Gandhi's campaign, and its damaging effects on the Indian war effort should be made clear to the American President and Secretary of State. He also assured the Ambassador that he would be given as much notice as possible before Britain took any firm action.⁴⁹ Although unwavering in his support for any necessary action against Congress, Amery was determined that the Government of India should provide newspaper editors with a clear explanation of the political and military situation. He had, of course in mind, not only the reception of news in China and the USA, but in all parts of the British Empire.⁵⁰

Until the session of the Congress Working Committee at Wardha from 6 July to 14 July, there was considerable correspondence between the India Office and Linlithgow, as well as detailed reports of varying optimism sent to the Viceroy by provincial governors. Despite the amount of intelligence available, these communications remained purely speculative, with the outcome that the British authorities allowed the Congress leaders to 'preach rebellion' until their actual plans were revealed.⁵¹ Even the first resolution of the Congress Working Committee on 10 July was regarded by Linlithgow as too specific and mild to

⁴⁸ Amery to Linlithgow, 16 June 1942, L/P & J/8/596: ff 187 – 188. See also Amery to Linlithgow, 17 June 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11.

⁴⁹ Amery to Halifax, 17 June 1942, R/30/1/2: f 73. Also, Amery to Sir Horace Seymour and Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, via Foreign Office, 17 June 1942, L/P & J/8/607/: f 31.

⁵⁰ Amery to Government of India Home Department, 19 June 1942, L/P & J/8/596: ff 158 – 160.

⁵¹ Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942*, p. 295.

require immediate action, a response that Amery regarded as insipid.⁵²

On the evidence of this first resolution, Amery was swift to press Churchill for the immediate arrest of Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee using the following quotation as the justification for the only measures possible against persons who were now the enemies of Britain,

Twice armed is he that had his quarrel just;
but thrice armed is he who gets his blow in first.⁵³

Amery's appeal to the Prime Minister was unsuccessful, as an enlarged War Cabinet considered this Congress resolution, but preferred to defer any action until the final, more general one was issued. Nevertheless, the Viceroy was promised support if Congress proved to be as rebellious as the latest intelligence reports had indicated. Amery was relieved that the majority of the Cabinet attendees appeared to be steadfast, although he detected some reluctance on the part of Cripps to take firm action.⁵⁴

Once the main resolution was issued on 14 July, Amery made his feelings clear to Linlithgow. His initial opinion was that the challenge to the Government of India was as absurd and poorly thought out as it was dangerous. His thoughts also turned to the legal sanctions that could be employed against Congress at this stage, although the resolution was not yet official party policy, pending ratification by the All India Congress Committee. It now seems surprising that

⁵² Linlithgow to Amery, 11 July 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/29. Also, Amery, diary 13 July 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁵³ Amery to Churchill, 13 July 1942, AMEL 1/6/21.

⁵⁴ War Cabinet conclusions, 13 July 1942, CAB 65/27/7. Also, Amery diary, 5 July 1942, AMEL 7/36.

Amery was already sufficiently hawkish to believe that the unapproved resolutions warranted the application of the Defence of India Rules, or even possibly the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance.⁵⁵ ICS officials in Delhi did not agree with Amery's insistence on an immediate legal response to the Congress resolutions. Instead, he received a cagey telegram from the Government of India, Home Department, deploring the Congress position but still advocating no action until the resolutions were approved by the AICC.

Amery's Statement to the House of Commons on 30 July 1942

By 24 July the Government of India, Home Department, had prepared a stage-by-stage contingency plan on the assumption that the AICC would soon ratify the Wardha resolutions. Amery was asked to obtain War Cabinet approval for a sequence of measures that started with propaganda, and continued with the proclamation of the AICC and the provincial Congress Committees. The ultimate sanction, if these two measures failed to suppress any insurrection, would be to proclaim the whole of Congress by means of the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance.⁵⁶ While accepting the usefulness of this telegram, Amery agreed with Linlithgow that he should make a public statement of British policy through an answer to a Parliamentary Question in the House of Commons on 30 July.⁵⁷

Before Amery composed his Parliamentary statement he took the opportunity to press the case for British action against Congress during interviews in London

⁵⁵ Amery to Linlithgow, 15 July 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11. See also, Amery to Linlithgow, 16 July 1942, L/P & J/8/597: ff 238 – 239.

⁵⁶ Government of India Home Department to Amery, 24 July 1942, L/P & J/5/597: f 189.

⁵⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 25 July 1942, L/P & J/8/579: ff 193 – 197.

with Ivan Maisky, the Russian Ambassador, and V.K. Koo, the Chinese Ambassador. Amery was able to assure Maisky that to accede to Congress demands would paralyse the Indian war effort, and possibly enable Japanese forces to link up with the Axis Powers in the Middle East. He also took care to explain that the Indian Army would remain loyal, and that most trade unionists were indifferent to Congress.⁵⁸ Although his discussions with Koo also related to the maintenance of the war effort, Amery also had in mind Chiang Kai-shek's strong interest in Indian political reform. He warned the Ambassador that, despite Nehru's love of China and detestation of Japan, he would always fall in behind Gandhi on constitutional issues.⁵⁹

In composing his statement for the House of Commons, Amery needed to be mindful of a number of domestic political matters. He was surprisingly encouraged by the support of the Labour Party National Executive, which had publicly condemned the Congress resolutions and, also by a supportive editorial in the *Daily Herald* that had forsaken its normal pro-Congress stance. He was also reassured by an all party House of Commons Committee report that described the Congress resolutions as 'amounting to ninety percent eyewash, and intended to cover the organisation's difficulties'.⁶⁰

The final version of Amery's statement to the House of Commons on 30 July 1942 was the result of a difficult drafting procedure. He composed a War Cabinet memorandum enclosing his first attempt, having already broadly agreed the

⁵⁸ Amery, note of conversation with Maisky, 22 July 1942, L/P & J/8/597: f 159.

⁵⁹ Amery, note of interview with Koo, 22 July 1942, L/P & J/8/597: f 162.

⁶⁰ Amery diary, 23 July 1942, AMEL 7/36.

contents with Linlithgow.⁶¹ This was considered at two War Cabinet meetings on 28 July and 29 July, when a number of amendments were agreed.⁶² Despite a further War Cabinet memorandum on 28 July, and a strongly worded minute to Churchill on the same date, he was not successful in retaining in his speech a detailed restatement of the section of the offer made in August 1940 that had offered eventual self-government to India. He was also unable to include the pledge taken to India by Cripps, giving an independent India the option of leaving the Commonwealth at the end of the war.⁶³

His eventual statement in the House of Commons on 30 July was much harsher in tone than he had originally envisaged. He made only a brief reference to Britain's existing promises regarding Indian independence, and instead stressed the damage that the action threatened by Congress would make, not only to the Allied war effort, but also to the goals set out by the United Nations. He continued in trenchant mood, pointing out that the British Government and the Government of India would take any action necessary to defeat a Congress rebellion. Realising that he had the support of senior Labour Party politicians, he was able to dismiss requests by other socialist MPs, Charles Ammon and Manny Shinwell, for an immediate resumption of negotiations with Congress.⁶⁴ Typically, he felt justified in recording in his diary that his speech had gone down well.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 27 July 1942, CAB 66/26/49.

⁶² War Cabinet conclusions, 28 July 1942, L/P & J/8/59: f 178. Also, War Cabinet conclusions, 29 July 1942, CAB 66/26/49.

⁶³ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 28 July 1942, CAB 66/27/1. Also Amery to Churchill, minute 28 July 1942, L/PO/6/102a: f 9.

⁶⁴ *Hansard*, 30 July 1942, vol. 382, cc674 – 676.

⁶⁵ Amery diary, 30 July 1942, AMEL 7/36.

Minor Disagreements with Linlithgow before the Final All-India Congress Committee Vote

Before the AICC gave final approval to its general resolution on 7 August 1942, Amery and Linlithgow differed on a small number of matters, that were all eventually settled in the Viceroy's favour. This could be said to be a reinforcement of the influence from Delhi at the expense of the India Office, motivated almost certainly by Linlithgow's desire to maintain the unanimity and cohesion of his Executive Council.

Firstly, there was the issue of where Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee (CWC) members should be imprisoned following their planned arrests. Although Amery had considered the deportation of Gandhi as early as 16 June 1942, Linlithgow, who had to bear in mind the almost entirely Indian composition of his Executive Council, was only prepared for the younger and fitter members of the CWC to be deported to Uganda. The critical issue for the Viceroy was that the detainees, wherever they were, should have no contact with their followers.⁶⁶ Although Amery immediately sent a telegram to Linlithgow underlining his preference for widespread deportation, the Viceroy wisely took the time to consult his provincial governors and advisers in Delhi.⁶⁷

Although Linlithgow supported the majority of his governors and advisers, who wanted any prisoners to be kept in India, a surprisingly unanimous War Cabinet decided on 6 August that the final responsibility lay with His Majesty's

⁶⁶ Amery to Linlithgow, 16 June 1942, L/P & J/8/596: ff 187 – 188. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 19 July 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

⁶⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 24 July 1942, L/P & J/8/597: ff 209 – 212. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 29 July 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

Government, and that the Congress leaders should be exiled.⁶⁸ On the following day Linlithgow learned of this decision and reacted sharply. He took soundings from his Executive Council and reported to Amery that his colleagues were unanimously against deportation, especially if Gandhi were to undertake a fast, as seemed likely.⁶⁹ As soon as Amery received Linlithgow's telegram, he brought the matter to another meeting of the War Cabinet, at which it was reluctantly agreed that the Viceroy's wishes should be respected.⁷⁰ Amery's diary showed that despite his distaste for the policy chosen by Linlithgow and his Executive Council, he had lobbied strenuously for the judgement of the man on the spot to be conclusive.⁷¹

Secondly, Amery attempted to delay the publication of the documents seized in May 1942 from the Congress offices until the resolutions had been finally approved. The Viceroy was anxious to placate his Executive Council, whose members believed that publication of the proceedings at Allahabad would be useful for propaganda purposes. In particular there were sentences in Gandhi's draft that might be construed as pro-Japanese, and although a first reading of the material might possibly have shown Nehru in a favourable light, this was negated by his later behaviour.⁷² Amery, showing caution, asked Linlithgow not to publish the documents before the critical AICC meetings for fear of Britain

⁶⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 1 August 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23. Also War Cabinet conclusions, 6 August 1942, CAB 65/27/21. Also Amery diary, 6 August 1942, AMEL, 7/36.

⁶⁹ Amery to Linlithgow, 7 August 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

⁷⁰ War Cabinet conclusions, 7 August 1942, CAB 65/27/23.

⁷¹ Amery diary, 7 August 1943, Amery Papers, AMEL 7/36.

⁷² Linlithgow to Amery, 1 August 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

appearing to be provocative, especially in the USA.⁷³ By the time that Linlithgow replied to Amery, the documents had already been released for publication to twelve Reuters centres, and thence to national and provincial newspaper editors.⁷⁴

Amery was irritated that Linlithgow had apparently ignored his instructions, but saw an opportunity for delivering his own propaganda in Britain. He summoned the entire Press Lobby, and put his own slant on the Congress documents, emphasising that Gandhi had been prepared to negotiate with the Japanese, and that only Rajagopalachari was genuine in his support for the Allied cause.⁷⁵

Finally, Amery, who never completely lost his suspicion that Cripps was pro-Congress, nevertheless supported the Lord Privy Seal's suggestion that he (Cripps) should broadcast to India in an attempt to rally moderate opinion before the impending AICC meetings.⁷⁶ Amery was insistent that Cripps should be allowed to broadcast, especially as his proposed script emphasised the breakdown in military and civil administration that would arise if there were to be widespread civil disobedience.⁷⁷ However, Linlithgow's outright refusal could not have been more strongly worded. Clearly remembering Cripps' perceived snubbing of his Executive Council a few months earlier, he stressed that 'such a broadcast by a man whose stock was so low in India would be seen by elements

⁷³ Amery to Linlithgow, 3 August 1942, L/P & J/8/597: ff 123 – 125.

⁷⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, 4 August 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

⁷⁵ Amery diary, 4 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁷⁶ Cripps to Amery, 3 August 1942, L/PO/3/3d: f 10..

⁷⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 3 August 1942, L/PO/3/3d: ff 20 – 23.

outside as a sign of a wobbling'.⁷⁸

The British Response to the Final All-India Resolution

Once the War Cabinet had decided not to pursue Saprú's call for an immediate conference to be attended by all political parties and communities in an attempt to produce an eleventh hour settlement, Amery sent a telegram to Churchill, in the Middle East, explaining that the Viceroy had been asked to act quickly once the AICC had made its resolution public.⁷⁹ After the resolution had been approved on 8 August by a margin of 250 votes to 13 votes, the Government of India swiftly put its carefully made plans into action. At a very early hour on the following morning, Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and the other CWC leaders were arrested, as well as large numbers of provincial Congress leaders, who lived outside Bombay. The leaders who were arrested in Bombay were taken to their places of incarceration by train, Gandhi to the Aga Khan's palace at Poona, and the others to Ahmednagar Fort, where although they remained *incommunicado*, were kept in relative comfort.⁸⁰ Azad recorded that Gandhi had been dismayed by the speed of the British reaction, especially as he had wanted one more chance to negotiate with the Viceroy.⁸¹

During the period of unrest, when sabotage and civil disturbance followed the arrests, Amery was largely restricted to a role that provided support for

⁷⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 4 August 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

⁷⁹ War Cabinet conclusions, 7 August 1942, CAB 65/27/23. Also, Amery diary, 7 August 1942, AMEL 7/36. Also Amery to Churchill, 8 August 1942, L/PO/6/102a: ff 65 – 66.

⁸⁰ Patrick French, *Liberty or Death*, London, Penguin Books, 1997, pp. 155 – 156.

⁸¹ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 87 – 94. Also Gandhi to Linlithgow, 14 August 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/124.

Linlithgow from London, whether by letter or telegram, but also in the War Cabinet and the House of Commons. He was also occupied in attempting to ensure that the reporting of the rioting, and the measures used in suppressing it, were as accurate, and as favourable to HMG and the Government of India, as possible.

The unrest that followed the detention of the Congress leaders soon became violent, which was not surprising as Gandhi's statements on the need for any protests to remain peaceful were, at best, ambiguous. For example, in mid-1942 he had stated that he had waited while the 'country developed the non-violent strength to throw off the foreign yoke'. However, he admitted that his 'attitude had undergone a change, and he could no longer afford to wait'.⁸²

Whether Gandhi had expressed qualified support for violence, or not, it was evident that within two or three days of the arrest of the leading Congress politicians, serious disorders had broken out in parts of Bombay, Madras, the Central Provinces and Bengal. Matters were graver in Bihar and in parts of the United Provinces, although on a much milder scale in Orissa and Assam. Few disturbances were reported in the Punjab, Sind or the North West Frontier Province, or even the princely states. Attacks were first directed against communications, especially railway stations, signal boxes and post offices that were set on fire by large mobs, possibly thousands strong. The permanent way was damaged to the extent that Bihar was cut off, while Bengal and Assam were

⁸² D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vlg, The Publications Division, Bombay, 1953, p. 113. Cited by David Arnold, *Gandhi*, London, Pearson Education, 2001, p. 211.

isolated off from the rest of Northern India.⁸³

Some 2,000 police officers were wounded, and a further 63 killed, sometimes in brutal circumstances. When police or troops were given the order to open fire, a total of 831 persons were injured, and as many as 297 killed. Although these figures were serious, they were very small when compared with the number of 92,000 arrests that were made, chiefly in Bombay, Bihar and the United Provinces.⁸⁴

The first bulletins from India enabled Amery to report to the War Cabinet about the early disorder that had broken out. Whether or not, at this stage, he had been given full details of the disturbances, he was anxious that matters should not be given the sensational coverage that was already being accorded in the USA.⁸⁵ In any event, his diary for the day suggested that the rioting was only sporadic, and 'largely committed by students and hooligans'.⁸⁶ For the next couple of days he described little escalation in the disorders, and once again showed his mistrust for 'unnecessary detail and bad headlines in the press'.⁸⁷ However, by 17 August, he had been obliged to observe that the degree of coordination in the sabotage, suggested more planning than could be expected from just students and hooligans.⁸⁸

During this early period of the disturbances, Amery made BBC broadcasts to

⁸³ Coupland, *Indian Politics 1936 – 1942*, p. 301.

⁸⁴ Arnold, *Gandhi*, pp. 210 – 211.

⁸⁵ War Cabinet conclusions, 10 August 1942, CAB 65/27/25.

⁸⁶ Amery diary, 10 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁸⁷ Amery diary, 12 and 13 August 1942, 7/36.

⁸⁸ Amery diary, 17 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

India, one of which annoyed Churchill, since without stating the exact circumstances in which it might come about, there was a reference to the possibility of Indian independence.⁸⁹ These broadcasts also drew criticism from two very different sources. Firstly, George Orwell, then a talks producer in the BBC Eastern Service, lamented that Amery made ghastly speeches, talking of Gandhi and Nehru as 'wicked saboteurs'.⁹⁰ Secondly, and possibly of more consequence, it was suggested by Francis G. Hutchins in 1973 that Amery, in broadcasting to India at this time, revealed such detail from intercepted Congress documents that he accidentally gave specific tactical advice to potential saboteurs, who previously had only a tentative idea of what to do.⁹¹

As he did on other occasions when he wanted to be candid on issues of political controversy, Amery confided in Smuts. At the very start of the measures against Congress, he sent him a long and remarkable letter, reviewing the constitutional and political position in stark terms. Drawing an unlikely parallel with the situation in South Africa, he bleakly asserted that Congress had rejected both the August 1940 offer and the Cripps proposals as a pretext to stage another civil disobedience movement. He believed that whether Congress would need to wait until the end of the war or not, its ultimate aim was one party domination, a goal that he regarded as 'at bottom totalitarianism'. It was ironic

⁸⁹ Amery diary, 11 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁹⁰ W. J. West (ed.), *Orwell, the War Broadcasts*, London, Duckworth/BBC, 1985, p.37. Orwell drily commented that Amery was impossible to coach as a broadcaster, and that there was no choice 'but to record him exactly as God and Harrow had made him'.

⁹¹ Francis G. Hutchins, *India's Revolution, Gandhi and the 'Quit India' Movement*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1973, pp. 221 – 222. Also, Paul R. Greenhough, 'Political Mobilisation and the Underground Literature of the Quit India Movement, 1942 – 1944', *Social Scientist*, vol. 27, No. 7/8 (July – August 1999), pp. 15 – 16.

that when Smuts eventually replied to Amery, he provided only qualified short term support to the British Government. Although he agreed that during the initial period of civil disobedience Congress leaders should be interned, he felt that the insurrection would be short lived. Once matters had settled down, he recommended that the prisoners should be released and a fresh attempt be made to settle the constitutional position by summoning all parties and interest groups.⁹²

At first, the Viceroy gave Amery a sanguine account of the agitation, believing that prompt action by the authorities had deprived Congress militants of the time in which to organise a wholesale revolution to be run by an underground network.⁹³ However, as more detailed reports came in from provincial governors, Amery was forced to accept that there had been real violence in a number of areas and that substantial numbers of troops were required to suppress the insurrection.⁹⁴

The suspicion of enemy influences behind the disorders was discussed at a meeting of the War Cabinet on 24 August. Intelligence reports from the Government of India, Home Department, had suggested that Congress alone was not responsible for the troubles, but had been assisted by agencies working directly for the Japanese.⁹⁵ Amery, who was asked by the War Cabinet to look

⁹² Amery to Linlithgow, 1 September 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11. Smuts' telegram to Amery was sent as an enclosure to the letter to the Viceroy. Although undated, it was received shortly before 1 September 1942. .

⁹³ Linlithgow to Amery, 17 August 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11.

⁹⁴ Amery diary, 19 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁹⁵ War Cabinet conclusions, 24 August 1942, CAB 65/27/33.

into the matter, clearly believed that sabotage, especially in Bihar was 'real fifth column work'.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, a scrutiny of Amery's subsequent correspondence and diary for 1942 reveals very little in the way of high quality intelligence about organised subversion, or contact between Congress and Japan. This would appear to be corroborated by a passage in a telegram sent by the Government of India, Home Department, to Amery on 1 September 1942. This telegram that was intended to provide briefing for Amery to use during an impending debate in the House of Commons, attributed the disturbances exclusively to Congress discontent following the failure of the Cripps mission.⁹⁷

The House of Commons Debates on India in September and October 1942

Although order was largely to be restored by the end of September 1942, the situation had been grave. Despite the relatively small number of fatalities, Linlithgow described the disturbances as the most serious since the Indian Mutiny of 1857.⁹⁸ Amery was more bullish, asserting that the prompt action taken by the authorities had prevented bloodshed on the scale of 1857.⁹⁹ Churchill concurred with these views, but believed that it was necessary to explain to the House of Commons why Britain had responded to the Congress resolutions in such a forthright manner. Once a statement from Downing Street had been arranged for 10 September, Amery amended Churchill's first draft that

⁹⁶ Amery diary, 24 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁹⁷ Government of India Home Department to Amery, 1 September 1942, L/P & J/8/604: f 12.

⁹⁸ Linlithgow to Churchill, via India Office, 31 August 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/158.

⁹⁹ Amery diary, 31 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

he found 'curiously *jejeune*'.¹⁰⁰ However, the Prime Minister would have nothing to do with such editing, and after some long winded discussions, settled upon a version that had Amery fearing for its reception in India.¹⁰¹

Churchill's forceful analysis divided opinion sharply in the House of Commons. Labour backbenchers such as Aneurin Bevan directed their anger not only at him, but also at their colleagues, Attlee and Cripps, who were senior ministers in the Coalition Government. Churchill first used simple arithmetic in an attempt to show that Congress did not speak for the majority of Indians by stating that 235 millions out of India's population of 390 millions were supporters of other parties or communities. He then claimed that Gandhi's commitment to non-violence was only theoretical, with the consequence that Congress had moved seamlessly into its current revolutionary campaign. Finally, his claim that the rebellion was being put down with restraint drew an angry response.¹⁰²

On the following day, an adjournment debate about India revealed a surprising consensus on the need for goodwill from all sides, both in Britain and India. When Amery was called to speak, he approved of parts of a thoughtful contribution from Arthur Greenwood, the Labour Minister without Portfolio, and Leader of the Opposition, but also disagreed with his view that Churchill's speech, on the previous day, had been provocative. After a sharp exchange with Manny Shinwell over the tone of the Prime Minister's statement, he turned to the metamorphosis of Congress from a party of *satyagraha* into one that was

¹⁰⁰ Amery diary, 2 September 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹⁰¹ Amery diary, 9 September 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹⁰² *Hansard*, 10 September 1942, vol. 383, cc302 – 310.

attempting to paralyse the country's communications, and therefore its war effort.

There had been further improvement in the security situation in India by the time that the next Parliamentary debate on the matter took place on 8 October. During these intervening weeks there had been the usual progress reports from Linlithgow to Amery, but of more interest was a detailed minute by Alec Joyce, a publicity adviser at the India Office. He detected general support in Britain for the strong action taken against Congress, but also suggested that it ought to be possible to combine firmness with an invitation to representative Indians to resume consideration of constitutional reform.¹⁰³ Various senior officials at the India Office considered the issues raised by Joyce, and soon Amery received a minute from Monteath, conceding that disagreeable as it might be, publicity considerations should be in Amery's mind when preparing his speech for the debate on 8 October.¹⁰⁴

When the War Cabinet discussed its tactics, it was decided to 'avoid a controversial debate', and instead stress that previous offers made to Congress were still open. To this end it was agreed that the debate would be wound up by Attlee, and not Churchill, who would be away from London.¹⁰⁵ However, even without the Prime Minister, the atmosphere in the chamber was more than usually tense and adversarial. Amery's opening speech was long, full of self-

¹⁰³ Alec Joyce, minute 21 September 1942, L/P & J/8/5i5/: ff 74 – 76.

¹⁰⁴ Monteath to Amery, 24 September 1942, L/P & J/8/515: f 73.

¹⁰⁵ War Cabinet conclusions, 6 October 1942, CAB 65/28/2. Also, Amery diary, 6 October 1942, AMEL 7/36.

justification and covered very little new ground, concentrating as before on Congress intransigence and communal differences.

Although Amery had some support from his Conservative colleagues, a number of left wing Labour MPs made powerful and denunciatory speeches that somewhat unfairly portrayed him as an arch imperialist in the diehard tradition. Although Greenwood attempted to put the case for the Government, it was left to Attlee to employ his usual pragmatism to put an effective case for the need to restore order before any reforms could take place. In the division, the House supported the Government by 360 votes to 17 votes.¹⁰⁶

Amery and the Concern of the United States and China with the Indian Situation

Although the Congress campaign lost national momentum throughout the remaining months of 1942, the matter of Britain's action to repress the insurrection, and a perceived wish to hang on to a valued colony still occupied American and Chinese opinion. As mentioned in the previous chapter, following the end of the Cripps mission, Roosevelt made no further direct attempts to persuade Churchill to make any fresh initiatives on the subject of Indian constitutional reform. Accordingly, when Cripps' assistant Graham Spry, visited the President on 15 May 1942, he was assured that the USA did not want to interfere in matters between Britain and India.¹⁰⁷

However, Amery had long resented American opinions on the British Empire,

¹⁰⁶ *Hansard*, 8 October 1942, vol. 383, cc1386 – 1460.

¹⁰⁷ Spry note, 15 May 1942, L/PO/6/105F: ff 39 – 40, IOR.

and in common with Linlithgow, had been particularly irked by Louis Johnson's intervention in the final stages of Cripps' mission. Not surprisingly, he asked both Eden and Churchill to ensure that Johnson would not be allowed to return to India.¹⁰⁸ Churchill acquiesced by writing to Harry (Lloyd) Hopkins, Roosevelt's Special Adviser, explaining that Johnson would no longer be welcome in India, and responding to rumours, insisted that he did not want Nehru to be permitted to visit the President in Washington.¹⁰⁹ However, Clymer has suggested that Roosevelt and Hopkins still harboured suspicions over Britain's intentions in India, and that these were confirmed by the final failure of the American Technical Mission in October 1942.¹¹⁰

If Roosevelt was discreet about his real opinions on the British in India, there were many others, such as Cordell Hull, who were not so reticent, especially when a Japanese invasion appeared imminent.¹¹¹ However, there was ambivalence in American thinking. On the one hand, there were those who had always harboured doubts about the moral legitimacy of the British Empire. On the other hand, there was also widespread concern over the behaviour of certain Indians. In particular, there was disappointment about the Congress

¹⁰⁸ Amery to Eden, 28 May 1942, L/PO/6/105c: f 147. Also, Amery to Churchill, 29 May 1942, L/PO/6/105c: f 143.

¹⁰⁹ Churchill to Hopkins, 31 May 1942, L/PO/6/105c: f 141. In the event, Nehru did not go to Washington, and Johnson was too ill to return to India. Harry Hopkins (1890 – 1946): New Deal official, and Roosevelt's unofficial emissary to Britain, 1940 – 1945.

¹¹⁰ Kenneth J. Clymer, *Quest for Freedom, the USA and India's Independence*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995, pp. 76 -81.

¹¹¹ Cordell Hull, *Memoirs, Volume II*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1948, pp. 1482 – 1491. Hull, who had long been an opponent of Amery on the subject of imperial preference, placed philosophical objections to colonialism alongside the need to keep India's war effort going in the face of the threat from Japan.

rejection of Cripps' offer, alarm at the nature of the Allahabad resolutions, but most of all, dismay over the inflammatory radio broadcasts sent from Berlin by Subhas Chandra Bose.¹¹²

Once the arrest of Congress officials had begun, Amery really began to feel apprehensive about any potential interference from the USA or China. He had already bluntly explained the British position over the Congress resolutions to John Winant, US Ambassador to London, at a meeting at the India Office on 29 July. In particular, he revealed his scorn at attempts by Nehru to associate the Congress cause with the best interest of the United Nations.¹¹³

However, it was only when Chiang Kai-shek attempted to persuade Roosevelt to use his influence with Churchill that Amery really became incensed. The Generalissimo had already written to Roosevelt asking that he should insist on Britain granting complete freedom to India, only for Churchill, having seen the letter to state, with some vehemence, that Congress did not represent India.¹¹⁴ Once the widespread arrests had started, Chiang Kai-shek sent a further impassioned telegram to Roosevelt, imploring him to take immediate action on India, and this was again forwarded to Churchill, who, by this time, was in Moscow.¹¹⁵ Amery, having seen this telegram, immediately wrote to Churchill,

¹¹² Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India, The American Response to the 1942 Struggle*, pp. 145 – 154.

¹¹³ Amery, note 29 July 1942, L/P & J/8/597: f 151. Also, Amery to Eden, letter 30 July 1942, L/P & J/8/597: f 150. Amery sent the note of his meeting with Winant to the Foreign Secretary.

¹¹⁴ War Cabinet memorandum, 2 August 1942, L/P & J/21/2315: ff 186 – 190. Annex 1 to this memorandum from President Roosevelt to Churchill, 30 July 1942, itself enclosing a message from Chiang Kai-shek. Annex 2 to this original memorandum, Churchill to Roosevelt, 31 July 1942.

¹¹⁵ Mr Martin to Mr Rowan, via Air Ministry and 30 Military Mission, Moscow, 12 August 1942, L/PO/6/105f: ff 77 – 78.

describing the Chinese intervention as 'mischievous and ignorant' and asserting that Congress leaders had no interest in helping the Allies, but were only concerned with establishing their supremacy.¹¹⁶

It was only in his diary that Amery really expressed his true worries, especially his consternation at the demise of Britain's influence in the world. He had already denounced the Atlantic Charter as 'tripe', and deeply regretted an atmosphere of defeatism in which all post-war problems would be handed to Americans, Chinese, or even Russians to solve.¹¹⁷

He was much calmer when writing a War Cabinet memorandum, *India as a Factor in Anglo-American Relations*. This put a sober well argued case for the division of propaganda duties on the subject of Indo-British relations between the British Information Services and Sir Girja Bajpai, who, since 1941, had been in Washington as the Indian Agent-General.¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, it did not take long after the British crackdown for the efforts of Bajpai and his colleagues to become less effective in resisting demands by the American public for a national government to be installed in India. Even respected newspapers such as the *Washington Post* believed that the Indian problem was no longer a 'solely British problem or headache'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Amery to Churchill, via Air Ministry and 30 Military Mission, Moscow, 12 August 1942, L/PO/6/105f: f 74.

¹¹⁷ Amery diary, 12 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹¹⁸ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 13 August 1942, CAB 66/27/38

¹¹⁹ Halifax to Eden, 16 September 1942, L/P & S/12/2633: f 177.

William Phillips' Mission to India

Grudgingly accepting a suggestion from Halifax, Amery loyally wrote to Linlithgow, and pressed the case for a high calibre American to live in Delhi, gain the confidence of members of the Government of India, and then send valuable propaganda material to the USA.¹²⁰ Possibly to his surprise, the Viceroy supported the idea, but stipulated that the ideal representative should be unlike Louis Johnson, whom he regarded as 'too much of a sensationalist'. Instead he was quite specific in wanting a mature, professional diplomat, who was not ambitious, and who would report to the State Department, instead of the White House.¹²¹

There was a considerable amount of political bargaining between London, Washington and Delhi before the veteran American career diplomat, William Phillips was formally appointed by Roosevelt to be his personal representative in India.¹²² Earlier, on 24 November, and before Roosevelt had given Phillips his exact title, his appointment had been approved by Britain, and on his way to Delhi, he had visited Amery at the India Office. He promised him that he was going to India to assist in any way he could, but would not mediate; a welcome reassurance that Amery immediately passed on to Linlithgow. In particular he

¹²⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 13 September 1942, L/P & S/12/2633: ff 182 – 183.

¹²¹ Linlithgow to Amery, 18 September, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

¹²² Roosevelt to Linlithgow, 3 December 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/130. There are two detailed American accounts of the process by which Phillips was finally chosen. Firstly, Clymer, *Quest for Freedom, The United States and India's Independence*, pp. 120 – 127. This version stressed the efforts of the American administration to find a candidate who would be most likely to appeal to the British, especially Amery and Linlithgow. Secondly, Venkataramani and Shrivastava, '*Quit India*', *The American Response to the 1942 Struggle*, pp. 304 – 307. By contrast, these authors portrayed a hapless Amery, outwitted by cagey Americans, and unable to protect his Viceroy from the imposition of an unwelcome visitor, free to interfere in Indian politics.

reported to the Viceroy that the sixty four year old Phillips had recent ambassadorial experience in Rome, and had also assured him that he was at the stage in his career when he was certainly not 'out to make political capital for himself'.¹²³

Linlithgow's first meeting with Phillips on 9 January 1943 was promising, particularly as the American planned to travel widely in India, rather than remain in Delhi, and more importantly said he hoped to keep out of politics.¹²⁴ Unfortunately for the remainder of his mission that lasted until May 1943, there was a worsening of the relationship between Phillips and the Viceroy. The origins of their difficulties were ironically to be found in a meeting in London in late 1942 attended by Phillips, Anderson, Amery, and the Editor of *The Times*, Barrington-Ward.¹²⁵ Phillips believed that Amery had assured him that he had the licence to do anything he could to bring the parties together in India.¹²⁶

Amery's recollection of events was quite different as he believed that he had only repeated what he had said to Phillips at their first meeting on 24 November, namely insisting that Britain saw his role in India as one of informing the President, and not mediating between the Government of India and various political groups. However, Amery did admit that, when asked for advice by Phillips on how to speak to Indians, he had suggested that he should stress the

¹²³ Amery to Linlithgow, 25 November 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11, enclosing a note of a talk with Phillips at the India Office on the previous day. See also, Amery diary, 24 November 1942, AMEL 7/36.

¹²⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, letter 11 January 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12.

¹²⁵ Clymer, *Quest for Freedom, The United States and India's Independence*, p. 140.

¹²⁶ Linlithgow to Amery, 28 January 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/24.

consensual manner in which the American and Dominion constitutions were formed.¹²⁷

The first real difficulty between Phillips and Linlithgow occurred on 8 February 1943, when the former asked to be allowed to meet Gandhi who was on the eve of his fast. Linlithgow proved to be far too optimistic when he thought that Phillips had taken his refusal very well, and that the matter was at an end.¹²⁸ Within the next few days, Phillips was put under considerable pressure by Roosevelt and the State Department to persuade the British to release Gandhi from detention.¹²⁹ Accordingly, he made contact with Linlithgow, enclosing a message from Cordell Hull, expressing the extreme disquiet felt in Washington about the crisis in India.¹³⁰

Amery, who hitherto had been unwilling to bother Churchill about American intervention in Indian matters, was sufficiently alarmed to send him a strongly worded minute. In particular, he saw beyond Linlithgow's view that Phillips was the main cause for concern, and told the Prime Minister that he had been given direct instructions to mediate by the American Government. He beseeched Churchill to ask Roosevelt to 'keep off the grass', and was delighted when this message was passed to Hull by Halifax.¹³¹

Although Phillips was to try again to meet Gandhi, his attempts were politely

¹²⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 29 January 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12.

¹²⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 11 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/24.

¹²⁹ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, pp. 196 – 197.

¹³⁰ Linlithgow to Amery, 19 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/24. Amery received the full text of Hull's message from Linlithgow.

¹³¹ Amery to Churchill, 19 February 1943, AMEL 1/6/21. Also, Amery diary, 22 February 1943, AMEL 7/37.

refused by Linlithgow, who had Amery's assurance that his actions were supported by the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet.¹³² Any remaining leverage that Phillips might have had with the British largely disappeared, when Gandhi ended his fast in late February 1943. Soon after, he returned to the United States a bitter and disappointed man, and moreover one, who in Amery's opinion had permitted himself to be duped by Congress propaganda.¹³³

Gandhi's Fast

Some months before Gandhi commenced his fast in February 1943, his campaign had been anticipated by Amery and the War Cabinet in London, and Linlithgow and his Executive Council in Delhi. The matter of how to deal with a possible fast by Gandhi was discussed by the War Cabinet on 6 August 1942, even before the 'Quit India' movement started. A bullish meeting rejected the earlier suggestion by the Government of India Home Department that a 'cat and mouse' policy should be applied, whereby the Mahatma would be released from custody as soon as his life was in danger.¹³⁴ Amery's diary for the same day recounted that he was the most hawkish of his colleagues in recommending that Gandhi be allowed to fast to death, but also that not only Anderson, but more surprisingly, Cripps and Bevin supported him.¹³⁵

At the time of the 'Quit India' resolution, a majority of provincial governors

¹³² Amery to Linlithgow, 11 March 1943, L/P & S/12/2754: f 120.

¹³³ Clymer, *The United States and India's Independence*, p. 161. Also, Amery diary, 13 April 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹³⁴ Government of India Home Department to Amery, 3 August 1942, L/P & J/8/597: ff 118 – 119. Also, War Cabinet conclusions, 6 August 1942, CAB 65/27/21.

¹³⁵ Amery diary, 6 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

had been fearful of the consequences for public order if Gandhi fasted to death in captivity, a view supported by Linlithgow, and his advisers. However the War Cabinet had remained unconvinced. Firstly, Gandhi was a *detenu*, and not a prisoner, a fact which made him responsible for his own fate.¹³⁶ Secondly, they stressed the propaganda difficulties that would arise for the Viceroy if Congress were able to portray the release of Gandhi as a victory.¹³⁷ Once it became clear that a fast by Gandhi was not imminent, matters were left as decided by the War Cabinet on 7 September 1942. If Gandhi were to fast he would not be released, but his son, Devdas, would be permitted to join him at the Aga Khan's palace in Poona.¹³⁸

The prospect of a fast by Gandhi recurred many weeks later following an exchange of correspondence with Linlithgow, that if courtly in expression, was nevertheless more acrimonious in meaning. Gandhi wrote to Linlithgow on 31 December 1942 in a mood of frustration over the blame that had been attributed to him for the violence of the Congress campaign. He felt that unless Linlithgow could convince him that he was responsible for the bloodshed, he would be obliged to fast under his personal code of *satyagraha*.¹³⁹ Amery had a critical role in the wording of the Viceroy's reply that was delayed until after a meeting of the War Cabinet that had been arranged to discuss the change of opinion in Delhi over the action that would need to be taken, if Gandhi again chose to

¹³⁶ War Cabinet conclusions, 10 August 1942, CAB 65/27/25.

¹³⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 17 August 1942, CAB 65/27/29.

¹³⁸ War Cabinet conclusions, 7 September 1942, CAB 65/27/37.

¹³⁹ Gandhi to Linlithgow, 31 December 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/124.

fast.¹⁴⁰ On 7 January 1943 the War Cabinet softened its position from the previous September to the extent of countenancing the release of Gandhi on humanitarian grounds, provided that the security situation with Congress had eased.¹⁴¹

Amery, nevertheless realised that the War Cabinet, especially Churchill did not wish to make any special allowances for the judgement of the man on the spot, and shrewdly wrote two separate telegrams to Linlithgow on 8 January. The first telegram merely stated the War Cabinet conclusions, but the second, which Amery did not wish to be circulated, gave the Viceroy a list of options to consider before finally replying to Gandhi. The themes of the latter telegram were not only the importance of avoiding a tactical victory for Gandhi, but also a recognition of Linlithgow's need to carry his Executive Council with him.¹⁴²

Linlithgow's eventual reply to Gandhi on 13 January was the first in a sequence of letters between the two men, the last written on 7 February. Gandhi's letter of 29 January contained the statement that, on 9 February he proposed to commence a fast for twenty one days, albeit one that permitted the consumption of water flavoured with citrus juice. The Viceroy's letters unequivocally laid the blame for the violence and sabotage during the previous

¹⁴⁰ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum 4 January 1943, CAB 66/35/5.

¹⁴¹ War Cabinet conclusions, 7 January 1943, CAB 65/33/4.

¹⁴² Amery diary, 7 January 1943, AMEL 7/37. Also, Amery to Linlithgow, 8 January 1943, L/P & J/8/600: f 470. This telegram was a curt statement of the War Cabinet conclusions. Also, Amery to Linlithgow, 8 January 1943, L/PO/6/102b: ff 427 – 428. This was the personal telegram, and was not circulated.

few months at the door of Congress, of which he regarded Gandhi as the undisputed leader. The Mahatma's opposite view was that it was not the nature of the Congress resolutions that were the cause of the disorders, but the suddenness of the widespread arrests by the Government of India in August 1942.¹⁴³

Although Gandhi had lost a considerable amount of weight during his fast, by the time it ended on 2 March, he recovered quickly from a condition that a team of British and Indian doctors had, at times considered to be critical.¹⁴⁴ A day by day account of Gandhi's fast is beyond the scope of this thesis, but an early, and representative example of Amery's difficulties occurred during and after the meeting of the War Cabinet on 7 February. Amery supported the decision of the Viceroy's Executive Council to release Gandhi for the three weeks of his fast, following which he would be returned to custody. Even the normally strictly factual minutes of the meeting showed that the War Cabinet was deeply opposed to this decision made in Delhi, and had asked for a telegram to be sent to the Viceroy, saying that no action should be taken without further instructions from London.¹⁴⁵

Amery's diary showed that he was unable to convince Churchill and his colleagues that the key issue was not how to deal with Gandhi, but whether the

¹⁴³ Linlithgow to Gandhi, 13 January 1943. Text as per draft telegram from Linlithgow to Amery, 6 January 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/24. Also the following letters, Gandhi to Linlithgow, 19 January 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/125; Linlithgow to Gandhi, 25 January 1943, MSS. EUR. 125/125; Gandhi to Linlithgow, 29 January 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/125; Linlithgow to Gandhi, 5 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/125; Gandhi to Linlithgow, 7 February 1943, L/P & J/8/600: ff 217 – 220.

¹⁴⁴ Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay*, pp. 264 – 267.

¹⁴⁵ War Cabinet conclusions, 7 February 1943, CAB 65/33/25.

War Cabinet should insist on Linlithgow overriding his Council. There was further indignity for Amery as he was only one of a trio chosen by Churchill to draft the telegram to be sent to the Viceroy, and was unable to persuade the other members, Anderson and Simon, that it should not be peremptory in tone.¹⁴⁶ He was particularly concerned that the final version sent to Linlithgow, and signed only by himself, seemed preoccupied with the perceived weakness of the Executive Council's stance, and the danger that Gandhi might be able to achieve a propaganda success.¹⁴⁷ Indeed he was sufficiently worried about his relationship with Linlithgow to send him a separate personal telegram, explaining that the main content of the official telegram had been drawn up by Anderson and Simon.¹⁴⁸

Despite a forceful telegram that Churchill sent to Linlithgow on 8 February, emphasising the danger of British rule in India being brought into ridicule, the Viceroy in replying to Amery's two telegrams, insisted that a decision to override his Council would endanger the war effort.¹⁴⁹ Amery was delighted that Linlithgow had 'applied the Nelson touch' to the War Cabinet instructions, and remained confident that, once any storm had subsided, the Viceroy would be supported by the War Cabinet.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Amery diary, 7 February 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹⁴⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 8 February 1943, L/PO/ 6/102b: ff 345 – 346.

¹⁴⁸ Amery to Linlithgow, 8 February 1943, L/PO/6/103b: ff 341 – 342. Also, Amery diary, 7 February 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹⁴⁹ Churchill to Linlithgow, via War Office and Commander-in-Chief, India, 8 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/158. This telegram was not copied to Amery, or the India Office. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 8 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/24. This telegram answered Amery's personal telegram. Also, Amery to Linlithgow, 8 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/24.

¹⁵⁰ Amery diary, 8 February 1943, AMEL 7/37.

In the event, Gandhi, who seemed taken aback by the Viceroy's offer of temporary freedom, informed the Governor of Bombay that he did not wish to be released for the duration of his fast.¹⁵¹ With the possibility now that Gandhi could die in captivity, the unanimity of Linlithgow's almost exclusively Indianised Council broke up, and three members, Sir Mormasji Mody, Dr Madhao Aney and Nalini Sarkar, resigned from office.¹⁵²

Although Amery had needed to be cunning in his relations with Churchill and the War Cabinet, he had surprisingly few problems elsewhere at home in defending British policies over Gandhi's fast. Despite describing the editorials in the *News Chronicle* and the *Manchester Guardian* as 'mischievous' he found *The Times* 'helpful'.¹⁵³ His defence of the Viceroy's stance in the House of Commons was also relatively straightforward, as on the only two occasions that he was obliged to answer Parliamentary questions during Gandhi's fast, his usual Labour Party interrogators were not particularly awkward.¹⁵⁴

Once it became clear to Amery, Linlithgow and Churchill that Gandhi's fast, whether to death or not, was not going to have a significant effect on the War Cabinet, or the Government of India (the resignation of the three Indian Council members notwithstanding), they became increasingly more confident that matters were under control. Sapru, as a liberal Hindu, had generally been held in fair esteem by Britain, but the request to release Gandhi put forward by a group

¹⁵¹ Linlithgow to Amery, 9 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/24.

¹⁵² Linlithgow to Amery, 17 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/158.

¹⁵³ Amery diary, 19 February 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹⁵⁴ *Hansard*, 11 February 1943, vol. 386, cc1433. Also, *Hansard*, 25 February 1943, vol. 387, cc277 – 280.

of moderate Indian politicians he had assembled, drew no positive response.¹⁵⁵

Indeed, Churchill's curt reply to Sapru, via Amery and Linlithgow, merely reinforced the determination of the authorities in London and Delhi not to be intimidated by Gandhi's fast.¹⁵⁶

When Gandhi's health began to improve towards the end of February, the tone of British utterances became more triumphalist. Linlithgow was the most understated, although he insisted to both Amery and Lumley that Gandhi had suffered a major defeat.¹⁵⁷ Unsurprisingly, Churchill showed little restraint, telling Smuts that he doubted whether Gandhi had fasted at all, and when praising Linlithgow for his handling of the whole matter could not resist sharp criticism of his colleagues in the War Cabinet, who may have fallen for the Mahatma's 'bluff and sob-stuff'.¹⁵⁸

Amery had generally remained conscious of his need to maintain a responsible position between the Government of India and the War Cabinet, although he had taken care not to dignify Gandhi's action as a fast, but rather a 'restricted diet'.¹⁵⁹ However once Gandhi's survival had been confirmed, he too suggested that his gesture had failed, and rejected the proposal in the *News Chronicle* that the end of the fast offered an opportunity to end the constitutional

¹⁵⁵ Sapru to Laithwaite, 20 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/125. Also, Sapru and others to Churchill, 21 February 1943, L/P & J/8/600: f 247.

¹⁵⁶ Amery to Linlithgow, 23 February 1943, L/P & J/8/600: ff 252 – 253. Churchill asked that his message be given to Sapru by Linlithgow.

¹⁵⁷ Linlithgow to Amery, 2 March 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12. Also, Linlithgow to Lumley, 11 March 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/57.

¹⁵⁸ Churchill to Smuts, 26 February 1943, R/30/1/3: f 5. Also Churchill to Linlithgow, via War Office and Commander-in-Chief, India, 28 February 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/158.

¹⁵⁹ Amery to Linlithgow, 6 February 1943, L/PO/6/102b: f 370.

deadlock.¹⁶⁰

In his view Gandhi was a 'a woolly pacifist who combined a reputation for holiness with a political dictatorship exercised in a wrecking and negative sense'.¹⁶¹ He had not changed his opinions about Gandhi's fast when he composed his draft memoirs, and described a 'theatrical performance that achieved nothing, beyond his capacity for survival'.¹⁶²

A more sober assessment of the effects of the fast on the Indian public can be gained from a scrutiny of the contemporaneous reports sent to Linlithgow by the provincial governors. Most accounts conceded that there was some local tension when it seemed possible that Gandhi would die, but the broad theme was the general level of apathy, even amongst students.¹⁶³

Hutchins' analysis of Gandhi's fast concluded that the whole matter so occupied the British in London and Delhi that the ordinary business of government was overwhelmed, and that the Viceroy was obliged to offer to release him while on hunger strike.¹⁶⁴ This was untrue, but there can be little doubt, that the time taken by the War Cabinet in dealing with Gandhi's fast might well have been better spent in planning for the looming famine in Bengal.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Amery to Linlithgow, 2 March 1943, MSS. EUR. 125/12.

¹⁶¹ Amery, diary 1 March 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹⁶² Amery, draft memoirs, Chapter VIII, p. 61, AMEL 8/86.

¹⁶³ Lumley (Bombay) to Linlithgow, 4 March 1943, MSS. EUR. 125/57. Also, Rutherford (Bihar) to Linlithgow, 5 March 1943, MSS. EUR. 125/50. Also, Hallett (United Provinces) to Linlithgow, 9 March 1943, MSS. EUR. 125/106.

¹⁶⁴ Hutchings, *India's Revolution, Gandhi and the Quit India Movement*, pp. 256 – 258, 261 – 264.

¹⁶⁵ French, *Liberty or Death*, p. 165.

Amery and Social Reform in India

When Cripps and Bevin suggested the option of undertaking social reform in India as a way of making progress, and bypassing traditional communal and party politics, they started a policy debate that lasted until the final weeks of Linlithgow's term in late 1943, and once more placed Amery in a difficult position. Although Amery was to take a highly sceptical view of the value of social engineering to undermine Congress, and indeed the value for money that could be delivered by such a project, he was not opposed in principle to well thought out reforms. Indeed, by illustration, there is evidence that he differed considerably from his Conservative colleagues over the Beveridge Report since he did not believe that it contravened Tory philosophy.¹⁶⁶

Some five months after the failure of his mission, Cripps was the first to take the initiative, and employed tactics that his biographer, Peter Clarke, described as combining Marx with Machiavelli.¹⁶⁷ His note to Churchill and Amery was based on the highly optimistic premise that measures to promote more economic and industrial fairness would enable the Indian working classes to identify Congress businessmen as their natural enemy, and not the British.¹⁶⁸

Despite some warnings about the scope and underlying political motivation of Cripps' ideas by William Croft, an Under-Secretary at the India Office, and Sir Anul Chatterjee, one of Amery's Indian advisers, the project surprisingly

¹⁶⁶ Amery diary, 30 November 1942, AMEL 7/36. Amery had a surprisingly progressive view of the social arrangements recommended by Beveridge.

¹⁶⁷ Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, pp. 351 – 352.

¹⁶⁸ Cripps, note for Churchill and Amery 2 September 1942, L/E/8/2527: ff 339 – 341.

recommended itself to Churchill, who asked for it to be developed.¹⁶⁹ Amery's early response to Cripps was cautious and non-committal, especially as he insisted that while he was prepared to include Bevin and Kingsley Wood in any discussions, he felt that he needed the specialist advice that could only come from Chatterjee and Mudaliar.¹⁷⁰

By the time that Amery chaired a large meeting on the subject at the India Office on 25 September 1942, he had been made aware by Cripps' assistant, Graham Spry, that a recent statement by an important policy study group at Chatham House had included social reform in India as an important element in any wider programme to break the constitutional deadlock.¹⁷¹ The minutes of the meeting at the India Office showed a critical difference of emphasis between Amery, Cripps and Bevin. Amery, assisted by Mudaliar, stressed the need for any critical decisions to be taken by the Government of India, and any provinces not being governed under Section 93. Cripps, still wanted political responsibility for reform to remain with the War Cabinet, while Bevin, his mind firmly on the well-being of Indian workers, stressed that the rigorous enforcement of existing labour legislation would be sufficient for the moment.¹⁷²

Surprisingly Amery felt the need to be pragmatic. Although he disliked Cripps' proposals and wanted to dismiss them in peremptory fashion, he felt obliged to

¹⁶⁹ Croft, note regarding Cripps' memorandum, 11 September 1942, L/E/8/2527: ff 332 – 336. Also, Croft, minute 18 September 1942, L/E/8/2527: ff 308. Also Churchill to Cripps and Amery, 20 September 1942, L/E/8/2527: f 307. Churchill requested that Cripps and Amery should be joined by Bevin and Kingsley Wood in exploring the matter of social reform in India.

¹⁷⁰ Amery to Cripps, 23 September 1942, L/PO/8/4a: f 94. Also, Amery to Churchill, 25 September 1942, L/PO/3/3a: f 93.

¹⁷¹ Spry, minute 25 September 1942, L/E/8/2527: f 317.

¹⁷² Note of meeting at the India Office, 29 September 1942, L/E/2527: ff 314 – 315.

be altogether more circumspect in their correspondence. While doubting their value as a substitute for political progress, he was more comfortable when stressing the financial constraints upon any viable action to make social progress in India.¹⁷³ Despite the coolness of Amery, Linlithgow, and Mudaliar, Cripps persevered. Before his transfer to the Ministry of Aircraft Production he sent a detailed blueprint for a social and economic policy to Amery, Bevin and Kingsley Wood. The paper prepared by Cripps' assistant, Arthur Owen, was stronger on analysis than prescription, proposing a number of conferences in India, but suggesting little detail on funding.¹⁷⁴ Amery's response in January 1943 was again cautious, but he insisted that any major decisions should be taken in India, and not London. He was still wary as to how such an ambitious scheme could be paid for, especially bearing in mind the vexed issue of the sterling balances, and suggested that no commitments should be made until a new Viceroy had taken office.¹⁷⁵

It was inevitable that Bevin and Cripps would be disappointed by Amery's pessimistic response to Owens' paper, and wrote him separate letters, both suggesting that the issue should be put before Churchill and the War Cabinet.¹⁷⁶ At this point Amery showed his bent for intrigue, and pointed out to Bevin that it would be necessary to hear the views of the Viceroy's experts before putting the

¹⁷³ Amery to Cripps (after consulting Bevin), 2 October 1942, L/E/8/2527: f 299. Also Amery to Cripps (copied to Bevin and Kingsley Wood), 23 October 1942, L/E/8/2527: ff 278 – 280.

¹⁷⁴ Cripps to Amery, 15 December 1942, enclosing a paper, *A Social and Economic Policy for India*, L/E/8/2527: ff 231 – 240.

¹⁷⁵ Amery to Bevin (copied to Cripps and Kingsley Wood), 22 January 1943, L/E/8/2527: f 218.

¹⁷⁶ Bevin to Amery, 26 February 1943, L/E/8/2527: f 204. Also, Cripps to Amery, 26 February 1943, L/E/8/2527: f 203.

matter before Churchill. In any event, he did not believe that Linlithgow would want to take any new initiatives in the final six months of his Viceroyalty.¹⁷⁷

Only when Bevin called Amery's bluff by requesting that ICS officials in Delhi should know Churchill's opinion as soon as possible, did the Secretary of State act with any urgency.¹⁷⁸ Despite an attempt to persuade Churchill that the outgoing Viceroy's views should be sought before matters were discussed at the War Cabinet, the Prime Minister wanted much quicker progress.¹⁷⁹ Accordingly, on 9 April, Amery was obliged to prepare a War Cabinet memorandum that said very little that was new, but was expressed in terms intended to convince Churchill that any new measures for social improvement in India would cost at least £400 million, and furthermore, that in the last forty years there had already been worthy improvements in public health, education and labour relations.¹⁸⁰ Ironically, as Churchill was away in Washington and North Africa from 4 May until 5 June, Amery's memorandum was never discussed by the War Cabinet.

Although no ambitious schemes for social and economic reform were implemented during the war, the debate on the matter represented a fascinating case study, not only in relations between Delhi and London, but also within the War Cabinet. Amery had been forced to defer to the greater knowledge of the men in Delhi, with the adverse consequences of this concession for the supposed seniority of the India Office. In terms of the balance of British political power,

¹⁷⁷ Amery to Bevin, 1 March 1943, L/E/8/2527: f 201.

¹⁷⁸ Bevin to Amery, 11 March 1943, L/E/8/2527: f 190.

¹⁷⁹ Amery to Churchill, 19 March 1943, L/E/8/2527: ff 179 – 181 Also, Churchill to Amery, 23 March 1943, L/E/8/2527: f 108.

¹⁸⁰ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 9 April 1943, CAB 66/35/50.

although Bevin and Cripps did not get their own way over this issue, it was clear that their influence was growing, often at the expense of traditional Tory politicians.

Summary

Amery and Linlithgow were united in seeing the 'Quit India' campaign and Gandhi's fast as episodes orchestrated by the Mahatma, Nehru and the Congress leadership, and requiring forceful and immediate action by both the Government of India, and HMG. Although violence and sabotage continued after the arrests of the Congress Working Committee, reports from provincial governors showed that order had largely been restored by the end of 1942. Subsequent historiography has been able to show that Congress militancy at local levels survived the strong British response, but it is hard to accept Hutchins' overarching thesis that the 'Quit India' movement was the main reason for Britain granting independence in 1947.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Bidyut Chakrabati. 'Political Mobilisation in the Localities: The 1942 Quit India Movement in Midnapur', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (October 1992), pp. 791 – 799, and pp. 805 – 814. Bidnapur was located in Bengal. Also, Francis G. Hutchins. *India's Revolution, Gandhi and the 'Quit India' Movement*, pp. 282 – 296. Also, Judith Brown, review, Francis G. Hutchins, 'India's Revolution, Gandhi and the "Quit India" Movement', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1975), pp. 555 – 557. Brown put forward a dismissive view of Hutchins' thesis, and suggested that in 1947, a war weary and impoverished Britain was only too glad to be rid of the responsibility for India.

CHAPTER VII

A SUCCESSOR FOR LINLITHGOW, THE STERLING BALANCES AND FOOD SHORTAGES

Introduction

This chapter deals with a number of issues that proved to be difficult for Amery, who was invariably awkwardly placed between a truculent Churchill, other abrasive characters in the War Cabinet, and a nervous administration in India. In the long running matter of choosing a successor to Linlithgow, Amery worked tenaciously to find a suitable candidate, but was ultimately overridden by Churchill.

On two other issues, the sterling balances and the food shortages, he was able to enjoy a little more sustained influence, although he frequently encountered such intransigence in London that, on more than one occasion, he felt obliged to consider resignation. Finally, during the few months that Wavell spent in England before travelling to India to become Viceroy, Amery had the demanding task of making sure that his unexpectedly radical ideas on constitutional reform were not destroyed at birth by his diehard colleagues.

Attempts to Find a Successor to Linlithgow in 1942

By late 1942, when the question of Linlithgow's replacement as Viceroy arose again, his term of office had already been extended on two occasions. Accordingly, on 26 August, Amery discussed the matter at some length with

Churchill, after reviewing a long list of names that ranged from the more feasible choices such as John Anderson and Bobbety Cranborne to more improbable candidates such as Rab Butler, Lord Zetland and the Duke of Devonshire.¹ However, when Churchill met Amery again on 22 September, he stated his preference for Anderson, not least because he had served as Governor of Bengal; a suggestion that Amery regarded as sound, if unimaginative.² Whatever his thoughts on the succession, Churchill's reluctance to make a decision caused Linlithgow great anxiety, leading him to threaten to announce his departure in April 1943. This was drastic, but Amery waited for a month to react on 13 November, with an urgent minute to Churchill, narrowing the possible choice down to Anderson or, surprisingly, Attlee.³

In the interim, Amery had discussed the choice of a new Viceroy with his perpetual confidant, Smuts, who was visiting London for military discussions with Churchill.⁴ Smuts stressed that Anderson's formidable work load in coordinating the war effort on the home front meant that he could not be spared, but supported Amery's alternative choice of Attlee. Unfortunately, on the same day, Attlee ruled himself out with the words, 'God forbid!'⁵

Amery's next conversation with Churchill about the Viceroyalty took place as they travelled to the annual Harrow School Concert. Significantly, this was the

¹ Amery diary, 26 August 1942, AMEL 7/36.

² Amery diary, 22 September 1942, AMEL 7/36.

³ Linlithgow to Amery, 18 October 1942, L/PO/8/6: f 46. Also, Amery to Churchill, 13 November 1942, L/PO/8/6: ff 33 – 34.

⁴ J. C. Smuts, *Jan Christian Smuts*, London, Cassell, 1952, pp. 421 – 422.

⁵ Amery diary, 9 November 1942, AMEL 7/36.

day after Amery learned that his dissolute son, John was in Berlin, and being employed by the Nazis for propaganda purposes. Despite this desperate news, Amery was not too distracted to comment disparagingly on Churchill's latest suggestion for Viceroy, Sir Richard (Dick) Law, who had been Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office since July 1941, and was well regarded in America. However, Amery had doubts about Law's intellectual qualities, and even graver reservations about his American wife's suitability as Vicereine.⁶ Once Amery had told the Prime Minister that Mrs Law had left wing views his candidature ended.⁷

Churchill's next candidate, Sir Miles Lampson, proved even more objectionable to Amery, who believed that a professional diplomat could not satisfy the criteria of parliamentary or Cabinet experience.⁸ He then took the extraordinary step of offering his own services as Viceroy, glossing over his age and reputation as a diehard in India, and even more fantastically suggesting that he was uniquely qualified to keep the country in the British Empire, and yet still retain the confidence of nationalist politicians. Above all, he took the opportunity to denigrate the ability of a diplomat such as Lampson to express true imperial zeal.⁹

⁶ Amery diary, 18 November 1942, AMEL 7/36. Dick Law was the son of the former Prime Minister, Bonar Law.

⁷ Amery diary, 23 November 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁸ Amery diary, 24 November 1942, AMEL 7/36. Lampson, who was sixty two years of age at the time, had been British Ambassador in Egypt since 1942.

⁹ Amery diary, 30 November 1942, AMEL 7/36. Also, Amery to Churchill, 1 December 1942, L/PO/8/6: ff 28 – 30.

Churchill finally seized the initiative by cunningly asking Linlithgow to continue as Viceroy for a further six months.¹⁰ When Linlithgow loyally accepted this suggestion, the final word on the abortive succession came from Amery, who wrote to the Viceroy in strong terms deploring how the subject had been covered in the British press. Although it was untrue that the Viceroyalty had been offered to a number of persons, who had rejected it, this had been the message 'poisonously reported' in the *New Statesman* and the *Daily Mail*. In Amery's view, this gave the impression that 'Britain thought little about India, and was pessimistic about its future'.¹¹

The Actual Replacement of Linlithgow in 1943

Linlithgow's successor was finally announced in June 1943 after a drawn out selection procedure that lasted three months. Amery worked assiduously to influence the choice of the new Viceroy, but ultimately matters were settled exclusively at the whim of the Prime Minister. The period from the confirmation of Linlithgow's final extension to the commencement of renewed speculation about his successor saw the final stages of the 'Quit India' campaign, the entire duration of Gandhi's fast and Phillips' mission to India, but according to the pessimistic Linlithgow and Amery, little progress in constitutional reform.¹²

The military situation over the winter of 1942/43 changed the context in

¹⁰ Amery diary, 3 December 1942, AMEL 7/36. Also Churchill to Linlithgow, via India Office, 3 December 1942, L/PO/8/6: f 23.

¹¹ Amery to Linlithgow, 16 December 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11.

¹² Amery to Linlithgow, 19 October 1942, L/P & J/8/515: ff 57 – 60. Also, Amery to Linlithgow, telegram 10 November L/P & J/8/515: ff 43 – 45.

which the search for a new Viceroy would take place. At the time of the Congress resolution in August 1942, India had seemed to be in considerable peril from invasion by Japanese forces, who believed that they might be welcomed by the indigenous population. However, in the next few months there was some easing in the military situation as following the defeat of Rommel in North Africa, the stalling of the German advance in Russia, and the change in the balance of sea power after the Battle of Midway, Japanese enthusiasm for an invasion of India waned.¹³

In his letter of 16 April 1943 to the Prime Minister, Amery put forward his own list of suitable candidates in order of preference, but preceded this with a statement that, even by his tendency to hyperbole, was astonishing. He asserted that a Viceroy with a suitable personality could keep India within the British Empire for the next ten years, possibly even as a dominion. He then trumped this claim by stating that the 'job of Viceroy of India was the biggest in the British Empire, and intrinsically more important than any post in the British Government'.¹⁴

His first choice was now Anthony Eden, from whom he had apparently obtained an indication of willingness to serve as Viceroy, and who would be successful at promoting Britain's position in India to the USA. When Eden's Private Secretary, Oliver Harvey heard of Amery's preference for his political master, he was appalled and did not believe that the suggestion should be taken

¹³ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, pp. 181 – 192.

¹⁴ Amery to Churchill, 16 April 1943, L/PO/8/9a: ff 116 – 118.

seriously.¹⁵

Nevertheless, on 22 April, Amery discussed the matter with a reluctant Eden, who had already been informed that Churchill was thinking of sending him to Delhi. Although Eden did not refuse immediately, he did tell Amery that accepting the Viceroyalty might carry serious political risk, which was a coded way of saying that it could disqualify him from the premiership.¹⁶

Churchill pursued the idea of Eden becoming Viceroy to the extent of putting his case in writing to the King, but, on 3 May explained to a disappointed Amery that the monarch had expressed serious misgivings about the loss of the Prime Minister's right hand man.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, when Eden later spoke to Amery about the matter he regretted that, in view of the King's strong opposition, he could not accept the offer to become Viceroy.¹⁸

However, while Churchill was away in Washington and Algiers from 4 May to 5 June, a persistent Amery took the opportunity to make another attempt to persuade Eden to succeed Linlithgow, largely dismissing the dangers to his political ambitions.¹⁹ Eden, to his credit, bore no grudge towards Amery's dogged lobbying that he dismissed as no worse than 'friendly persistence', and

¹⁵ John Harvey (ed.), *The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1941 – 1945*, London, Collins 1978, p. 245.

¹⁶ Amery diary, 22 April 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹⁷ Amery diary, 3 May 1943, AMEL 7/37. Also, John Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI, His Life and Reign*, London, Macmillan, 1958, pp. 700 – 701. Wheeler-Bennett cited diary entries by the King from 21 to 25 April 1943 that reflected his grave concerns, in addition to a long and forceful letter from His Majesty to Churchill on 28 April 1943. The King had chosen to discuss the issue of Eden and the Viceroyalty with Bobbety Cranborne and his Private Secretary, Sir Alexander Hardinge, rather than with Amery.

¹⁸ Amery diary, 4 May 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹⁹ Amery to Eden, 9 May 1943, L/PO/8/9a: ff 109 – 11.

even at this stage, did not give his final refusal.²⁰ Harvey, who saw Eden on a daily basis throughout this period, was less charitable towards the Secretary of State for India, noting in his diary on 11 May 1943 that 'Amery had been at it again'.²¹ Amery's final, but doomed, plea to Churchill to appoint Eden also repeated the suggestion that he could go himself, as a last resort, in the belief that that he would be able to keep alive his lifelong dream of 'seeing through Joseph Chamberlain's Empire Policy'.²² Churchill did not bother to respond.

After Eden's refusal, the matter of the succession was finally settled by the need to make appointments to the posts of Commander-in-Chief, India, and Commander-in-Chief, South-East Asia. When Churchill met Amery on 9 June, he announced his plan that saw Wavell become a surprising choice as Viceroy. Auchinleck and Mountbatten were more predictable choices as C-in-C, India, and C-in-C, South-East Asia respectively.²³ Amery clearly believed that Churchill had such a jaundiced view of India and the role of the Viceroy, that he gave the post to someone whom he barely respected, in order to remove him from his existing military command.²⁴

Although the editors of Amery's diaries, Barnes and Nicolson described his reaction to the choice of Wavell as lukewarm, there is no irrefutable evidence of

²⁰ Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs, The Reckoning*, London, Cassell, 1965, pp. 383 – 385.

²¹ Harvey, *War Diaries, 1941 – 1945*, pp. 255 – 256.

²² Amery to Churchill, 8 June 1943, L/PO/8/9a: ff 96 – 98.

²³ Amery diary, 9 June 1943, AMEL 7/37.

²⁴ Irial Glynn, 'An Untouchable in the Presence of Brahmins, Lord Wavell's Disastrous Relationship with Whitehall during his Time as Viceroy to India, 1943 – 1947', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (May 2007), p. 642

this. His diary for 9 June 1943, referred, with some approval to a bold experiment, and stated somewhat prophetically, that despite possible early difficulties with Hindu nationalists, 'Wavell might soon prove more radical than most politicians'.²⁵ He also judged that, had Churchill read Wavell's approving account of Viscount Allenby's sympathy towards Egyptian self-rule during his term as High Commissioner following World War I, he would not have appointed him as Viceroy.²⁶

The Origin of the Sterling Balances

The politics of the sterling balances, rather than their financial intricacies were to cause even more rancour between Amery and Churchill than their differences over the August offer of 1940, or the release of the *satyagraha* prisoners in 1941. Furthermore, there was also ill-feeling between Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Government of India, especially its Finance Member, Sir Jeremy Raisman.

The question of Britain's economic relationship with India in the decade before 1939, and also during the war, has not attracted a substantial body of scholarship, but it is relatively safe to conclude that the world recession and the failure to implement the federal provisions of the 1935 Government of India Act

²⁵ Barnes and Nicholson (eds.), commentary, *The Empire at Bay, The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929 – 1945*, p. 866. Also, Amery diary, 9 June 1943, AMEL 7/37. Also, Amery to Linlithgow, 10 June 1943, L/PO/8/9a: f 93.

²⁶ Amery diary, 9 June 1943, AMEL 7/37. Also, Viscount Wavell, *Allenby in Egypt, A Study in Greatness Volume II*, London, Harrap, 1943, pp. 119 – 129. Wavell's final summary of Allenby's performance in Egypt left little doubt that he believed him to have been a much more honest and trusted administrator in Egypt than Lord Kitchener, who went before him, or Lord Lloyd who became his successor.

made reform of India's financial system difficult.²⁷ Sir James ('Percy') Grigg, who became converted to the diehard cause during his spell as Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council from 1934 to 1939, had been sceptical of Keynesian attempts to move away from a *laissez-faire* policy in Indian economic management, and even more scathing about the establishment of an Indian Reserve Bank to manage currency and debt independently of the Government of India.²⁸

By the outbreak of war, the weaknesses in the Indian economy, and the terms of its trade with London had led to a sterling debt of £350 million in Britain's favour. This was exacerbated when, at the outbreak of war, sterling was declared non-convertible leading to the establishment of credit balances in the form of Treasury Bills lodged with the Indian banking institutions in London.²⁹ The origin of India's transformation from sterling debtor to creditor, lay in the provisions of the Defence Expenditure Plan, announced, with surprisingly little comment to the House of Commons on 29 March 1940 by Zetland's deputy, and Under-Secretary of State for India, Sir Hugh O'Neill.

The new arrangements, backdated to 1 April 1939 were the product of an agreement between London and Delhi, and were intended to take into account wartime conditions. They proposed that the Indian budget should provide during

²⁷ B. R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914 – 1947*, pp. 91 – 92.

²⁸ Sir P. J. Grigg, *Prejudice and Judgement*, London, Jonathon Cape, 1948, pp. 289 – 290. Grigg was quite open in his assertion that the India Reserve Bank Board became quickly dominated by Hindus, under the sway of Congress.

²⁹ B. R. Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947 – 1949', p. 143.

the war for,

- (a) the normal cost of India's pre-war forces, whether employed inside or outside India, adjusted for price inflation, and
- (b) the cost of special defence measures undertaken by India in Indian interests during the war.

All defence expenditure over this amount incurred by the Government of India would be met by the British taxpayer.³⁰

It is possible to put forward a variety of reasons why the 1940 Financial Settlement turned India so rapidly from a sterling debtor into such a major creditor, but the most convincing explanation was put forward in 1950 by Herbert Austen Shannon, who believed that it arose when India 'became the operational base and arsenal of democracy in the East against Japan'.³¹ The heavy extra military expenditure that this involved was added to India's sterling balances in London, as it did not fall within (a) or (b) of the criteria laid down by O'Neill.

The Politics of the Sterling Balances in 1942

The matter of the rapidly increasing balances was viewed with some concern in London by senior Treasury officials, who felt that the state of the British economy should be borne in mind as well as the public finances in Delhi.³² In July 1942, the first serious attempt to change the 1940 settlement was made when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Kingsley Wood, gave notice of his

³⁰ *Hansard* 29 February 1940, Vol. 357, cc2255 – 2256.

³¹ Shannon, 'The Sterling Balances of the Sterling Area, 1939 – 1949', p. 540.

³² Hinds, 'Imperial policy and Colonial Sterling Balances 1943 – 1956', p. 25.

intentions to Amery, who immediately became fearful that Churchill would lend enthusiastic support to any attempt to make India pay more during the war.

Amery was correct to be apprehensive over Wood's campaign to make substantial revisions to the arrangements agreed in 1940. The Chancellor's War Cabinet memorandum of 31 July 1942 used, as a justification for change, Roosevelt's statement on Reciprocal Aid, whereby at the end of the war, no member of the United Nations would owe a monetary debt to another as a result of the common war effort.³³ Wood realised that so far, India's debt to Britain had merely been extinguished, but warned that the Treasury had forecast a likely Indian sterling creditor balance of between £400 million and £450 million by April 1943.

He recognised that Raisman had offered minor amendments to the system, but as these amounted only to adjustments of £7.5 million per annum, they could not be said to produce a solution. Wood revealed that Raisman would not make any larger concessions for fear of inviting criticism in India, especially from Congress. However, Wood felt that the War Cabinet would not accept the risk of potential political criticism from India as an excuse to allow any substantial accumulation of sterling balances. As Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer in February 1940, had not accepted the settlement as necessarily final, Wood saw no reason why Britain and India should not now accept the

³³ Fifth Report to Congress on Lend-Lease Operations for the period ended 11 June 1942, Chapter 3, pp. 22 – 23, 77th Congress, 2nd Session, House Document No. 799, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1942. Cited by N. Mansergh, *The Transfer of Power, Volume II 'Quit India'*, London, HMSO, 1971, p. 505.

principle enshrined in Reciprocal Aid.³⁴

Before producing his detailed rebuttal of Wood's arguments in his War Cabinet memorandum of 1 August 1942, Amery tried to pre-empt controversy by writing to Churchill, asking for Raisman to be heard at the meeting of the War Cabinet on 6 August 1942.³⁵ Amery's subsequent memorandum, often frankly expressed, conceded that the picture had been changed by Japan's entry into the war, but described the Treasury claim that Britain was building up a huge monetary debt for the defence of India 'as a travesty'. In particular he stressed that much of the expenditure that was being credited in sterling in London, represented part of the Allied war effort in Egypt, Iraq and the Middle East.³⁶

The next meeting of the War Cabinet on 6 August 1942 was chaired by Attlee in Churchill's absence, and the minutes referred only to very brief summaries in support of their cases by Amery and Wood. Raisman made a powerful plea for making few changes to the arrangements during the war, especially as the cost of the defence of India itself had increased fivefold. He reasoned that during the war, the accumulated sterling balances were of little value to India, and also made the innovative suggestion that after the cessation of hostilities, they could be used to fund reconstruction projects.³⁷

Amery's disagreement with Wood had been civil, but once Churchill had returned to London, the issue of the sterling balances generated stronger

³⁴ Wood, War Cabinet memorandum, 31 July 1942, CAB 66/27/5.

³⁵ Amery to Churchill, 31 July 1942, L/PO/11/3: f 277.

³⁶ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 1 August 1942, CAB 66/27/8.

³⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 6 August 1942, CAB 65/27/21.

feelings. By the time that the matter was considered by a War Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Linlithgow had already conveyed to Amery the likely anger in India if the 1940 settlement were to be amended.³⁸ However, this meeting on 16 September concluded that, while the British Government had serious concerns over the outcome of the 1940 arrangements, it proposed to take no action at the time, beyond the despatch of an explanatory telegram to the Viceroy, indicating the need for a 'wider financial readjustment'.³⁹ The minutes did not record a lengthy and embittered outburst from Churchill, who considered it 'monstrous that Britain should be expected to defend India, but be left to pay millions of pounds for the privilege'. Once again, Amery lamented that when he attempted to explain the technical intricacies of the situation to Churchill, he enjoyed no support from his colleagues.⁴⁰

Within the next few days, the composition of the formal telegram to the Viceroy about the sterling balances became increasingly contentious. Wood sent his version to Amery on 17 September, and although the early paragraphs were unremarkable, the later ones were candid, stressing the relevance of Roosevelt's principle of Reciprocal Aid, and indicating that a fresh settlement could be in place before the end of the war.⁴¹ Amery reacted strongly to Wood's draft, describing it as 'long and argumentative'. His dual objections were not only to

³⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 8 September 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

³⁹ War Cabinet conclusions, 16 September 1942, CAB 65/27/41.

⁴⁰ Amery diary, 16 September 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁴¹ Wood, draft telegram for issue by the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy, 17 September 1942. Enclosed with a letter sent by Wood's Private Secretary to Turnbull (Amery's Private Secretary) 17 September 1942, L/PO/2/16: f 110.

the veracity of Treasury claims about the nature of the expenditure that was inflating the balances, but more importantly, to the disastrous political consequences in India that would follow if the telegram were to be sent, as composed by Wood.⁴²

Whatever his doubts, Amery accepted Wood's paper, although he told Linlithgow that he did so with great reluctance.⁴³ However, when Churchill composed his own memorandum, to be issued in the name of the Secretary of State, Amery was horrified by the additions to the Treasury version, especially the new final paragraph which provided for a potential counter-claim by Britain in respect of naval and air expenses incurred in the defence of India.⁴⁴ Risking Churchill's displeasure, Amery immediately sent a copy of this contentious paragraph to Linlithgow.⁴⁵ Despite Amery's protest to Churchill that a British counter-claim would be unacceptable to the Viceroy, both the drafts of the Treasury and the Prime Minister were put before the War Cabinet on 24 September 1942.⁴⁶

The differences between London and Delhi over the need to alter the 1940 arrangements were apparent from the Viceroy's long and aggrieved telegram of 20 September 1942. He argued that his Executive Council would not only reject

⁴² Amery to Wood, 18 September 1942, L/PO/2/16: f 101. Also, Amery diary, 18 September 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁴³ Amery to Linlithgow, 18 September 1942, L/PO/2/16: f 99.

⁴⁴ Churchill, draft telegram for issue by the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy, 19 September 1942, L/PO/2/16: ff 97 – 98.

⁴⁵ Amery to Linlithgow, 19 September, L/PO/2/16: f 95.

⁴⁶ Amery to Churchill, 19 September 1942, L/PO/2/16: f 94.

the minor concessions offered to Wood by Raisman, but had already considered them as too harsh for India.⁴⁷ At this stage, the situation so frustrated Amery that he 'considered resignation in order to make Churchill see sense'.⁴⁸

Feeling that the War Cabinet should be made aware of all matters concerning the sterling balances, Amery composed a long memorandum for the War Cabinet that he intended to be circulated, together with the draft telegrams prepared by Churchill and the Treasury. He made no attempt to disguise his support for the position of the Viceroy and his Executive Council, and recommended that the British Government should make no reference to a possible change in the 1940 settlement, before the end of the war.⁴⁹

Unfortunately for Amery, Bridges, the vigilant War Cabinet Secretary, realised how contentious Amery's memorandum could prove to be, and showed it to Churchill, who refused to allow it to be circulated before the meeting of the War Cabinet on 24 September 1942.⁵⁰ Although Churchill was typically aggressive towards Amery at this meeting of the War Cabinet, and accused him of sending the Viceroy only a small selected paragraph of his draft, he did not get his way with the War Cabinet.⁵¹ Although his draft that was so objectionable to Amery was eventually sent to Linlithgow, it was despatched with qualifying conditions that made it toothless.⁵² Churchill was sufficiently angered

⁴⁷ Linlithgow to Amery, 20 September 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

⁴⁸ Amery diary, 21 September, AMEL 7/36.

⁴⁹ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 22 September 1942, L/PO/2/16: ff 85 – 90.

⁵⁰ Bridges to Turnbull, 23 September 1942, L/PO/2/16: f 82.

⁵¹ Amery diary, 24 September 1942, AMEL 7/36.

⁵² War Cabinet conclusions, 24 September 1942, CAB 65/27/45.

at this outcome that he wrote directly to Linlithgow, not openly dissenting from the decisions of his War Cabinet, but condemning Amery's disingenuous conduct in sending only a selected part of his draft.⁵³

Despite being bruised by his latest spat with Churchill, Amery managed to engineer a lengthy hiatus in the Treasury's attempt to keep alive the prospect of a reservation to alter the 1940 arrangements. Linlithgow had never mentioned the possibility of this to his Executive Committee, and told Amery bluntly on 3 October that if they learned of potential changes to the 1940 settlement, there would be irreparable damage to the Indian military and industrial war effort.⁵⁴ Once Amery had circulated this telegram to the War Cabinet, the political climate in London changed.⁵⁵ After consulting Wood, Amery was able to tell Churchill that in view of the Viceroy's arguments it had been decided, at this time, not to pursue an alteration of the rules about the sterling balances.⁵⁶

Renewal of the Controversy of the Sterling Balances from July 1943

After an interval of nine months, political differences over the sterling balances resurfaced at a meeting of the War Cabinet on 27 July 1943, when Wood predicted that, by the end of the year, India would be Britain's sterling creditor to the extent of £745 million. Describing this matter as 'the one black spot in Britain's finances during the war', Churchill insisted that this hitherto obscure

⁵³ Churchill to Linlithgow, 24 September 1942, L/PO/2/16: ff 60 – 66.

⁵⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, 3 October 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23.

⁵⁵ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum 5 October 1942, CAB 66/29/27.

⁵⁶ Amery to Churchill, 27 October 1942, L/PO/2/16: f 38.

subject should be aired in Parliament. Amery was less successful than on previous occasions in calming the worries of his colleagues, and despite support from Bevin, Wood was asked to prepare a fresh paper on the topic.⁵⁷

Although Amery quickly wrote an impassioned letter to Wood, requesting that the possibility of India contributing more to the war effort should not be made public, he lost control of the sterling balances issue when the War Cabinet decided to set up a Standing Committee on Indian Financial Questions.⁵⁸ The remit of this body that, included Amery, but was chaired by Wood, was not only the sterling balances, but also the matter of inflation that was exacerbating food shortages.⁵⁹ To Amery's horror the new committee included the 'regrettable Lord Cherwell', who was to have Churchill's ear for the remainder of the war.⁶⁰

The first meeting of this new Standing Committee concentrated more on inflation in India and the terms of trade between the two countries than matters of currency.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Amery's subsequent letter to Linlithgow revealed his annoyance at Cherwell's misreading of the exact economic and financial relationship between Britain and India, and feared that this would be the interpretation believed by Churchill.⁶²

By the time that the sterling balances were discussed again, there were new

⁵⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 27 July 1943, CAB 65/35/16. Also, Amery diary, 27 July 1943, AMEL 7/37.

⁵⁸ Amery to Wood, 28 July 1943, L/F/7/2861: f 31.

⁵⁹ War Cabinet conclusions, 4 August 1943, CAB 66/40/17.

⁶⁰ Amery diary, 4 August 1943, AMEL 7/37.

⁶¹ Standing Committee on Indian Financial Questions, minutes 16 August 1943, L/F/7/687.

⁶² Amery to Linlithgow, 17 August 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12.

principals in important posts. Wood had died suddenly on 21 September, to be replaced as Chancellor by Anderson, and Wavell had arrived in Delhi to commence his duties as Viceroy. Amery's relationship with Anderson, who also chaired the Standing Committee on Indian Finances, was smoother than with Wood, although he did not manage to convince him that it was technically incorrect to compare the growing total of the sterling balances with Britain's future indebtedness to the USA.⁶³

Wavell's position on the sterling balances was essentially a moral, and not a technical one. After a wait of several months he asked Amery whether Churchill could make a joint announcement on Indian constitutional reform and the ethical imperative for Britain to 'honour the sterling balances'.⁶⁴ On failing to obtain any reassurance from Amery, he sent a powerful telegram supporting the views of Indians who felt insulted that Britain should now regard the sterling balances as 'ill-gotten gains', and also suggest that the British taxpayer had funded India's entire war effort. While admitting that the matter had been reported hysterically in Indian newspapers, the Viceroy was adamant that the Government of India had been slighted and believed that the damage was now almost beyond diplomacy.⁶⁵

Amery soon realised that he had been placed in a difficult position between Wavell and Churchill, when, after a year of deliberation, Anderson's Standing

⁶³Amery to Wavell, 3 November 1943, L/PO/10/21. Also, Anderson to Amery, 10 November 1943, L/PO/2/16: f 1.

⁶⁴Wavell to Amery, 18 July 1944, L/P & J/8/519: f 278.

⁶⁵Amery to Wavell, 20 July 1944, L/PO/10/21. Also, Wavell to Amery, 27 July 1944, L/PO/10/21.

Committee issued its report, which supplied considerable detail on how Britain's indebtedness had been built up. However, the paragraphs identifying the immediate and longer term problems to be solved were vague, and suggested little beyond the hope that India might make some abatement of the claim to the final sterling balances total.⁶⁶ The minutes of the meeting of the War Cabinet on 4 August 1944, when these findings were discussed did not reveal the voluble exchanges between Amery and Churchill, but merely reported that Anderson was seeking to make 'repayment of the balances by easy stages', and still hoping that there might be some readjustment of the debt to take account of Britain's contribution to the defence of India. Nevertheless, any immediate action was postponed.⁶⁷

The true bitterness of this meeting was apparent from Amery's diary in which he claimed to have had to contradict Churchill's assertion that a British counter-claim was justified by the 'worthlessness of the Indian Army'. The Prime Minister had also apparently wanted to renege on any promises made to India, once the war had been won, especially as he believed that the sterling balances had been created by Hindu money lenders. Amery, in accusing Churchill of behaving like Hitler, also suspected the malign influence of Bracken and Cherwell.⁶⁸

Fortunately, Amery was able to put a positive gloss on the War Cabinet conclusions to Wavell, who gratefully accepted the War Cabinet's postponement

⁶⁶ Anderson, *Report of Committee on Indian Financial Questions*, 19 July 1944, CAB 66/52/48.

⁶⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 4 August 1944, CAB 65/43/18.

⁶⁸ Amery diary, 4 August 1944, AMEL 7/38.

of any plans to adjust the sterling balances. Despite expressions of intent by both Viceroy and Secretary of State for the matter to be discussed in the spring of 1945, it was not raised again before the end of the war.⁶⁹ At this point, India was Britain's creditor to the extent of £1,111 million.⁷⁰

Amery's Discussions with Wavell in London

Compared with the predictably weary Linlithgow, who reported on 19 July 1943 that the political situation was quiet in India, Wavell was anxious for change, and unwilling to take up duty in Delhi before seeking ways of breaking the constitutional deadlock.⁷¹ He spent the period from his appointment in June until his departure for India in mid-October, putting his radical thoughts down on paper, attending meetings of the War Cabinet and the restored India Cabinet Committee, and also having numerous discussions with Amery. These early exchanges of opinion set the tone for their subsequent relationship, and were recorded differently in their diaries. Amery was patronising, praising Wavell's steadfast character and sound judgement, but echoing his earlier comments about Linlithgow, reserved judgement on his ability to think constructively in political terms.⁷² Wavell was initially more complimentary, noting that Amery was not the Tory diehard that Indian and some British newspapers had

⁶⁹ Wavell to Amery, 23 August 1944, L/PO/10/21. Also, Wavell to Amery, 27 December 1944, L/PO/10/21. Also, Wavell to Amery, 30 January 1945, L/PO/10/21.

⁷⁰ Hinds, 'Imperial Policy and Colonial Sterling Balances 1943 – 1956', p. 27.

⁷¹ Linlithgow to Amery, 19 July 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12.

⁷² Amery diary, 1 August 1943, AMEL 7/37.

depicted.⁷³

Unfortunately, within a few weeks, he had amended this view, describing the Secretary of State as having more intellectual qualities than Churchill, but 'rather let down by an unimpressive personality, and little suitability for the rough and tumble of high level politics'.⁷⁴ By the time that he had spent four months in London working with Amery on Indian matters, he had become even more critical. On 19 October, having just arrived in Delhi, he recorded that Linlithgow shared his opinion of Amery whom they both regarded as having admirable attributes, but 'quite unable to get his stuff across in Cabinet or Parliament'.⁷⁵

Before Wavell's thoughts on reform were reviewed by the India Committee that had been revived at Amery's insistence, the critical question of whether to take any constitutional initiative in the near future was discussed at the India Office on 10 September 1943.⁷⁶ In front of a group of senior officials, Amery and Wavell differed politely, but significantly, over the sort of reform measures that had any chance of success. In stressing that his ideas did not contradict the terms of the Cripps offer, Wavell advocated the replacement of the currently nominated Viceroy's Executive Council by a representative body, made up of leading politicians.

Amery, supported by his officials had little enthusiasm for Wavell's proposal.

His rebuttal repeated his usual observation that British Parliamentary

⁷³ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 1 August 1943, p. 14.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 8 September 1943, p. 16.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 19 October 1943, p. 32.

⁷⁶ Amery diary, 13 September 1943, AMEL 7/37.

government was unsuitable for India, and only offered yet another consultative body as a way of making progress.⁷⁷ Wavell was irked by Amery's intention to deliver an hour long monologue on Indian constitutional reform, and detected some hostility from civil servants when his directness cut short the Secretary of State.⁷⁸ Amery graciously admitted that Wavell had put his case frankly and shrewdly, but feared that there was not even a one in five chance that his proposals would succeed.⁷⁹

The memorandum that Wavell submitted to the India Committee on 17 September alarmed his colleagues in rejecting the existing strategy of doing nothing in terms of reform while there was a war still to be won. Fearing long term resentment in India he urged Britain to go even further than Cripps had recommended, and install coalition governments, not only at a national, but also at a provincial level.⁸⁰

To his disappointment, Wavell's proposals were received with a combination of lukewarm support, and outright hostility.⁸¹ The official minutes do not record the degree to which Grigg, Anderson and Simon urged rejection of Wavell's scheme, only that it was agreed that an amended paper should be prepared.⁸² Amery's account demonstrated the ambiguity of his position, as he maintained at first that there were advantages in waiting until the end of the war, and then,

⁷⁷ Note of interview between Amery and Wavell, 10 September 1943, L/PO/6/108a: ff 87 – 88.

⁷⁸ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 10 September 1943, p. 17.

⁷⁹ Amery diary, 10 September 1943, AMEL 7/37.

⁸⁰ Wavell, India Committee paper I (43) 2, 15 September 1943, L/PO/108a: ff 83 – 86..

⁸¹ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 17 September 1943, p.18.

⁸² India Committee conclusions, 17 September 1943, L/PO/6/108a: ff 78 – 82.

after brief reconsideration, hoped that some form of constitutional change could be attempted early in 1944.⁸³

With Churchill's likely antagonism in mind, Amery persuaded Wavell to amend his memorandum in order to convince the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet that there was little difference of opinion between Secretary of State and Viceroy-Designate.⁸⁴ When this amended paper was discussed at a further meeting of the India Committee on 29 September, Wavell's proposals were largely shelved in favour of a briefer memorandum to be prepared by Amery, and a directive to the Viceroy-Designate to be drafted by Cripps, who would specify the circumstances in which Indian leaders would be permitted to participate in any political negotiations.⁸⁵ Amery believed that he had 'backed up Wavell stoutly' at this meeting, but the latter's diary complained of having received only limited support.⁸⁶

Wavell's chances of making early constitutional progress were severely damaged by a Cabinet memorandum written by Churchill, who argued that the strong action taken against Gandhi and the Congress leaders had produced sufficiently stable conditions to enable an Allied offensive to be launched against Japan from India at some time in 1944. In these circumstances, he contended that the installation of a new Viceroy provided no reason for running any risks

⁸³ Amery diary, 17 September 1943, AMEL 7/37.

⁸⁴ Amery to Wavell, 20 September 1943, L/PO/6/108a: ff 75 – 77.

⁸⁵ India Committee conclusions, 29 September 1943, L/PO/6/108a: ff 60 – 67.

⁸⁶ Amery diary, 29 September 1943, AMEL 7/37. Also, Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 29 September 1943, p. 29.

that could lead to a renewal of agitation and civil disorder.⁸⁷ On 7 October 1943, despite the attempts of Wavell and Amery to convince their colleagues to authorise a fresh constitutional initiative, the War Cabinet decided that matters in India should be left much as they stood, and that Churchill alone should draft a directive by which Wavell should be guided during his first months in office.⁸⁸

Wavell was not in the least persuaded by Amery that they had both done as well as could have been expected at the meeting, and was vitriolic in his diary over the perceived spinelessness of most members of the War Cabinet. While conceding that Amery had been on his side, he criticised his circumlocution and vulnerability to Churchill's interruptions.⁸⁹

The Growing Food Shortages

Amery's limited capacity to control the response to the food shortages in India that became worse in late 1942, proved to be typical of his lack of influence during previous episodes such as the release of the *Satyagraha* prisoners and the Cripps mission. Furthermore he was obliged to answer difficult questions on this matter in the House of Commons by members who felt that Britain was being shamed by its dilatory response to the tragedy.

The onerous task of providing sufficient grain for India's own population, and an increasing number of troops, was characterised in its early stages by

⁸⁷ Churchill, War Cabinet memorandum, 6 October 1943, CAB 66/41/45.

⁸⁸ War Cabinet conclusions, 7 October 1943, CAB 65/36/4.

⁸⁹ Amery diary, 7 October 1943, AMEL 7/37. Also, Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 7 October 1943, pp. 22 – 23.

inadequate data and poor channels of communication.⁹⁰ Although the Japanese occupation of Burma had ended the relatively modest imports of rice that were required to make up the gap in self-sufficiency in Eastern India, there was to be no real recovery from the famine, especially in Bengal, until the end of 1944.

Although estimates of the deaths attributable to the famine in Bengal have varied considerably, the fact that a major tragedy took place has never been contested. The official report commissioned by the Government of India stated that there had been approximately 1.5 million deaths attributable to the famine, although it was conceded, at the time, that record keeping had been flawed.⁹¹ Writing in 1990 Sugata Bose summarised the statistical work done by a number of his colleagues, and computed a figure of famine related deaths between 3 millions and 3.5 million.⁹² There was more consensus over the quantification of the poor yield of rice crops in Bengal from December 1942 to August 1943. The main *aman* crop harvested in December 1942 that represented 75% of the total tonnage was poor, as were the yields of the smaller *bora* and *aus* crops in May 1943 and August 1943, respectively. Alarming, during this critical period the total production of rice fell 2.8 million tons short of normal requirements.⁹³

⁹⁰ Voigt, *India in the Second World War*, p. 204.

⁹¹ Famine Inquiry Commission, *Report on Bengal*, New Delhi, Government of India Press, 1945, pp. 108 – 110.

⁹² Sugata Bose, 'Starvation amidst Plenty: The Making of Famine in Bengal, Honan and Tonkin, 1942 – 1945', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (October 1990), pp. 701 – 702.

⁹³ Casey, *An Australian in India*, pp. 10 – 11.

Amery's First Involvement with the Food Shortages

Possibly because the forecast shortfall in the 1942 rice harvest was relatively modest, there were few worried reports from Linlithgow to Amery until the last weeks of that year. The Viceroy only began to reveal signs of concern when he wrote to Amery on 30 November 1942. Far from confining his misgivings to Bengal, he also cited food problems in Bombay, Madras and certain of the princely states. Above all, he was particularly anxious that Amery should emphasise to the War Cabinet that if the situation worsened, India would no longer be able to export rice to Ceylon or wheat to Persia.⁹⁴

Before Amery could reply, he had received more increasingly urgent telegrams from both Linlithgow and the Government of India Food Department. These warnings anticipated a major crisis in grain production in several regions of the country, and stressed that the scarcities were being increased by the hoarding of supplies by both affluent merchants and subsistence farmers, all waiting for prices to increase.⁹⁵ Amery's early responses to requests for food relief could scarcely be said to be sympathetic. On 15 December he told the Government of India, Food Department, that the need for shipping capacity by British imports had priority over its use in sending grain to India, and suggested that India should cut its own programme of imports in order to make some space

⁹⁴ Linlithgow to Amery, 19 November 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 30 November 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11.

⁹⁵ Linlithgow to Amery, 3 December 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/23. Also, Sir Roger Lumley (Bombay) to Linlithgow, 5 December 1942, MSS. EUR. 125/56. Also, Government of India Food Department to Amery, 9 December 1942, L/E/8/3297: f 297.

for more food shipments.⁹⁶

His letter to Linlithgow of 23 December was even less encouraging, and feared, with justification, that any requests for extra shipping would face the formidable obstacle of Lord Leathers and his Ministry of War Transport. As suspicious of Congress as ever, Amery suggested that it might well be encouraging hoarding in order to worsen the shortages, so that they could then be in a position to blame the British for starving the Indian people.⁹⁷

Unsurprisingly, when Linlithgow took more radical action to improve the food situation by decontrolling the price of wheat, Amery did not respond, although it had been made clear that the success of such a step depended on substantial imports of grain.⁹⁸

By this time, Amery had already made his first parliamentary statement about the food shortages, optimistically stating that, with care, there should be enough grain to go round. In particular, he attributed the inflationary prices to hoarding, and was less than complimentary about the procedures introduced by the Government of India in order to improve the distribution of grain, and stabilise prices.⁹⁹ In a later statement he made his own constitutional position clear, when after announcing the removal by the Government of India of the

⁹⁶ Amery to Government of India Food Department, 15 December 1942, L/E/8/3297: ff 283 -285.

⁹⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 23 December 1942, MSS. EUR. F. 125/11. Frederick Leathers (1883 – 1965) was a self-made businessman who, after performing an advisory role in the early years of the war, was appointed by Churchill in May 1941 to be Minister of the newly merged Department of Shipping and War Transport.

⁹⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 26 January 26 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12.

⁹⁹ *Hansard*, 21 January 1943, vol. 386, cc277 – 279.

maximum price for wheat, he stated that such matters were outside his remit, notwithstanding that India was not yet self-governing.¹⁰⁰

There was then a political hiatus in the food crisis of almost two months during which the matter of Gandhi's fast largely occupied Amery and Linlithgow. However, matters resumed, when in response to Amery's request on 15 March for a fresh report, Linlithgow produced a mixed account, citing the improved military position, and anticipating a better harvest in 1943. However, his optimism did not extend to Bengal, where there was both a shortage of rice and alarming levels of price inflation. Finally, he promised that central Government would begin to coordinate the distribution of foodstuffs with rationing introduced in urban areas.¹⁰¹

The ability of the administration in Bengal to alleviate the famine was further damaged by a constitutional crisis that resulted in the effective dismissal of the Chief Minister, Fazlul Huq by Governor Herbert, on 28 March. Herbert then took charge of administration under Section 93 until 24 April, when a new Muslim Chief Minister, Sir Kwaja Nazimuddin, was appointed.¹⁰²

For the remainder of Linlithgow's period in office until he was relieved by Wavell in October 1943, much of the early optimism, and possible complacency over the food shortages, especially in Bengal, had disappeared. He told Amery

¹⁰⁰ *Hansard*, 28 January 1943, vol. 386, cc597 – 599.

¹⁰¹ Amery to Linlithgow, 30 March 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 18 March 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/24.

¹⁰² Linlithgow to Amery, 30 March 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 2 April 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12.

that some provincial ministers were encouraging hoarding, but also expressed his doubts about the effectiveness of a free trade solution in bringing down the price of grain.¹⁰³ Amery also became gloomier, lamenting the poor outcome of the plans already made in Delhi, and insisting that there should be better liaison between the central and provincial authorities in taking action against the activities of middlemen.¹⁰⁴

Amery did not offer immediate support to the urgent demands from Delhi for the supply of 500,000 tons of wheat from September 1943 to March 1944, and indeed admitted on 26 July 1943 that he could only offer limited assistance. However, he changed his mind after noting the difficulties cited by the Shipping Committee.¹⁰⁵ This conversion to the political as well as the economic and humanitarian need for substantial shipments of wheat was reflected in a comprehensive memorandum that he prepared for a meeting of the War Cabinet on 4 August. An impressive technical review of the Indian economy was followed by a blunt statement of the dire consequences for munitions production, public order, and the loyalty of the Indian Army if Linlithgow's demands were not met in full.¹⁰⁶

The War Cabinet on 4 August 1943 was the first of a series, at which Amery

¹⁰³ Linlithgow to Amery, 19 June 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12.

¹⁰⁴ *Hansard*, 1 July 1943, vol. 390, cc1733 – 1734.

¹⁰⁵ Government of India, Food Department to Amery, 15 July 1943, L/E/8/3322: ff 310 – 311. Also, Linlithgow to Amery, 15 July 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/25. Also, Amery to Linlithgow, 26 July 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/25. Also, War Cabinet memorandum, *India's Requirements of Imported Food Grains, Report by the Shipping Committee*, 30 July 1943, CAB 66/39/45.

¹⁰⁶ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 31 July 1943, CAB 66/39/49.

met implacable opposition, not only from Churchill, but also from Leathers and Cherwell. The minutes recorded that Amery pleaded the Indian case for substantial imports, but Leathers argued successfully that only a token shipment of 100,000 tons of barley should be sent from Iraq.¹⁰⁷ Amery's diary that had previously hardly mentioned the food shortages charged his colleagues with treating the Indian appeal for grain as a 'bluff to loosen existing hoards'. Once again, he accused Cherwell of talking nonsense as a consequence of his visceral dislike of India and Indians, but at least was able to record that for once, Churchill was sympathetic.¹⁰⁸

When Amery wrote his next memorandum requesting further cereal imports, the situation in Bengal had become serious, not only in terms of the famine, but also in the governance of the province. Herbert had been taken seriously ill, and replaced, on a temporary basis by the Governor of Bihar, Sir Thomas Rutherford.¹⁰⁹ When this urgent request was discussed at the War Cabinet on 24 September, Amery was staunchly supported by Wavell, then Viceroy-Designate, but also an experienced Commander-in-Chief, India. Nevertheless, the outcome was disappointing to both men as Leathers prevailed with his argument that he was only prepared to authorise an additional 200,000 tons of grain, well short of the figure of 1 million tons that the Government of India now wanted.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 4 August 1943, CAB 65/35/21.

¹⁰⁸ Amery diary, 4 August 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹⁰⁹ Linlithgow to Amery, 20 September 20 September 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/12. Also, Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 22 September 1943, CAB 66/41/11.

¹¹⁰ War Cabinet conclusions, 24 September 1943, CAB 65/35/41.

Churchill's apparent lack of sympathy at this meeting caused a despairing Amery to record his profound disappointment at the Prime Minister's continued failure to realise that the interests of the British Empire should be placed at the head of his list of priorities.¹¹¹

The Famine: Wavell in India

When Wavell replaced Linlithgow as Viceroy on 20 October 1943, he was far more energetic than his predecessor in seeking solutions to the food shortages. Amery was impressed by the powerful, but concise letters and telegrams that he found a welcome change from 'Linlithgow's loquacious obfuscations', thereby permitting him to take a firmer stance over food imports with his colleagues in the War Cabinet.¹¹² Unlike Linlithgow, Wavell immediately travelled to Bengal with the Vicereine, both showing great courage in visiting the poorer districts of Calcutta by night, and witnessing large numbers of destitute refugees from the countryside, starving and sleeping rough.¹¹³

Armed with this first hand knowledge, his first reports to Amery not only underlined Rutherford's shortcomings as acting Governor, but condemned the entire provincial administration for its weak and inefficient response to the famine. In particular, he underlined the long and short term action that he required, especially in terms of liaison between the civil and military

¹¹¹ Amery diary, 24 September 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹¹² Patrick French, *Liberty or Death*, p. 182.

¹¹³ Adrian Fort, *Archibald Wavell, The Life and Times of an Imperial Servant*, London, Jonathon Cape, 2009, p. 362.

authorities.¹¹⁴ He also became rapidly aware that the deteriorating morale of a dwindling establishment of Indian Civil Service officials was a serious barrier to improvement.¹¹⁵

Amery was forced to endure a difficult time in London, both in obtaining shipments of grain for India, and also defending his own performance in the House of Commons. Firstly, he was unsuccessful in persuading the War Cabinet to accept an offer of a gift by the Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King of 100,000 tons of wheat for India.¹¹⁶ A few days later, a partially successful appeal to the War Cabinet did see Leathers promise a further 100,000 tons of wheat from Australia in the first two months of 1944.¹¹⁷ Amery's diary gives some important details about Churchill's influence on Leathers, at this meeting, especially the comment that 'Indians were breeding like rabbits'.¹¹⁸

Secondly, on 4 November 1943, during a long debate in the House of Commons on the Indian famine, he was challenged by the senior Labour politician, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, who recognised that Amery had always been honest in acknowledging the shortcomings of all agencies in solving the food problem, but disputed the Secretary of State's view that these failures were not dishonourable. The Liberal MP, Sir George Schuster, a former Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, was even more critical of the

¹¹⁴ Wavell to Amery, 29 October 1943, L/PO/8/31: f 155. Also, Wavell to Amery, 29 October 1943, L/E/8/3322: ff 125 – 126.

¹¹⁵ Fort, *Archibald Wavell*, p. 363.

¹¹⁶ War Cabinet conclusions, 2 November 1943, CAB 65/36/17.

¹¹⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 10 November 1943, CAB 65/36/20.

¹¹⁸ Amery diary, 10 November 1943, AMEL 7/37.

leadership given to the Government of India by Amery and his officials.

Amery's defence was a tortuous, and oft recounted history of the famine, especially the mistakes of various provincial governments. His main excuse for the shortage of available shipping to transport grain to India was the demand for vessels to take part in the landings in Sicily in July 1943.¹¹⁹ It was disingenuous of Amery to tell Wavell that 'the debate on the Indian famine had gone reasonably well'.¹²⁰

Although the Government of India, Food Department, forcibly reminded Amery of the food requirements of both civilians and the military, he was not able to make any further progress in obtaining the promise of further shipments during the last few weeks of 1943.¹²¹ His detailed, but sober reply of 1 January 1944 could only restate the British Government's difficulties in improving on previous offers, not least of which was the priority for shipping in connection with the impending Second Front.

The Appointment of Richard Casey

In the view of Wavell, the poor performance of both Herbert, who eventually retired with a fatal illness in October 1943, and his temporary replacement, Rutherford, made the choice of a new Governor of Bengal extremely urgent. The origins of the decision to appoint the Australian politician and diplomat, Richard

¹¹⁹ *Hansard*, 4 November 1943 vol. 93, cc886 – 970.

¹²⁰ Amery to Wavell, 6 November 1943, L/PO/10/21.

¹²¹ Government of India Food Department to Amery, 24 November 1943, L/E/8/3322: f 85 and also, 21 December 1943, L/PO/10/25.

Casey, at the time serving in Cairo as Minister of State, are somewhat obscure. Amery's diary for 5 November 1943 recorded that he recommended Casey to Churchill, and that his suggestion was 'received with enthusiasm'.¹²² Whether he was correct in taking the credit for what turned out to be an inspired choice is debatable, as a minute sent on the same day to Amery by his Private Secretary, Francis Turnbull, included the name of Casey, added in manuscript to a typed list of other candidates.¹²³

Although Casey had earned an enviable reputation for his pragmatic diplomacy in the Middle-East, he had little knowledge of Bengal beyond the famine, and its reputation for fierce Hindu-Muslim antipathy among its population of 65 million.¹²⁴ From the date that he was sworn in on 22 January 1944, he became aware that the province had a small Muslim electoral majority which gave them control of the administration, in circumstances that virtually excluded other communities from power. This, of course contrasted uneasily with the situation in which most business leaders, especially in Calcutta were from an educated Hindu elite. The result was that those best qualified to govern were not available to contribute to an administration, barely supported by an already stretched, despondent and diminishing cadre of ICS officials.¹²⁵ In assessing how much influence he could exert in reforming such an ineffective, and sometimes corrupt provincial ministry, Casey did not forget that it was still a

¹²² Amery diary, 5 November 1943, AMEL 7/37.

¹²³ Turnbull to Amery, 5 November 1943, L/PO/8/31.

¹²⁴ Casey, *An Australian in India*, p. 9.

¹²⁵ Hudson, *Casey*, pp. 156-157.

part of British India, and that despite the devolution of some power to the province provided by the 1935 legislation, he was answerable to Delhi and London.

His attempts to reform provincial governance were initially hampered by a bout of amoebic dysentery, but after setting up a commission to make a thorough review of the entire administration, he made changes in advance of its findings.¹²⁶ More technocrat and mandarin than politician, he used his professional skills to make some early progress in his reforms. As well as introducing systems of organisation and methods into the province, he broke with the habits of Herbert and Rutherford by expanding government publicity, and also by entertaining persons of all sections of Bengal, sometimes at his official residence.¹²⁷

Amery's relationship with Casey was excellent throughout the eighteen months that they worked together, especially as both men were keenly interested in both technical innovation and the reform of administrative procedures. Amery quickly expressed his approval of the initiatives proposed by Casey not only for the distribution of food supplies, but also for the introduction of modern methods in water management and the fishing industry.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 162. Casey was to endure recurrent bout of dysentery, and also attacks of boils, throughout his service in Bengal.

¹²⁷ Casey, *Personal Experience, 1939 – 1946*, p. 181. Also, Casey, *An Australian in India*, pp. 24 – 31. In 1918, Casey had graduated from Cambridge University in mechanical sciences (engineering).

¹²⁸ Amery to Casey, 9 August 1944, AMEL 2/3/18. Also, Casey to Amery, 4 May 1944, 7 July 1944, and 19 July 1944, all AMEL 2/3/19.

Casey's chosen solution to the grain crisis was for the Bengal Government to take over the rice trade of the province, a course which necessitated the construction of substantial storage facilities.¹²⁹ This required Casey to build up a very large organisation, virtually from scratch. He supported the small group of beleaguered ICS officials by recruiting a diverse, but highly effective collection of new staff. In addition to army officers, who volunteered for civic duty, and a number of Ministry of Food officials seconded from Britain, he used his antipodean contacts to obtain experienced staff from Australia and New Zealand.¹³⁰

Although as will be seen later in the chapter there was an improvement in the availability and promise of grain from the middle of 1944, Casey finally decided to ask for the freedom to run the province under Section 93. He had become increasingly frustrated by the weakness of the Muslim ministry, and despite the assistance of administrators from overseas believed that a collapse of the food distribution system could occur at any time.¹³¹ The matter was not finally settled until March 1945, when direct rule was introduced in Bengal.¹³²

Attempts to Obtain Grain during Amery's Illness

While Casey was making his first organisational changes in Bengal, Amery's fraught attempts to obtain grain were interrupted by a painful kidney stone

¹²⁹ Casey, *An Australian in India*, pp. 18 – 19.

¹³⁰ Casey, *Personal Experience*, 1939 – 1946, p. 194.

¹³¹ Casey to Wavell, 24 July 1944, L/P & J/8/652. Also, Wavell to Amery, 10 August 1944, L/PO/10/21. Also, Casey to Amery, 26 August 1944, AMEL 2/3/19.

¹³² Casey, *Personal Experience*, pp. 216 – 217. Also, Hudson, *Casey*, pp. 170 – 171.

which kept him away from the India Office from 30 January until 1 March.¹³³

While he was absent, R. A. Butler, President of the Board of Education, and a former junior minister at the India Office, deputised for Amery in a spell that was characterised by the expression of angry views by both Churchill and Wavell.

At the War Cabinet meeting on 7 February, the Prime Minister questioned the statistical basis of the Government of India's claim for grain imports quoted in Amery's memorandum of 28 January, and suggested that a small committee should be appointed to review the veracity of the figures.¹³⁴ Wavell was angry and hurt that his officials' calculations had been questioned, and for the first time raised the matter of the psychological value of impending imports in helping central government control grain prices.¹³⁵

Before Amery returned to the India Office there was a marginal softening in the War Cabinet's stance on providing shipping, almost certainly prompted by two telegrams sent by Wavell on 16 February 1944. Firstly, supported by Auchinleck and Mountbatten, he told Amery that the War Cabinet's adverse decision on grain shipments was jeopardising Britain's good name in the world.¹³⁶ Secondly, he sent a short message to Churchill asking the War Cabinet to reconsider its position, warning that a failure to do so 'would have serious

¹³³ Amery diary, 2 February 1944, AMEL 7/3. Throughout his confinement at home Amery was briefed by both Turnbull and Monteath.

¹³⁴ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum 28 January 1944, CAB 66/46/13. Also, War Cabinet conclusions, 7 February 1944, CAB 65/41/16. The members nominated for this committee were Butler, Leathers, Llewellyn and Cherwell.

¹³⁵ Wavell to Amery, 9 February 1944, R/30/1/4: ff 92 – 93.

¹³⁶ Wavell to Amery, 16 February 1944, L/PO/10/25.

repercussions on India's war effort'.¹³⁷

Surprisingly, Churchill did not dismiss Wavell's plea out of hand, but persuaded the War Cabinet to ask the Committee on Indian Food Grain Requirements to reconsider matters.¹³⁸ Their next set of findings proved to be more helpful to Wavell, and conceded that it might be feasible to make some reductions in the British imports programme in order to find the capacity to send grain to India.¹³⁹ The War Cabinet adopted these modest proposals, albeit with the addition of a more promising offer from Auchinleck and Mountbatten to forego some shipping capacity earmarked for military supplies in favour of imports of grain.¹⁴⁰ Once Wavell had been informed of this by Butler, he reacted with predictable fury, accusing the British Government of deliberately ignoring the advice of those working in India.¹⁴¹

Although unwell, Amery was sufficiently moved by Wavell's angry response to write a strong letter to Churchill, offering to fly to Washington to ask Roosevelt in person to release ships to carry food to India.¹⁴² Nevertheless he was less bullish when explaining the British Government's position to Wavell, and repeating the official view that 'it was better to take the risk of a second famine than risk the

¹³⁷ Wavell to Churchill, via India Office, 16 February 1944, Wavell Papers: Private Correspondence: Secretary of State, 1943 – 1946, p. 14.

¹³⁸ War Cabinet conclusions, 17 February 1944, CAB 65/41/22.

¹³⁹ War Cabinet Committee on Indian Food Grain Requirements, Paper I.F.R. (44) 2, 19 February 1944, L/E/8/3323: f 364.

¹⁴⁰ War Cabinet conclusions, 21 February 1944, CAB 65/41/22.

¹⁴¹ Amery (written by Butler) to Wavell, telegram 23 February 1944, L/E/8/3321: ff 352 – 353. Also, Wavell to Amery, 26 February 1944, L/PO/10/25.

¹⁴² Amery diary, 17 February 1944, AMEL 7/38.

failure of the Second Front'.¹⁴³

Progress in Famine Relief after Amery's Return to the India Office

When Amery looked anew at the Indian food situation, he was obliged to act on a telegram sent by Wavell on 4 March 1944 that gave new figures for required imports of grain. Wavell foresaw, *ceteris paribus*, no shortages of rice, but the combined estimated shortfall for wheat was 500,000 tons for civil and military needs, even after taking into account all possible economies. His solution was not to rely only on the shipping space promised by Auchinleck and Mountbatten, but also to ask the American Commander in the region, Lieutenant-General Joseph ('Vinegar Joe') Stilwell whether he was prepared to make a similar gesture as his British colleagues. This would, Wavell calculated, provide a total of an extra 40,000 tons of wheat per month.¹⁴⁴

Amery was immediately alarmed that Stilwell, who had often been hostile towards Britain, should have been approached for a favour on the scale suggested by Wavell, without prior approval from the War Cabinet. However, his minute to Churchill explaining that he had already written in these terms to the Viceroy, received the Prime Minister's complete approval.¹⁴⁵ Amery's predilection for widespread consultation ensured that the matter of finding shipping space for grain by reducing imports of military supplies by British and American

¹⁴³ Amery to Wavell, 17 February 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁴⁴ Wavell to Amery, 4 March 1944, L/PO/10/25.

¹⁴⁵ Amery to Churchill, 4 March 1944, L/WS/1/654: f 261. Also, Churchill to Amery, 5 March 1944, R/30/1/4: ff 67 – 68.

commanders should be reviewed, firstly by the Committee on Indian Food Grain Requirements, and secondly by the Chiefs of Staff in London. The former Committee, aware of their lack of specialised military knowledge, largely passed the responsibility for making recommendations to the Chiefs of Staff, who accepted a reduced need for military maintenance and proposed that the War Cabinet should release twenty five ships to transport wheat to India in the second six months of 1944.¹⁴⁶ They also suggested that the US military authorities should be asked to make a similar commitment.¹⁴⁷

The minutes of the War Cabinet meeting on 20 March show that only a total of 200,000 tons of wheat could be promised unreservedly in 1944, but another 150,000 tons could be made available, provided that a similar amount of rice was shipped from India to Ceylon. Furthermore the meeting concluded that no approach should be made to the United States military authorities for assistance.¹⁴⁸ Amery's diary recorded that there were considerable acrimonious exchanges at this meeting, especially when Churchill vented his anger at the Chiefs of Staff who were all present. Yet again, Amery claimed that he put the Viceroy's case strongly in face of Leathers' hostility, and the Prime Minister's frequent interruptions, while only receiving support from Field Marshall Alan Brooke.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ War Cabinet Committee on Indian Food Grain Requirements, Paper I.F.R. (44) 3, 7 March 1944, L/E/8/3323: ff 315 – 319.

¹⁴⁷ War Cabinet memorandum, Report by the Chiefs of Staff 18 March 1944, CAB 66/48/15.

¹⁴⁸ War Cabinet conclusions, 20 March 1944, CAB 6541/36.

¹⁴⁹ Amery, diary 20 March 1944, AMEL 7/38. Field Marshal Alan Brooke, later Viscount Alanbrooke (1883 – 1963): Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Following this meeting, three attempts by Amery to pacify Wavell, were unsuccessful, once the Viceroy had realised that, at best, only a net 250,000 tons of grain had been promised.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Wavell used one telegram to produce a sober explanation of why the grain recently offered was inadequate, and another more cryptic one to express his acute disappointment at the outcome of the War Cabinet meeting on 20 March. In particular he blamed the Prime Minister and his War Cabinet colleagues for failing to back his judgement, and also for suggesting that he might have been exaggerating the scale of India's food situation.¹⁵¹

Amery's Change of Strategy over the Food Crisis

Amery was sufficiently concerned by Wavell's extreme frustration to write directly to Churchill, concentrating in particular on the likely shortfall in wheat requirements for the armed forces garrisoned in India, especially in Bengal.¹⁵² He developed this theme on 29 March in a letter to Wavell, asserting that there were two separate questions to be asked about the food situation. Firstly, whether India could feed its own civilian population without imports, and secondly if food could be provided for foreign troops in addition to the needs of its own forces. He also made the important judgement that once the Government of India made it clear that it could supply no more than a specific amount of food for the military, the responsibility for satisfying any additional demands lay with the War

¹⁵⁰ Amery to Wavell, 22 March 1944, L/E/8/3323: f 260. Also, Amery to Wavell, 22 March 1944, L/E/8/3323: ff 254 – 257. Also, Amery to Wavell, 24 March 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁵¹ Wavell to Amery, 25 March 1944, L/PO/10/25.

¹⁵² Amery to Churchill, 27 March 1944, L/E/8/3323: f 243.

Cabinet.¹⁵³

The meeting of the War Cabinet Committee on Food Grain Requirements on 6 April was attended by Sir Archibald Rowlands, Wavell's official Adviser on Administration, who made an impassioned plea for the USA to send as much grain as possible so that prices could be controlled. Although the meeting was not swayed by these arguments, Amery insisted that progress could be made if the War Cabinet were to choose from three distinct choices over the food problem. Firstly, the wheat imports requested by India should be supplied to the general public, even if at the expense of the military. Secondly, the USA should be approached for help. Thirdly, the Viceroy should supply all the food needed to satisfy the armed forces, even at the expense of the civilian population. He recognised that this latter course would have serious political and economic consequences.¹⁵⁴

Before the matter could be put to the War Cabinet, Wavell informed Amery that unprecedented rain and thunderstorms had reduced crop forecasts in a number of provinces, other than Bengal, to the total extent of 500,000 tons. Even if the promised grain of only 200,000 tons were to be received there would be nothing to meet the defence requirements of 724,000 tons for the twelve months from 1 May 1944.¹⁵⁵ Although Amery confessed to shock at this sudden

¹⁵³ Amery to Wavell, 29 March 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁵⁴ War Cabinet Committee on Food Grain Requirements, Paper I.F.R. (44) 4, L/E/8/3323: ff 213 – 216, 208. Also, Cherwell to Amery, 21 April 1944, L/E/8/3323: f 174. Also, Amery diary, 6 April 1944, AMEL 7/38.

¹⁵⁵ Wavell to Amery, 19 April 1944, L/PO/10/25.

worsening of the situation, he persevered with his choice of options, but added some statistical analysis to support the Viceroy's warnings.¹⁵⁶

At the War Cabinet on 24 April, Churchill expressed some sympathy with India, and conceded that the 45,000 tons of wheat lost in an explosion in Bombay should be replaced, and that the Americans should provide the shipping. An ad hoc committee to be chaired by Morrison, but including Amery and Firoz Khan, Indian Representative at the War Cabinet, was asked to draft a letter to be sent from Churchill to Roosevelt, not only asking for transport of the grain to Bombay, but also seeking wider assistance with shipping.¹⁵⁷ Amery's own assessment of this meeting was somewhat more colourful, noting that only the presence of Firoz Khan and the Maharajah of Kashmir prevented Churchill from being more offensive about India than usual, although he came close to suggesting that Britain 'could not let Indian starvation interfere with military operations'.¹⁵⁸

Great care was taken with the content of the letter to Roosevelt, not only the section on the worsening grain position, but also a paragraph warning about the effect of food shortages on the effectiveness of SEAC.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, possibly distracted by the preparations for D-Day, and certainly on the advice of his military advisers, the President delayed for over a month before he turned down

¹⁵⁶ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum 21 April 1944, CAB 66/49/16.

¹⁵⁷ War Cabinet conclusions, 24 April 1944, CAB 45/42/13.

¹⁵⁸ Amery diary, 24 April 1944, AMEL 7/38.

¹⁵⁹ War Cabinet conclusions, 28 April 1944, CAB 28/4/44. Also, Amery to Wavell, 29 April 1944, L/E/83323: f 165. This telegram enclosed the complete text of Churchill's telegram to Roosevelt.

Churchill's request.¹⁶⁰ As was his wont in such circumstances, Amery pondered whether the only way to convince the President would be for him to visit Washington in order to press the British case.¹⁶¹ He made this suggestion at the Indian Food Grains Requirements Committee that met on 7 June, but was told by Leathers that nothing could be done to obtain more shipping from the USA, especially as an increasing number of vessels would be required in connection with the campaign in Normandy.¹⁶²

Wavell's faith in the Chiefs of Staff proved justified. Amery was able to confirm on 24 June that the British Government had accepted the recommendation of the military leaders that 200,000 tons of wheat should be shipped from Australia to India during the third quarter of 1944, and that the situation could be considered again in August and November of the year.¹⁶³ However, this did not prevent Wavell's continued impatience with the delays over the actual provision of grain. This was apparent in a letter sent on 19 July from the Viceroy's summer camp at Simla. Before supplying a long, and only partially favourable report on the food situation he again criticised the 'lack of attention' that Amery's colleagues in London had given to the grain shortages.¹⁶⁴ Although not naming Amery in this letter, his true feelings were apparent in his diary entry

¹⁶⁰ Amery to Wavell, 2 June 1944, L/PO/10/21. Also, Amery to Wavell, 3 June 1944, L/WS/1/654: f 196. This telegram enclosed Roosevelt's cryptic message rejecting Churchill's appeal.

¹⁶¹ Amery diary, 2 June 1944, AMEL 7/38.

¹⁶² Amery diary, 7 June 1944, AMEL 7/38.

¹⁶³ Amery to Wavell, 24 June 1944, L/E/8/3323: ff 95-96. Also, Wavell to Churchill, via India Office, 24 June 1944, L/PO/10/25.

¹⁶⁴ Amery to Wavell, 19 July 1944, L/PO/10/21.

of 13 July. He deplored both the Committee on Food Grain Requirements that he felt was 'packed' with unsympathetic characters such as Cherwell and Leathers, and also the India Office, which had 'failed to make its weight felt'. This thinly disguised criticism of the Secretary of State for India only repeated the judgement by Linlithgow, who had always felt that he had little influence within the War Cabinet.¹⁶⁵

In the early months of 1944, Amery had not been seriously challenged in the House of Commons over the response to the famine by the governments in London and Delhi. On 28 July, during a long debate that chiefly concerned itself with constitutional matters, he was not the subject of serious blame. His winding up speech dealt only partly with the food crisis, and then concentrated mainly on the effective rationing systems introduced by Casey in both Calcutta and the rural areas of the province. However, his progress report on grain imports was more guarded as, although he reported that 800,000 tons of grain would have been shipped to India by September 1944, he realised that this was disappointingly short of the required amount. For someone who had fought hard, if often unavailingly in the War Cabinet, he rather limply quoted the military demand for shipping as a legitimate excuse for the delay in providing grain to the affected areas.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, The Viceroy's Journal*, 23 July 1944, p. 81.

¹⁶⁶ *Hansard*, 28 July 1944, Vol. 402, cc1013 – 1021.

The Easing of the Food Crisis

The first indication of an end to the severity of the food shortages came from the Chiefs of Staff Committee. In a short, but decisive paper these senior military men put the provision of wheat on a par with other strategic considerations, and recommended that their computed deficit of 300,000 tons be made good in the final quarter of 1944.¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the implementation caused Amery difficulties. On the day that Paris was liberated, Attlee, who was standing in for Churchill, refused to approve the Chiefs of Staff recommendation before Amery had obtained the consent of the Food Grains Committee.¹⁶⁸ His difficulties increased when Leathers, seeking to divert some tonnage to the Balkans, refused to make arrangements to transfer the full 300,000 tons of wheat to India.¹⁶⁹ A few days later, when Amery wrote to a frustrated Wavell, he reported not only the possible diversion of some grain to the Balkans, but also the more damaging prospect that a poor wheat harvest in Australia might limit the amount available for India.

Wavell's replies to Amery expressed regret that the Balkans could be preferred to India as regards imports of wheat, although he exempted him from the charge directed at those in power in Britain whom, he believed knew little about India, and bore the moral responsibility for the deaths caused by the

¹⁶⁷ War Cabinet paper, 19 August 1944, Committee, C.O.S. (44) 752 (0), L/E/8/3324: ff 195–196.

¹⁶⁸ Amery to Wavell, 23 August 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁶⁹ Amery diary, 25 August 1944, AMEL 7/38.

famine.¹⁷⁰ His diary more than hinted at a conspiracy in London, when he repeated his accusation that the Indian Food Grains Committee had been deliberately staffed with members hostile to India. Amery was again given partial exemption from criticism, but Wavell suspected that Churchill believed sending food to India was 'appeasement of Congress', and that his prejudice had been fuelled by the release of Gandhi.¹⁷¹

Until 9 October when Amery was able to inform Wavell that the outstanding 300,000 tons of wheat would be shipped during October, November and December, there was a brief period during which the Viceroy, although anxious about shortages in other parts of India, was able to announce that Bengal was soon likely to have produced a substantial surplus of rice.¹⁷²

Even with a relatively successful outcome to the campaign for grain imports, Amery's problems in Whitehall were not over. The original draft of the report by Sir Henry French into the food crisis had pleased Wavell, not only for its favourable comments about Indian efforts to deal with the problem, but also because it had a degree of impartiality, having not been produced by the Government of India, or the India Office.¹⁷³

Unfortunately, Amery was not able to repeat this message in the House of

¹⁷⁰ Wavell to Amery, 5 September 1944, L/PO/10/21. Also Amery to Wavell, 12 September 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁷¹ Moon (ed.), Wavell, *the Viceroy's Journal*, 7 September 1944, P. 89.

¹⁷² Amery to Wavell, 9 October 1944, L/E/8/3324: ff 83 -84, IOR. Also, Wavell to Amery, 27 September 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁷³ Wavell to Amery, 25 October 1944, L/PO/10/21. Sir Henry French (1883 – 1966): a senior official at the Ministry of Food.

Commons as the Food Grains Committee had watered down its laudatory statements about India's performance.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, he had to endure the ignominy of the abhorred Cherwell partially redrafting those passages originally written by French, that he would have read out in Parliament.¹⁷⁵ In the event, Amery did not need to address the House as Leathers considered that renewed demands for shipping in the Pacific theatre of war necessitated caution in making promises of exports to India.¹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, by the end of the year, the crisis had largely passed, and Wavell was willing to take the credit for securing 1,000,000 tons of grain.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, throughout the year there was an apparent contradiction between the expressions of gratitude in his correspondence with Amery, and the comments in his diary, that praised the tenacity, if not the influence of the Secretary of State in his efforts to secure grain for India. Whatever the effectiveness of the India Office at this time, Amery's departmental staff supported their Secretary of State. In particular, his Private Secretary, Turnbull, wrote to Mrs Amery, absolving him from any blame for the tardy supply of grain to India, and placing responsibility squarely with Leathers and the Ministry of War Transport.¹⁷⁸

There is little doubt that Amery was upset by what he regarded as ill informed and flagrantly orchestrated criticism. In January 1944 he wrote to

¹⁷⁴ Wavell to Amery, 5 December 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁷⁵ Amery to Wavell, 7 December 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁷⁶ Amery to Wavell, 21 December 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁷⁷ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 31 December 1944, p.107.

¹⁷⁸ Turnbull to Mrs Florence Amery, 6 November 1943, AMEL 6/3/101.

Attlee suggesting that an otherwise flagging campaign against him in Britain by Krishna Menon and the India League had been revived by the famine, and that, aided by the Communist Party were seeking his dismissal. As late as the General Election campaign in Birmingham in the summer of 1945, he was being accused by the Communist candidate Rajani Palme Dutt as being the 'murderer of one and a half million Bengalis'.¹⁷⁹

Despite his poor press during the famine in Delhi and the provinces, and the usual personal criticism from Sapru, he has not always been damned by recent Indian scholarship. Indeed the highly polemical analysis of the food crisis by Madhusee Mukerjee stated that, 'one person who emerged from the famine with remarkably clean hands was Leopold Amery'.¹⁸⁰ There can be little doubt that, during the period of famine in India, Amery operated with his usual courage and persistence. Although relief supplies of food took longer to reach the starving than he would have wished, he had faced indifference and hostility in London, and yet ultimately achieved a better result than on many other issues.

¹⁷⁹ Amery to Casey, 11 July 1945, Amery Papers, AMEL 2/3/18.

¹⁸⁰ Madhusee Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War, The Secret Ravaging of India during World War II*, New York, Basic Books, 2010, p.275. The author's praise for Amery was only by comparison with her fierce criticism of Churchill, and the rather odd attribution of his helpful attitude to the need for expiation in respect of his son John's treachery.

CHAPTER VIII

FINAL ATTEMPTS TO ACHIEVE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM BEFORE THE LABOUR ELECTION VICTORY

Introduction

Although the time from Amery's recovery from gallstones in March 1944 until the declaration of the Labour electoral landslide on 26 July 1945 was still, to some extent, concerned with food shortages and the sterling balances, there was a considerable renewal of interest in constitutional reform, both in India, and in Britain. Amery, beset with worries over his wayward son, Jack, and still partially diverted by his obsession with imperial preference, again worked assiduously, but the impetus for change in India came primarily from Wavell, as well as the major communal groups.

As the end of the war approached, a number of Indian politicians produced schemes to achieve a settlement, but it was really only when Wavell took the initiative in designing the basis of an interim constitution that Amery was able to put forward his own proposals. Unfortunately, this final attempt by Amery to break the deadlock found favour with practically no one, whether the Viceroy, his political colleagues in London, or his senior officials at the India Office. In particular, this last phase of his tenure showed a further decrease of his influence in London that would be marked by key tasks such as the drafting of memoranda on Indian reform allocated to other members of the India Committee.

Although there were also inevitable disagreements between Secretary of State and Viceroy, whether the latter was in Delhi, or London, these proved to be tepid compared with the diehard attitudes that often prevailed at meetings of the War Cabinet.

The Constitutional Position in India in the Spring of 1944

With the Congress leaders imprisoned and Wavell strongly mandated by Churchill and the War Cabinet to concentrate on the war effort, there had been few constitutional developments since the 'Quit India' movement and Gandhi's fast. Amery had found very little time to produce any new thinking on the matter, but during his recovery from illness he discussed possible ways of breaking the deadlock with his Private Secretary. Turnbull's views are not recorded, but Amery's continued attachment to whimsy can be seen both from his continued commitment to the Swiss model of federal government, and also a suggestion that they could employ Coupland's latest version of his scheme for the administration of a united India based on its four main river basins.¹

The only Indian politician to propose realistic new reforms during the months following the end of Gandhi's fast was Rajagopalachari, who represented liberal Hindu opinion. He was particularly innovative, and prepared a formula, promising a form of Muslim self-government that he hoped might form the basis of an agreement between Jinnah and the Mahatma. As early as March 1943, Rajagopalachari had explained his proposals to Gandhi, who although fasting,

¹ Amery, diary 19 March 1944, AMEL 7/38. Also, Coupland, *The Future of India*, pp. 119 – 125.

had apparently been well enough to give them his approval. On 8 April 1944 he sent them to Jinnah optimistically claiming they had been accepted by Gandhi as the basis for a settlement between Congress and the Muslim League. The available evidence remains inconclusive, but it is likely that, in response, Jinnah told Rajagopalachari that he was unable to agree to the formula without consulting his colleagues in the Muslim League.²

The position in which Jinnah and the Muslim League had been left by Cripps' proposals was more difficult than might have been thought. Cripps had been prepared to allow individual provinces to opt out of any all-India arrangements, thereby offering a serious threat to Jinnah's ambitions to bring all Muslim majority provinces under the communal banner.³ Consequently, scholars have been hesitant in confirming that Jinnah was able to take control of these provinces during the early months of 1944. Although Fazlul Huq had been dismissed by Herbert in Bengal, and the Unionist premier in the Punjab, Sikander Hyat Khan had died, it has been shown that Jinnah did not immediately benefit from the installation of majority Muslim League administrations in these provinces.⁴ Only after the breakdown of Jinnah's discussions with Gandhi in September 1944 did his influence, and that of the Muslim League, increase rapidly throughout the country.

Amery received detailed briefings, whether directly from Wavell or from

² Wavell to Amery, 12 July 1944, L/P & J/8/519: ff 310 – 312.

³ Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p. 82.

⁴ Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India*, pp. 95 – 105. Also, Humayun Kabir, 'Muslim Politics, 1942 – 7', Philips and Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India*, p. 394.

experienced governors, on Jinnah's difficult relationship with these Muslim provincial premiers who were not necessarily attracted by the concept of Pakistan.⁵ Surprisingly, he contributed very little, at this time, to the development of British policy towards a separate Pakistan, merely making the point on 11 May that Jinnah was 'even more tiresome in his authoritarianism than Ghandi', and advising that it would be better to wait and negotiate a settlement from a position of strength, later in the war.⁶

By contrast, Amery had clearer views on the future status of the princely states. Even before the Cripps mission, he had written to Linlithgow setting out the India Office view on the course needed to be taken in the 582 states. In short, he made it clear to the Viceroy that, although Britain would not be repudiating any past pledges to the states, matters could not go on as before. In particular, there would need to be some move towards grouping, especially amongst the smaller states.⁷

By the time that Linlithgow expressed his broad agreement with this assessment, direct responsibility within the Government of India for the States had passed to the energetic and forceful Sir Francis Wylie, who as Political Adviser to the Crown Representative (Viceroy), worked hard to persuade the princes to countenance reform.⁸ The powers of the Viceroy to promote the

⁵ Wavell to Amery, 16 April 1944, L/P & J/8/513: ff 298 – 304. Also, Glancy (Punjab) to Wavell, 24 April 1944, L/P & J/8/662: ff 33 – 35.

⁶ Amery to Wavell, 11 May 1944, L/PO/10/21.

⁷ Amery to Linlithgow, 16 May 1941, L/P & S/13/889: ff 63 – 72. Wylie's position was Political Adviser to the Crown Representative (the title of the Viceroy) as regards his dealings with the States).

⁸ Linlithgow to Amery, 13 September 1943, MSS. EUR. F. 125/14. Also, Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917 – 1947*, pp. 196 – 201.

grouping of smaller, and supposedly less viable states, needed to be reinforced by legislation in the form of the 1944 Attachment of States Bill.⁹ Despite outrage from the Chamber of Princes, lukewarm support from Wavell who knew little about the states, and the opposition to such measures in the House of Commons, Amery took the lead in getting the necessary provisions enacted by 21 March 1944.¹⁰ Amery's initiative forced Wavell to publish his thoughts on the states. He was anxious that no further pledges should be made to the princes, and stressed that self-government for India was incompatible with preserving all 582 States in their current form.¹¹

Amery agreed with Wavell's sober analysis, and after advising the Viceroy not to meet the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes in the near future, outlined his own plan for the future of the states. In brief, he envisaged a three tier hierarchy of states with only the largest certain to retain their independence, and even then at the cost of some rationalisation. All other states would have to accept some element of merging.¹² A non-committal Wavell merely agreed to send these proposals for his Political Department to consider.¹³

Gandhi's Approaches to Wavell and the Reaction in London

In the few weeks following Gandhi's release from custody, Amery made no

⁹ The need for legislation was made urgent by a judicial decision in December 1943 that enabled a talukadar (ruler) in Bhadwa to resist the Crown Representative in a particular attachment scheme.

¹⁰ *Hansard*, 14 March 1944, vol. 398, cc177 – 202.

¹¹ Wavell to Amery, 20 April 1944, L/P & S/13/981: ff 164 – 168.

¹² Amery to Wavell, 22 May 1944, L/P & S/13/981: ff 143 – 148.

¹³ Wavell to Amery, 30 May 1944, L/PO/10/21.

new initiatives on Indian reform possibly in view of the imminent Second Front, but also because he remained cautious about the need to maintain the means of dealing with any fresh unrest.¹⁴ Gandhi took some little time before attempting to break the deadlock, but finally on 13 June asked Wavell if he could meet the Congress Working Party in order to find out their current thinking about constitutional reform.¹⁵ Amery lost little time in supporting Wavell's blunt refusal to allow Gandhi to meet his Congress colleagues, especially as the Viceroy had received no expression of regret over the 'Quit India' resolution of 1942.¹⁶

While Wavell was awaiting a further initiative from Gandhi, Amery had become anxious over the comments he should make during an imminent debate in the House of Commons about Indian constitutional reform. In particular, he sought guidance from Wavell on the answers to be given to two questions that might be put to him. Firstly, what should be the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the establishment of a national government in India during the war, and secondly was there still to be continued opposition towards Gandhi meeting the Congress Working Committee to discuss such an administration? Amery made it clear that, in formulating his reply, he needed Wavell's insistence that the Viceroy should maintain his full reserve powers as envisaged by the terms of the Cripps offer.¹⁷

Wavell's trenchant reply was an indication of his growing impatience with

¹⁴ Amery to Wavell, 11 June 1944, L/P & J/8/623: f 75.

¹⁵ Gandhi to Wavell, 17 June 1944, L/P & J/8/623: f 50.

¹⁶ Wavell to Gandhi, 22 June 1944, L/P & J/8/623: f 49. Also, Amery to Wavell, 26 June 1944, L/PO/10/21.

¹⁷ Amery to Wavell, 15 July 1944, L/P & J/8/519: ff 304 -306.

Westminster's failure to grasp the delicacy of the situation in India, especially at a time when a number of political groups were already considering proposals by Rajagopalachari that permitted some degree of Muslim self-government. Consequently, he advised Amery to give as few details as possible about a new wartime national government, and to confine himself to a restatement of the criteria set out in the Cripps proposals.¹⁸ To a degree, Amery heeded Wavell's advice, and said he hoped that his statement in the House of Commons would largely confine itself to reconstruction in India. Nevertheless, he feared that he would need to speak about Gandhi when questioned by Sorensen and other left wing Labour members.¹⁹

Amery's wish that the parliamentary debate, which took place on 28 July should concentrate on Indian reconstruction was generally fulfilled. Although many speakers did restrict themselves to economic matters and the food shortages, it was no surprise that Sorensen and his colleagues, although more moderate than Amery had feared, advocated the release of Congress leaders and the immediate resumption of negotiations with Gandhi. Amery's very long summing up commenced with a terse denunciation of Gandhi's view that any plans depended on the removal of the Viceroy's reserve powers, but soon became more rambling in its references to India's military effort, scientific advancement and alleviation of the food crisis.²⁰ Although his speech was widely

¹⁸ Wavell to Amery, 18 July 1944, Wavell Papers, Political Series, April 1944 – July 1945, Part I, pp. 22 – 23.

¹⁹ Amery to Wavell, 19 July 1944, L/PO/6/110: ff 159 – 160.

²⁰ *Hansard*, 28 July 1944, vol. 402, cc1013 – 1021.

criticised in India, Amery's diary struck a self-congratulatory note by claiming that his speech had 'informed and steadied the House'.²¹

When Gandhi made his next proposal on the form of a new national government on 27 July, the details had not been known by the participants in the debate referred to above. Gandhi was now prepared to advise the Congress Working Committee to call off any threat of civil disobedience, provided that Indian independence was declared immediately, and a national government installed, answerable only to the legislature. He also stipulated that, although military operations could continue for the remainder of the war, this should be at no financial cost to India.²²

On 1 August, Wavell sent two telegrams to Amery in connection with Gandhi's proposal. Firstly, he reluctantly sent his proposed reply to Gandhi for consideration in London.²³ He combined an outright refusal of Gandhi's terms with a declaration that progress might be possible if the leaders of all groups were willing to participate in a transitional government, operating within the framework of the current constitution.²⁴ Secondly, he explained the rationale behind his draft reply, especially his suggestion for an acceptable provisional government. Above all, he stressed that merely rejecting Gandhi's scheme would not be enough.²⁵

²¹ Wavell to Amery, 1 August 1944, L/PO/10/21. Also, Amery, diary 28 July 1944, AMEL 7/38.

²² Wavell to Amery, 1 August 1944, L/PO/10/25. Wavell's telegram enclosed the verbatim text of Gandhi's letter of 17 July 1944.

²³ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 2 August 1944, p. 82.

²⁴ Wavell to Amery, 1 August 1944, L/PO/10/25 (1493 – S).

²⁵ Wavell to Amery, 1 August 1944, L/PO/10/25 (1491 – S).

In the period from 2 August until 15 August, when Wavell was finally able to send a reply to Gandhi, there were a number of meetings of the India Committee and the War Cabinet that tested Amery sorely. During these sessions that were arranged to agree the details of a reply to Wavell, he attempted, with only limited success, to support an irascible Viceroy in the face of an unhelpful War Cabinet, subjected to an even greater level of bullying by Churchill than before.

Amery's attempt at editing Wavell's draft was enclosed with his War Cabinet memorandum of 2 August, and made only minor amendments that sought to emphasise the need for an interim provisional government to be established within the framework of the existing constitution.²⁶ Amery's difficulties soon became more serious, when his draft was considered by the India Committee, and found to be so inadequate that he was mandated to collaborate with Cripps to produce a completely new version for consideration by the War Cabinet, later that day. As might be expected from the joint authorship of Amery and Cripps, greater stress was laid on the prior need for communal groups to find some agreement amongst themselves on the means of framing a new constitution.²⁷

Even with a more robust draft before them, the War Cabinet meeting later that day was stormy. Amery spoke carefully in order to protect his position. Although he conceded that it would have been difficult for the Viceroy to decline to respond to Gandhi, he pointed out that he had not consulted the India Office before doing so. His criticism of Wavell also extended to the latter's draft reply to

²⁶ Amery, War Cabinet memorandum, 2 August 1944, CAB 66/53/26.

²⁷ Attlee, War Cabinet memorandum 3 August 1944, CAB 66/63/29. Also, Amery diary, 3 August 1944, AMEL 7/38.

Gandhi that had needed revision by the India Committee to become 'firm and dignified'.²⁸

Amery's sophistry had been occasioned by a trenchant outburst from Churchill that even the normally discreet Bridges did not attempt to disguise. His minutes described the Prime Minister as expressing unease at 'a renewal of negotiations with a bitter enemy of Britain'. Accordingly, the India Committee was asked to produce a fresh draft reply that was 'even stiffer, and less forthcoming in tone'.²⁹

Amery's diary provided an even more graphic account of Churchill's behaviour, quoting his remark that 'Gandhi was a traitor who ought to be put back in prison'. He also recorded that he had harangued the Prime Minister accusing him of behaving like Canute, and being out of touch with the great majority of the Conservative Party.³⁰ At the War Cabinet meeting on the following day, an even greater row broke out between Prime Minister and Secretary of State. Although only minor amendments to Wavell's reply were being discussed, Churchill accused the Viceroy of being a 'wretched sentimentalist', and Amery of being short on patriotism in 'failing to stand up to Indian moneylenders'. When Churchill promised that after the war was won he would renege on any promises that had been made to Indians, Amery retorted that he was 'behaving like Hitler'.³¹

²⁸ War Cabinet conclusions, 3 August 1944, CAB 65/43/16.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Amery diary, 3 August 1944, AMEL 7/38.

³¹ Amery diary, 4 August 1944, AMEL 7/38.

Possibly fearing some collusion between Amery and Wavell, Churchill sent an urgent telegram directly to the Viceroy, expressing not only his own, but also the War Cabinet's concern that contact had been resumed with Gandhi.³² Wavell, despite his clear annoyance at the Prime Minister's intervention, wrote a calm reply, shrewdly explaining that his response to Gandhi did not fall outside the terms of the directive given to him in 1943 on the eve of his departure for India. In the circumstances, he felt fully justified in adopting a more positive attitude towards Congress.³³

Amery sent the draft favoured by Churchill to Wavell on 4 August 1944 together with a separate cryptic telegram admitting that while the latest version was 'stiffer in tone', there had been no change in substance.³⁴ As Wavell spent the next few days visiting the troops who, earlier in the year, had repelled the Japanese attackers at Imphal and Kohima, he took a little time to respond to Amery. When he returned to Delhi his dismay at reading the latest War Cabinet draft was acute. He accepted that the amendments had resulted in little change in principle, but regretted the new tone that seemed 'intransigent and discourteous'. He particularly deplored the lack of awareness in Britain of the importance that Indians attached to 'good manners, and at least an appearance of consideration'.³⁵

³² Churchill to Wavell, via India Office, 4 August 1944, L/PO/6/110: f 142.

³³ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 4 August 1944, p. 82. Also, Wavell to Churchill, via India Office, 4 August 1944, L/PO/10/25.

³⁴ Amery to Wavell, 4 August 1944, L/P & J/8/519: f 113. Also, Amery to Wavell, 4 August 1944, L/P & J/8/519: ff 120 – 121.

³⁵ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 9 August 1944, pp. 83 – 84.

Wavell repeated these reflections to Amery, and explained why he had felt it necessary to produce yet another redraft, this time with the help of Menon, the Reforms Commissioner.³⁶ His letter to Amery, also on the same day, made the point that a more friendly approach to Congress would earn Britain a better press, especially in the USA.³⁷

The consideration of Wavell's latest redraft by the India Committee on 11 August marked another low point in Amery's influence. Although he made a spirited case in support of the Viceroy, Cripps, Butler and Anderson all favoured the uncompromising approach that the Prime Minister wanted. He also suffered the indignity of being asked to prepare a very short alternative reply to Gandhi, rejecting his offer on the grounds that it was not constructive.³⁸ Amery's telegram to Wavell explaining the conclusions of the India Committee, and enclosing his short alternative draft, produced an angry reaction, which did not absolve the Secretary of State from blame.³⁹ Not surprisingly, Wavell's first inclination was to send his own revised draft directly to Gandhi, and 'risk Winston's displeasure'.⁴⁰

The final meeting of the War Cabinet arranged to decide the wording of Wavell's reply to Gandhi, took place on 14 August, and in the absence of Churchill, was chaired by Attlee. Amery's performance was one of contradictions. Although his opening remarks indicated that the absence of several members of

³⁶ Wavell to Amery, 10 August 1944, L/PO/10/25.

³⁷ Wavell to Amery, 10 August 1944, L/PO/10/21.

³⁸ India Committee conclusions, 11 August 1944, L/PO/6/110: ff 107 – 110.

³⁹ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 12 August 1944, pp. 85 – 86.

⁴⁰ Wavell to Amery, 12 August 1944, L/PO/6/110: f 85.

the War Cabinet made it impossible to adopt the Viceroy's latest draft, he later asked for the minutes to record his dissent from the final conclusions. His plea for the judgement of the man on the spot to be respected was unsuccessful, and Wavell was left with the unenviable choice of sending the longer War Cabinet draft, or Amery's blunt alternative.⁴¹ Of the three telegrams that Amery sent in connection with the War Cabinet's decision, the final one was the most significant as it urged the Viceroy not to resign merely on such a matter as the wording of a reply to Gandhi.⁴² Amery's plea was successful as Wavell reluctantly sent the longer War Cabinet draft to Gandhi on 15 August 1944.⁴³

Wavell's judgement proved to be correct as the letter that he finally despatched to Gandhi evoked an angry response in India, with blame attaching more to London than to Delhi. By way of proof, when Amery sent a letter to Wavell with the intention of mollifying him, the recipient added a manuscript comment to the original copy, revealing the Secretary of State to be even more unpopular amongst Indians than Churchill.⁴⁴

The Talks between Gandhi and Jinnah: 9 to 22 September 1944

When Wavell was obliged to send his uncompromising reply to Gandhi, the consequences that he had feared seemed likely to follow. Believing that Britain had shut the door on immediate progress, Gandhi turned to Jinnah in the hope

⁴¹ War Cabinet conclusions, 14 August 1944, CAB 65/43/21.

⁴² Amery to Wavell, 14 August 1944, L/PO/6/110: ff 63 – 64. Also, Amery to Wavell, 14 August 1944, L/PO/6/110: ff 65 – 66. Also, Amery to Wavell, 14 August 1944, L/PO/6/110: f 62.

⁴³ Wavell to Gandhi, 15 August 1944, Wavell Papers, Political Series, April 1944 – July 1945, Part I, pp. 40 – 42.

⁴⁴ Amery to Wavell, 16 August 1944, L/PO/10/21.

that Rajagopalachari's plan could still be used as the basis for negotiations. As Gandhi had spoken out so often against the vivisection of India, it is worth questioning if he really supported his colleague's formula. We get a clue from a letter sent on 10 August to Wavell by Sir Henry Twynham, who was Governor of Central Provinces and Berar. Twynham indicated that his intelligence officers had obtained proof that Gandhi had no faith in the Pakistan project, and that his endorsement of Rajagopalachari's scheme was only a 'matter of expediency'.⁴⁵

The formula that was originally published by Rajagopalachari on 10 July 1943 provided for a provisional interim government to be set up through cooperation between Congress and the Muslim League. More importantly, he proposed that at the end of the war, a commission should be set up to demarcate areas in north-west and north-east India where Muslims were in an absolute majority. In these areas, there would be a plebiscite of all inhabitants to elect whether to separate from Hindustan or not. If a majority chose separation, effect would be given to that decision.⁴⁶ If Rajagopalachari had intended to provide for a viable form of Pakistan he had made no provision for it to have its own set of central functions such as defence, commerce and communications. Instead these would have to be shared with Hindustan, an arrangement that was not likely to appeal to either Hindus or Muslims.⁴⁷

If Gandhi could be said to have had an ambiguous approach to Rajagopalachari's willingness to permit separate Muslim territories, Jinnah had an

⁴⁵ Twynham to Wavell, 10 August 1944, L/P & J/5/193: f 71.

⁴⁶ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 163.

⁴⁷ Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 119 – 120.

even more awkward relationship with the creator of the formula. On 2 July 1944, Jinnah had insisted that, so far he had not rejected the formula, but was waiting to submit it to the Working Committee of the Muslim League.⁴⁸ Within a month, Jinnah had recanted, telling the All India Muslim League Council that the initiative was a travesty offering only a 'maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan', and designed to 'torpedo' the Lahore resolution of 1940.⁴⁹

Amery had only received summaries of the relevant correspondence before 13 July, when after conceding that the situation regarding Gandhi and Jinnah was obscure, he gave non-committal answers to questions in the House of Commons.⁵⁰ After receiving Wavell's thorough analysis he felt able to record in his diary that, at this stage, neither Gandhi nor Jinnah 'wanted the responsibility of government'.⁵¹

When the anticipated talks between the two leaders finally began at Jinnah's house in Bombay on 9 September, prospects for success were poor. Although, since the end of the Cripps mission, Gandhi had become more realistic concerning Muslim aspirations for Pakistan, he underestimated the strength of feeling against this proposition from Sikhs, Mahasabha nationalists and most importantly, Hindus in the Punjab and Bengal.⁵² In these provinces, Jinnah had also been placed in a difficult position because having already dismissed Rajagopalachari's formula, he was still unsure of the unqualified support of fellow

⁴⁸ Wavell to Amery, 12 July 1944, L/P & J/8/519: ff 310 – 312.

⁴⁹ Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p. 121.

⁵⁰ *Hansard* 13 July 1944, vol. 401, cc1866 – 1868.

⁵¹ Amery diary, 20 July 1944, AMEL, 7/38.

⁵² Brown, Gandhi, *Prisoner of Hope*, p. 351.

Muslims.⁵³

Although their discussions were conducted, at least with outward courtesy, the differences between the two men proved too great for a constructive outcome to emerge. There are considerable differences in the reasons put forward by scholars for the failure of the talks, but it is probably safe to conclude that Gandhi was not prepared to accept that the Muslims of India were a separate nation, a key condition for Jinnah who also rejected any future sharing of central administrative functions by Pakistan and Hindustan.⁵⁴

Wavell's Initiative in September 1944 and Amery's Counter Proposal

Wavell did not wait for the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks before showing Amery fresh proposals for constitutional reform. In taking this step he was encouraged by the generally favourable response of his provincial governors to a new initiative before the end of the war.⁵⁵ He made a passionate case for early action, intending that his plan should operate within the existing constitution, but significantly include Gandhi and Jinnah, if possible. In terms of detail, he envisaged the formation of a transitional central government consisting of a reconstituted Executive Council representing the main political parties. The longer term goal was intended to be the selection of a constituent assembly that

⁵³ Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 121 – 122. Also, Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, pp. 163 – 164.

⁵⁴ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p.165. As someone who, at the time, was working in the Reforms Office in Delhi, Menon would have had a clear perspective on these events, as his even handed account revealed.

⁵⁵ Note by Jenkins, 31 August 1944, Wavell Papers, Political Series, April 1944 – July 1945, Part I, pp. 44 – 47. Also, Note by Wavell, *Ibid*, pp. 47 – 49.

would draft the new permanent constitution, as well as negotiate a treaty with His Majesty's Government for the purpose of protecting existing British interests in India.⁵⁶

Wavell admitted that his ideas carried risk, especially as there was a possibility that the Viceroy's position could be undermined by a politicised Executive Council, a danger that he conceded might cause disquiet in London. Such misgivings were shared by others in Delhi, including Jenkins who warned his boss that any broadcast by Wavell in connection with his initiative would have to be expressed in his own words, and 'not a hotch-potch by the India Office, P. J. Grigg, or Lord Cherwell'.⁵⁷

Such suspicion was confirmed by Amery's reaction to Wavell's proposals. His letter of 3 October, which was not delivered to Wavell for nine days, was striking for the paranoia contained in his statement that the principal Indian grievances were with His Majesty's Government, control by the India Office, and most of all, 'that odious person the Secretary of State'. His radical solution to such perceived bitterness was the concession of independence to Indians immediately following the end of the war, and before any attempts were made to arrive at a new constitution.⁵⁸

Before Wavell could respond he received two further telegrams from Amery, who had discussed the Viceroy's proposals with his senior officials at the India

⁵⁶ Wavell to Amery, 20 September 1944, L/P & J/8/520: ff 238 – 244.

⁵⁷ Note by Jenkins, 30 September 1944, Wavell Papers, Political Series, April 1944 – July 1945, Part I, pp. 64 – 67. Sir Evan Jenkins (1896 – 1985) was Private Secretary to the Viceroy.

⁵⁸ Amery to Wavell, 3 October 1944, L/PO/10/21.

Office.⁵⁹ Encouraged by their strong disapproval of Wavell's politicised Executive Council, he made his own trenchant criticisms before defending his own scheme that intentionally bypassed Gandhi and Jinnah, and that he felt would be more likely to commend itself to his colleagues in London. On the one hand, he argued that the need for unity in the coalition made it probable that Churchill's prejudice over India would prevail. On the other hand, he suggested that the transitional government advocated by Wavell would be unable to maintain its cohesion, especially while Congress Working Committee members were still detained.⁶⁰

Although Wavell took some time to send his response to Amery, his opinions were clear since he recorded in his diary that the Secretary of State's 'objections to his own plan were ill advised, and the counter proposal fatuous'. In particular, he deplored the suggestion that the National Defence Council should be used as a constitutional sounding board, an idea that had already been canvassed by Churchill.⁶¹ At the time, the Reforms Commissioner, Menon, made a sober analysis of the two different plans, and while not giving approval to either, was especially damning about Amery's proposals that he did not feel would 'bear examination'.⁶² However, his account of events, published some thirteen years later, was kinder to Amery, and suggested that he showed a 'boldness of vision that was only thwarted by the circumstances of the time'.⁶³

⁵⁹ Amery diary, 6 October 1944, AMEL 7/38.

⁶⁰ Amery to Wavell, 10 October 1944, L/PO/6/108b: ff 415 – 419. Also, Amery to Wavell, 10 October 1944, L/P & J/8/520: ff 202 – 212.

⁶¹ Moon (ed.), *Viceroy's Journal*, diary 11 October 1944, p. 92.

⁶² Menon to Jenkins, 13 October 1944, Wavell Papers, Political Series, April 1944 – July 1945, Part I, pp. 94 – 96.

⁶³ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, pp. 169 – 171.

Wavell's eventual reaction to Amery was written in a generally dismissive tone, although the first paragraphs that rebutted criticism of his plan were frank in their admission that his own plan for a reformed Executive Council carried risks. Later in his telegram he made it clear that Amery's strategy of excluding Gandhi and Jinnah was 'quite impracticable', and showed little appreciation of the *realpolitik* needed to deal with Congress and the Muslim League.⁶⁴

The schism between official thinking in Whitehall and Delhi was clearly revealed in the views expressed by Amery's senior officials. John Gibson (Political Office), Patrick and Monteath, while praising Wavell's military record, stressed his political inexperience and possibly suspect judgement that they believed was causing him to rush into hazardous reforms capable of prejudicing the Indian war effort.

Despite Wavell's impatience at the slow progress in London, Churchill was unapologetically determined to defer any consideration of the Viceroy's initiative, if possible until the 'achievement of a victorious peace'.⁶⁵ Amery could only react by asking Attlee, in his capacity as Leader of the Labour Party, and not as Churchill's deputy, to persuade him to permit the India Committee to consider Wavell's proposals as soon as possible.⁶⁶ There are no details as to how Churchill's mind was changed, but on 4 December he relented and referred the correspondence between Wavell and Amery to the India Office.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Wavell to Amery, 22 October 1944, L/P & J/8/520: f 196.

⁶⁵ Churchill to Wavell, via India Office, 26 November 1944, L/PO/6/108b: f 356.

⁶⁶ Amery diary, 28 November 1944, AMEL 7/38. Also, Amery to Wavell, 30 November 1944. Also, Amery to Attlee, 2 December 1944, L/PO/6/108b: f 139.

⁶⁷ Amery to Wavell, 4 December 1944, L/PO/6/108b: f 347.

The India Committee and the Latest Reform Proposals

The meeting of the India Committee on 6 December was to be the first in a long series over the next five months during which Amery, and later on occasions Wavell, had to defend their policies against a group of highly sceptical colleagues. At this first meeting, Wavell's plan to replace the existing Executive Council by a selection of political appointees was described as 'abject surrender'. Amery was only supported in his defence of the Viceroy by Cripps, although he did have the satisfaction that his own idea for a constitutional conference received a more sympathetic reception. Overall, there was little to argue with in Amery's contention that the Committee was generally diehard in approach, especially after it had recommended a wait of two or three months after which it was hoped that Wavell might be 'less wedded to his ideas'. The only concession was to defer a final rejection of the Viceroy's scheme until he had been given the chance to come home, and defend it.⁶⁸

Amery used his own opinions, rather than those of the India Committee in an attempt to placate Wavell. Nevertheless, his suggestion that a larger body of non-political figures and academics should sit on the constitutional conference, was unlikely to find favour with the Viceroy.⁶⁹ By the time that Wavell had sent a powerfully worded reply to Amery expressing his contempt for constitutional research conducted by academics, the War Cabinet had ratified the recent conclusions of the India Committee. Although Wavell was to be permitted to

⁶⁸ India Committee conclusions, 6 December 1944, L/PO/6/108b ff 320 – 324. Also, Amery diary, 6 December 1944, AMEL 7/38.

⁶⁹ Amery to Wavell, 7 December 1944, L/PO/10/21.

defend his ideas in person, he was also requested to take no new initiatives, until permitted to do so by the War Cabinet.⁷⁰

Amery, who had the distasteful task of sending, under his own signature, a telegram, composed by Attlee explaining the decision of the War Cabinet, soon received a reply from Wavell. The Viceroy, while denying any bad faith by His Majesty's Government towards India, nevertheless repeated the views of educated Indians, suspicious of British intentions. As examples of pledges that Indians wanted Britain to honour Wavell quoted the last sentence of the August offer, and the preamble to Cripps' 1942 proposals.⁷¹

Wavell also found considerable practicable obstacles in getting his ideas over to colleagues in London. Firstly, Amery supported his request to see the minutes of the India Committee, albeit with any sensitive paragraphs removed.⁷² Attlee's curt refusal patronisingly attributed Wavell's request to his lack of political experience, but fortunately Monteath was able to see this correspondence, and find a solution. Realising that it would be politically unwise to deny Wavell completely, he suggested that the Viceroy's status as a Privy Councillor should at least enable him to be shown a point by point summary of the proceedings.⁷³

Secondly, it was no surprise that Churchill proved to be difficult over Wavell's request to explain his proposals in London. Although Churchill expected to be

⁷⁰ War Cabinet conclusions, 18 December 1944, CAB 44/41. Also, Wavell to Amery, 20 December 1944, L/PO/10/21.

⁷¹ Amery to Wavell, 22 December 1944, L/P & J/8/520: f 51, Also, Wavell to Amery, 24 December 1944, L/P & J/8/520: f 35..

⁷² Amery to Attlee, 28 December 1944, L/PO/6/108b: f 288.

⁷³ Attlee to Amery, 28 December 1944, L/PO/6/108b: f 284. Also, Monteath, minute 29 December 1944, L/PO/6/108b: f 283.

away at various times attending war conferences, the real motive for his unwillingness to meet Wavell in London was to defer any constitutional discussion for as long as possible. Indeed, on 1 January 1945 he stated that he did not want the Viceroy to come at all, 'for fear of a scene and a possibly dramatic resignation'.⁷⁴ Despite further regular requests from Wavell, Amery did little until he sought Attlee's support on 12 March, but then only received a curt refusal for the matter to be sent to either the War Cabinet or the India Committee.⁷⁵

Amery's apparently willing acquiescence with Attlee's wish to defer Wavell's visit until June 1945 annoyed the latter to the extent that he immediately despatched his angriest telegram.⁷⁶ Only then was Amery able to put the matter to the India Committee whose members decided, on balance, that Churchill should be asked to approve a visit by the Viceroy in March 1945.⁷⁷ Amery's diary recorded that, on meeting Churchill he chose not to show him the Viceroy's testy letters, and that, despite the Prime Minister's usual tirade against Wavell's capacities as a soldier, he agreed that he could return home within a fortnight.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Churchill, minute 1 January 1945, L/PO/6/108b: f 282.

⁷⁵ Amery to Attlee, 12 March 1945, L/PO/16/108b: ff 35 – 36. Also, Attlee to Amery, 13 March 1945, L/PO/8/108b: f 34.

⁷⁶ Wavell to Amery, 15 March 1945, L/PO/6/108b: f 24.

⁷⁷ India Committee conclusions, 16 March 1945, L/PO/6/108b: ff 5 – 11.

⁷⁸ Amery diary, 16 March 1945, AMEL 7/38.

Attlee's Call for Alternative Reform Initiatives

Attlee's India Committee paper of 28 December 1944 requested further reform ideas from its members, quoting the recommendations of the Simon Commission and Coupland's ideas in *The Future of India* as examples of potentially viable schemes.⁷⁹ Amery did not in fact reply specifically to Attlee as he had already drafted a substantial memorandum based on his response to Wavell's scheme. Despite the length of his paper, Amery said very little that was new, adding a history of failed reform initiatives to his insistence on severing the chain of responsibility from Delhi to Westminster, and suggesting the establishment of a large representative body to devise a new constitution.⁸⁰ In compiling this memorandum, he had certainly not enjoyed the unqualified support of his officials, especially Montearth who minuted his detailed misgivings about the key proposal to end the subordination of the Executive Council to the Secretary of State and the British Parliament.⁸¹

Four members of the India Committee, Simon, Anderson, Cripps and Butler, gave replies of differing length to Attlee, who wanted Amery's technical experts to examine and report on the various suggestions. Simon offered little of a constructive nature, choosing to underline the communal perils if the Viceroy became a figurehead and an Indian Prime Minister conducted foreign policy in both peace and war. Anderson offered even less, merely a study group to

⁷⁹ India Committee minutes, 28 December 1944, L/PO/8/108b: f 285. Also Coupland, *The Future of India*, pp. 110 – 136. The two alternative schemes put forward were based on river basins, or a division of the country into seven regions.

⁸⁰ Amery, India Committee memorandum, 5 January 1945, L/PO/6/108b: ff 256 – 259.

⁸¹ Montearth, minute 3 January 1945, L/P & J/8/520: ff 5 – 6.

consider possible variants of Coupland's plan. Cripps was more innovative. Two widely differing proposals envisaged indirect elections based on the village community and a second chamber elected on a racial or religious basis, much in the manner of the Soviet of nationalities in the U.S.S.R.; a system familiar to Cripps following his mission to Moscow.

The most wordy contribution came from Butler, who after a cautious preamble wanted an interim government with dominion status, and a looser arrangement with HMG that nevertheless still protected long term British interests. One of his key ideas was the incorporation of the Princes into his scheme, a development that he regretted would necessitate some repartitioning of the territories held by British India and the Indian States.⁸²

Cripps had not only responded to Attlee's appeal for alternative approaches to reform, but had also sent Amery a personal letter asking for clarification on certain points in his India Committee paper of 5 January 1945. As befitted a lawyer, Cripps pointed out the contradictions that attended any scheme to declare India a dominion under the Statute of Westminster, but still retain the existing constitution. Not only did he assert that, in these circumstances it would be impossible to 'remove the hand of Whitehall', but also his letter was written in a tone that suggested Amery was intending to mislead.⁸³ Amery admitted that Cripps had been very direct, but argued that as his plan was for an interim

⁸² Attlee, India Committee memorandum and Appendix, 9 January 1945, L/PO/6/108b: ff 261 – 262.

⁸³ Cripps to Amery, 10 January 1945, AMEL 2/1/39. Also, Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, Volume 5. Cripps' letter was described as untraceable in the India Office records.

government, it could not be wholly logical. The remainder of his long attempt to assuage Cripps' anxieties was disingenuous, and really only argued that the Viceroy would only exercise his reserved powers towards India, and not towards any established British interests.⁸⁴

The End of Amery's Scheme for Reform

During these early discussions on various reform proposals, Amery had still believed that his ideas were the best way to progress, at least in the short term, although he did not have the unqualified support of his Private Secretary, Turnbull, who strongly advised him not to send a copy of his India Committee paper of 5 January 1945 to Wavell. The reason, ostensibly unconnected with the details of Amery's plan, was to avoid giving the Viceroy the impression that he was working against his proposals.⁸⁵ Despite Turnbull's counsel, Amery wanted Wavell to 'see the workings of his mind', and enclosed a copy of his paper with his letter of the same date, insisting that it should not to be shown to anyone else, except possibly Jenkins.⁸⁶

Wavell reacted in a firm but polite manner on 20 January, disagreeing completely with Amery's recommendation. Unless he was to be permitted to consult his Home Member, Political Adviser, or the Reforms Commissioner, he would not comment any further.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Amery to Cripps, 11 January 1945, L/PO/6/108b: ff 253 – 255.

⁸⁵ Turnbull, minute 11 January 1945, L/PO/6/108b: ff 264 – 265.

⁸⁶ Amery diary, 11 January 1945, AMEL 7/39. Also, Amery to Wavell, 11 January 1945, L/PO/6/108b: ff 249 – 250.

⁸⁷ Wavell to Amery, 21 January 1945, L/PO/6/108b: f 179.

With typical tenacity Amery persevered with his plan for reform, replying to Wavell with the assertion that their favoured schemes were not incompatible. Basing his reasoning on a tortured review of the meaning of political responsibility, he once again repeated his conclusion that a central government for India should be independent of any legislature.⁸⁸

Amery's final major attempt to persuade his colleagues cunningly linked his own proposals with those already put forward by Butler, possibly because the latter had a respected record on Indian matters.⁸⁹ His India Committee paper of 17 February 1945 was another masterpiece of obscure reasoning, especially in relation to the real and moral authority of the Viceroy under his scheme. At no point in this long memorandum did he produce a credible rebuttal of the charge made by his officials that, even with the most meticulous drafting, a declaration of dominion status would leave the Viceroy answerable to no one.⁹⁰ Indeed the highly detailed and technical objections to Amery's plan expressed by his experts at the India Office were so convincing that, at Attlee's request, he had no choice but to enclose them as part of another official paper. Each point in Amery's scheme was criticised, not only on legal grounds, but also for its likely failure to achieve the desired effect on the Indian psyche.⁹¹

Although Amery had sent a copy of his proposals to Bevin, probably in the

⁸⁸ Amery to Wavell, 24 January 1945, L/PO/10/22.

⁸⁹ Butler, as a junior minister at the India Office had been involved with the drafting of the 1935 Government of India Act.

⁹⁰ Amery, India Committee memorandum, 17 February 1945, R/30/1/5: ff 79 – 85.

⁹¹ Amery, India Committee memorandum, 20 February 1945, enclosing a note by his officials, L/PO/6/108b: ff 86 – 88.

hope of securing support at a future War Cabinet, they did not progress beyond the India Committee meeting of 28 February 1945.⁹² Opposition was led by Attlee, who did not believe that Amery's proposals represented 'practical politics'. Once he had secured the support of Anderson and, more surprisingly, Cripps, he concluded that these ideas did not have the approval of the India Committee. A chastened Secretary of State could only accept this decision, albeit with the hope that he could continue to develop his ideas incrementally.⁹³ His diary showed a far less sanguine reaction towards colleagues, whom he believed disliked new ideas, most of all those in relation to Indian independence. Even with the passage of six years a manuscript note appended to this entry showed no diminution in his bitterness at this rejection. This addendum claimed that his scheme would have secured Indian independence without partition had it not been for the intransigence of his officials and fellow ministers.⁹⁴

Desai's Initiative

By the time that Amery had lost his battle with his India Office colleagues, the most promising initiative so far had been launched in India. Matters began with a meeting on 13 January 1945 between Wavell's Private Secretary, Jenkins, and Bhulabhai Desai, Leader of the Congress Party in the Legislative Assembly and a member of the Congress Working Committee. Desai, who had requested the meeting, put forward a plan that apparently had the support of Gandhi and

⁹² Amery to Bevin, 21 February 1945, L/PO/6/108b:f 85.

⁹³ India Committee conclusions, 28 February 1945, L/PO/6/108b: ff 58, 60 – 67.

⁹⁴ Amery diary, 28 February 1945 and manuscript addendum, sometime in 1951, AMEL 7/39.

Liaquat Ali Khan, Jinnah's deputy. A distinguished constitutional lawyer, Desai used the rising status of the Muslim League to convince Liaquat Ali of his *bona fides*.⁹⁵

The moderate proposals that Desai outlined to Jenkins provided for an interim government at the Centre with the posts divided between Congress, Muslim League and the minorities in the ratio of 4:4:2. Potential members would first be chosen by Jinnah and Gandhi after consultation with groups in the Indian Legislature, and the final composition selected from this short list by individual elected members. As this would be an interim government it was made clear, with Jinnah in mind, that such short term arrangements would be without prejudice to a future Pakistan. Desai was prepared to wait for his colleagues in the Congress Working Committee to be released until the formation of an interim government, although he did insist that all members of a reformed Executive Council, other than the Viceroy or the Commander-in-Chief, would be Indians.⁹⁶

Wavell's reaction to this plan was generally favourable, despite being unhappy with the proposed arrangements for selecting the members of the Executive Council. His request to be able to discuss the development of the plan with Desai was approved by Amery, who while similarly optimistic, feared that it would get a colder reception from the India Committee and the War Cabinet.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Humayun Khan, 'Muslim Politics, 1942 – 47', Philips and Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India*, p. 394.

⁹⁶ Jenkins, note of interview with Desai, 13 January 1945, Wavell Papers, Political Series, April 1944 – July 1945, Part 1, pp. 149 – 150.

⁹⁷ Wavell to Amery, 14 January 1945, L/P & J/8/521: f 131. Also, Amery diary, 15 January 1945, AMEL 7/39.

While Desai's ideas gained increasing support from British officials in India, Amery's fears about the response in London were justified. At Churchill's insistence the strategy for dealing with this development was discussed at a meeting of the India Committee, when it was decided that Jenkins should see Desai again before Wavell undertook any negotiations.⁹⁸ Once Wavell had informed Amery that he had already arranged to meet Desai, he was permitted by the India Committee to proceed, although on the assumption that he would be non-committal.⁹⁹ Wavell considered his meeting with Desai on 20 March 1945 to have been successful although he remained wary about the degree of backing that the proposals might get from Jinnah and the Muslim League.¹⁰⁰

Amery's attempts to obtain support at the India Committee for Wavell's continued endorsement of Desai's ideas were largely unsuccessful. Although ministers were sceptical about the entire scheme, Amery was unable to persuade them that Desai had provided any guarantee that India would continue to support the war effort, or that the Viceroy would have any say in the selection of members of the Viceroy's Council.¹⁰¹

His increasing loss of control over the British response to the Desai proposals became apparent when Attlee, who once again seized the initiative, drafted the two sceptical telegrams that were to be sent to Wavell after approval by the War

⁹⁸ Sir F. Mudie to Jenkins, 15 July 1945, L/P & J 8/521: f 69. Mudie had been the Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council since July 1944. Also, Churchill minute, 16 January 1945, L/PO/6/108b: f 239. Also, India Committee conclusions, 16 January 1945, L/P & J/8/521: ff 113 – 116. Also, Amery diary, 16 January 1945, AMEL 7/39.

⁹⁹ India Committee conclusions, 18 January 1945, L/P & J/8/521: ff 94 – 96. Also, Amery to Wavell, 18 January 1945, L/P & J/8/521: f 98.

¹⁰⁰ Wavell to Amery, 20 January 1945, L/P & J/8/521: f 97.

¹⁰¹ India Committee conclusions, 23 January 1945, L/P & J/8/521: ff 82 – 84.

Cabinet.¹⁰² At the meeting on 29 January, Amery found his fellow ministers even more difficult under Churchill's partisan chairmanship. In particular he was not able to resist the stiffening of the tone of the proposed telegrams following the news that Jinnah had disclaimed any association with Desai's scheme.¹⁰³

Amery's difficulties with the diehards continued when the India Committee considered further instructions to Wavell. In particular, his fears that Britain risked a loss of world prestige, especially in the USA, by an obstructionist attitude to reform in India, did not convince Grigg, Anderson, Simon, or Attlee.¹⁰⁴ Before Amery sent two further telegrams to Wavell requesting caution in any meetings that he might have with Jinnah, he despatched a letter that attempted to put a positive gloss on War Cabinet intransigence, but also contained a considerable amount of special pleading about the fight that he had already put up on behalf of Desai and the Viceroy.¹⁰⁵

Matters came to a head when Wavell, frustrated that he could not speak to Jinnah in Delhi as requested by the War Cabinet, instead asked Colville to meet him in Bombay to discover if he supported Desai's plan.¹⁰⁶ The result of Colville's interview with Jinnah on 24 February 1945 was unambiguous as the leader of

¹⁰² Attlee, War Cabinet memorandum, 24 January 1945, CAB 66/61/9.

¹⁰³ War Cabinet conclusions, 25 January 1945, CAB 65/49/9. Also, Amery diary, 25 January 1945, AMEL 7/39.

¹⁰⁴ India Committee conclusions, 30 January 1945, L/P & J/8/521: ff 55 – 59. Also, India Committee conclusions, 31 January 1945, L/P & J/8/521: ff 51 – 54.

¹⁰⁵ Amery to Wavell, 1 February 1945, L/PO/10/22. This letter was received by Wavell on 6 February 1945, after the two telegrams sent on 3 February 1945. Also, Wavell to Amery, 3 February 1945, L/P & J/8/521: f 48.

¹⁰⁶ Wavell to Colville, 22 February 1945, Wavell Papers, Political Series, April 1944 – July 1945, Part I, pp. 189 – 191. Sir John (David) Colville (1894 – 1954), later Baron Clydesmuir: Governor of Bombay 1943 to 1948. Temporary Viceroy of India March 1945 to June 1945.

the Muslim League insisted that he had not authorised any discussions between Liaquat Ali and Desai. However, Jinnah still wanted to discuss matters with Wavell, when he next visited Delhi, probably within the next fortnight.¹⁰⁷ At this point, the Viceroy, disheartened both by Colville's report and Jinnah's subsequent indisposition with pleurisy, decided that it would be preferable to return to Britain and 'learn the mind of His Majesty's Government'.¹⁰⁸

Wavell's return to Britain in March 1945 effectively put an end to the Desai proposals. However, the Viceroy and the Secretary of State had not been misled. A shrewd observer such as the Indian Reforms Commissioner, Menon, was in no doubt that there had been an understanding between Desai and Liaquat Ali over the formation of an interim national government, and that the latter only resiled from it when he found that Jinnah was not going to be helpful. Whatever the disappointment felt by Desai and Liaquat Ali, the precedent of equality between Congress and the League in the formation of a national government had been set.¹⁰⁹

Wavell in London and the Discussion of his Proposals for Simla

The Viceroy's arrival in Britain on 23 March was the start of a period of activity lasting ten weeks during which there was intense, and often heated argument over the precise nature of the proposals to be taken to the constitutional conference at Simla, later in the summer. In view of the imminent end to the war

¹⁰⁷ Wavell to Amery, 25 February 1945, L/P & J/8/521: f 32.

¹⁰⁸ Wavell to Amery, 12 March 1945, L/PO/6/108b: f 38.

¹⁰⁹ B. R. Nanda, 'Nehru, the Indian National Congress and the Partition of India, 1935 – 1947', Philips and Wainwright (eds.) *The Partition of India*, p. 174.

in Europe, Attlee asked Amery to be available for frequent meetings of the India Committee during the early days of Wavell's visit.¹¹⁰ He readily assented.¹¹¹

The first meeting in this sequence took place on 26 March, when Wavell reported that he was heard in a friendly manner as he outlined his simple plan to create an Executive Council of political appointees, and also responded to specific criticisms that his proposals had already attracted.¹¹² Nevertheless, he was questioned closely by Simon, Anderson, Grigg and Butler, who all had reservations about the potential reduction in the Viceroy's powers, especially his veto over his Executive Council. Amery said very little during this meeting that was adjourned to the following day.¹¹³

Before Wavell faced the India Committee again, Amery had issued a memorandum, largely prepared by his advisers, on the details of a possible interim constitution. He was clearly at one with his officials on the need to secure a greater number of Muslim seats on a reformed Executive Council, especially if it were to be elected by proportional representation from the Legislature. However, he differed from them over the selection of the Prime Minister, preferring him to be chosen by the Viceroy, and not by the Legislature as suggested by his staff.¹¹⁴

Wavell did not find his second appearance before the India Committee as comfortable as the first. Amery, who also found this meeting difficult, contributed

¹¹⁰ Attlee to Amery, 22 March 1945, L/PO/11/4: f 223.

¹¹¹ Amery to Attlee, 23 March 1945, L/PO/11/4: f 221.

¹¹² Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 26 March 1945, pp. 118 – 119.

¹¹³ India Committee conclusions, 26 March 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 286 – 296.

¹¹⁴ Amery, India Committee memorandum, 26 March 1945, L/PO/6/108c: f 297.

very little beyond a statement that the Executive Council was rarely overridden by Whitehall or the House of Commons.¹¹⁵ Anderson voiced serious concern regarding any possible *de facto* loss of control by the Secretary of State and the British Parliament, and also doubted whether an Executive Council as envisaged by Wavell could prevent the administrative machine from breaking down. Attlee's concerns were even more bluntly expressed as he was 'horrified at the thought of the substitution for the present government of a brown oligarchy subject to no control either from Parliament or the electorate'. Without referring to any particular communal group, he suspected that members of the Executive Committee might, in future, owe their allegiance to party caucuses.¹¹⁶

Wavell did not attend the next meeting of the India Committee on 29 March, but was occupied, spending part of the day discussing Indian matters with Churchill. Although the Viceroy stressed the importance of early progress on constitutional reform, a highly pessimistic Prime Minister left him in no doubt that, at such a busy time, it was not first amongst his priorities.¹¹⁷

In Wavell's absence, Anderson stated that he did not want to send him back to India empty handed, and therefore offered an alternative plan. This envisaged no radical changes to the constitution, but proposed fixed percentages of communal representation on the Executive Council, drawn from a wider field of candidates. Amery felt able to give reluctant support to Anderson's scheme, especially as it was intended to be without prejudice to dominion status for

¹¹⁵ Amery diary, 26 March 1945, AMEL 7/39.

¹¹⁶ India Committee conclusions, 27 March 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 268 – 275.

¹¹⁷ India Committee conclusions, 29 March 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 260.

India.¹¹⁸ There may have been some similarities between these proposals and those that Amery had been advocating for some months, but it is hard to agree with the claim in his diary that all his ideas were eventually adopted by others, after initial rejection.¹¹⁹

At this point, a further scheme emerged from the India Committee, the author being Cripps who put his ideas in the form of a draft declaration by the Viceroy. His retention of the existing constitution pending the negotiation of a permanent arrangement was not new, but his plan to set up a Grand Council was more original. From such a body, itself chosen from the Centre and the provinces, would come the members of a reformed Executive Council. Nevertheless, his radicalism ended with the proposed selection of members of the Grand Council by the Viceroy, and provincial governors.¹²⁰ Amery did not like Cripps' draft declaration and told him so in frank terms. Firstly, he saw no proper function for the Grand Council, and secondly he believed that any major statements should be made by His Majesty's Government, and not the Viceroy.¹²¹

Before the next meeting of the India Committee, Amery was shrewd enough to obtain expert legal and constitutional opinion from his own officials on the proposals put forward by Anderson and Cripps. Although not completely dismissive of these schemes, they identified a number of practical and theoretical difficulties thereby confirming the suspicions that Amery had already formed

¹¹⁸ India Committee conclusions, 29 March 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 261 – 267.

¹¹⁹ Amery diary, 29 March 1945, AMEL 7/39.

¹²⁰ Cripps, India Committee memorandum, 31 March 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 255 – 258.

¹²¹ Amery to Cripps, 2 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: f 248.

about their viability.¹²² That wariness was present throughout the meeting of the India Committee, which again convened without Wavell, but finally took the decisions, firstly to report its preference for Anderson's scheme to Churchill, and also to brief Wavell in order to enable him to attend their next session.¹²³

Wavell's return to the India Committee was a long and tetchy affair, that ended with an anti-climactic decision to adjourn the debate to a later date. His own criticism of Anderson's plan for a Grand Council of India drew admonition from Attlee who thought that the same criticisms could be applied to the Viceroy's proposals.¹²⁴ Later that day, a still indignant Wavell was asked to attend a meeting with Cripps, Amery and the legal experts from the India Office, but was displeased to be summoned merely to re-open the earlier discussion at the India Committee. Despite his colleague's irritation, Amery still felt that sufficient legal ground was covered to make agreement on reform closer.¹²⁵ On the following day at the India Office, despite more pressure from Amery to appease Attlee by adopting a more democratic method of selecting the Executive Council, Wavell stubbornly refused to budge.¹²⁶

Before the next meeting of the India Committee that again took place without Wavell, Amery was bypassed by Anderson who saw the Viceroy on his own. Still bothered by the curtailment of the Viceroy's power implicit in Wavell's scheme,

¹²² Undated, but likely to have been written on 3 April 1945, Brief for Amery, MSS. EUR. D. 714/68.

¹²³ India Committee conclusions, 3 April 1945, L/PO6/108c: ff 236 – 244.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 5 April 1945 p. 122. Also, Amery diary, 5 April 1945, AMEL 7/39.

¹²⁶ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 6 April 1945, p. 123.

Anderson tried, without success, to persuade him to agree to legislation in the British Parliament clarifying the matter.¹²⁷ When the India Committee met on 10 April, it was once again in an atmosphere hostile to Wavell's stance. Incited by a strong note from Simon, who did not want His Majesty's Government to authorise reform in India, Attlee, Butler, Grigg and Anderson expressed doubts about Wavell's proposals.¹²⁸ Furthermore, Amery's aspiration that Wavell's scheme might lead smoothly to a dominion style constitution was derided by Anderson. A final breakdown was only avoided by the political acumen of Cripps, who suggested that the Executive Committee could be chosen from a list of nominees put forward by both the Central and Provincial Legislatures.¹²⁹

When the next India Committee meeting took place on 12 April, Butler, Simon and Grigg still registered dissent, but eventually there was a reluctant agreement to Wavell's plan, as amended by Cripps.¹³⁰ Although Cripps' canny political sense had been the critical factor in making this progress, Amery showed little restraint in congratulating himself on the impetus that he had given to producing a result that turned out to be little different from his own scheme; an odd claim considering that his own proposals envisaged no change to the composition of the Viceroy's Executive Council.¹³¹

Unfortunately, Wavell did not approve Cripps' draft. Despite a series of brief

¹²⁷ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 9 April 1945, p. 123.

¹²⁸ Simon, India Committee memorandum, 7 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 209 – 210.

¹²⁹ India Committee conclusions, 10 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 199 – 208. Also, Amery diary, 10 April 1945, AMEL 7/39.

¹³⁰ India Committee conclusions, 12 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 170 – 176.

¹³¹ Amery diary, 12 April 1945, AMEL 7/39.

conversations in which Amery sought to reassure him that matters were proceeding satisfactorily, Wavell remained unhappy, not least with the Secretary of State's apparent complacency. Aided by Jenkins and Menon who both shared his unease, Wavell composed a strongly worded memorandum, condemning both the proposal for a more democratically selected Executive Council, and also a suggested legislative clarification of the reduction in the Viceroy's power of veto.¹³²

Wavell had a most unfavourable reception when his proposals were discussed by the India Committee on 18 April. In the absence of Cripps, Amery attempted manfully to support the Viceroy, but was unable to alter the tone of the meeting that had been determined at the outset by Attlee, who accused Wavell of thinking only of Indian opinion, and not the reception of his ideas in Britain. Again, nothing was decided.¹³³

This glacier like progress continued when the India Committee considered two new but contrasting papers by Amery and Wavell. Amery favoured a parliamentary statement, to be made by himself about Britain's proposals for reform, but with a degree of vagueness about the effect of the *de facto* changes on the Viceroy's powers.¹³⁴ Wavell opposed both the idea of a public statement and any attempt to explain the Viceroy's reduced authority.¹³⁵

In the absence of Attlee, Simon chaired the next meeting of the India

¹³² Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 16 April 1945, pp. 124 – 125. Note Moon's detailed commentary on this matter.

¹³³ India Committee conclusions, 18 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 124 – 139.

¹³⁴ Amery, India Committee memorandum, 20 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 112 – 117.

¹³⁵ Wavell, India Committee memorandum, 21 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 109 – 111.

Committee, and in combination with Butler and Grigg, wanted to send Wavell back to India with no agreed plan. Cripps, with his eye on world opinion and the need to show Gandhi and Jinnah as intransigent, insisted that a statement should be made in the House of Commons endorsing either Anderson's scheme, that he personally favoured, or Wavell's proposals as amended by the Secretary of State. The redrafting of the statement was entrusted to the combined efforts of Amery, Cripps and Wavell.¹³⁶ Again, the official minutes showed that Cripps played the leading part in overriding the diehards, yet Amery claimed the majority of the credit in his diary.¹³⁷

The new proposed statement incorporated few radical changes, and stressed that the Viceroy's powers regarding his Executive Council would be unchanged. Nevertheless, the matter of the release of the remaining Congress prisoners would not be included in the parliamentary declaration, but would be covered in a separate statement.¹³⁸ This convoluted process of composition drew a strong response from Amery who warned that if Churchill did not approve his actions he would resign together with Cripps and Wavell.¹³⁹

The India Committee's last meeting before the entire matter was put to the War Cabinet lacked Wavell, leaving Amery and Cripps to grapple again with the reluctance of Simon, Grigg and Butler, who seemed to want to make little progress at all. Only after Anderson had insisted on including an explanatory

¹³⁶ India Committee conclusions, 23 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 76 – 86.

¹³⁷ Amery diary, 23 April 1945, AMEL 7/39.

¹³⁸ Amery, India Committee conclusions, 25 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 56 – 58.

¹³⁹ Amery diary, 24 April 1945, AMEL 7/39.

paragraph in the Viceroy's powers was there sufficient consensus to enable the War Cabinet to consider a new paper, to be written by Simon.¹⁴⁰ Wavell was so upset by this meeting that he made his frequently quoted comment that throughout his few weeks in London he had been treated as 'an Untouchable in the presence of Brahmins'.¹⁴¹

The memorandum that Simon prepared for the War Cabinet, although stressing the problems in undertaking any reform, was surprisingly more even handed than the views he had expressed at previous meetings of the India Committee.¹⁴² Amery, helped this time by his Labour colleagues, Bevin and Morrison, made a strong case for Wavell's amended scheme. However his proposal that matters should move quickly in order to avoid India becoming a party political issue in the imminent General Election did not impress Churchill, who refused to allow any decision to be made.¹⁴³

Not even the euphoria of VE Day on 8 May 1945 prompted Churchill to show any urgency over Wavell's initiative since Amery's request to make a statement in the House of Commons before its adjournment on 17 May 1945 was met with a flat refusal.¹⁴⁴ When Amery pressed him again, the coalition had broken up, and a purely Conservative administration formed on 23 May. Fearful of the political mischief that could be made on India by the Labour Party, he pleaded

¹⁴⁰ India Committee conclusions, 25 April 1945, L/PO/6/108c: ff 29 – 34.

¹⁴¹ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 26 April 1945, p. 127.

¹⁴² Simon, India Committee memorandum, 27 April 1945, L/PO/6/108d: ff 228 – 231.

¹⁴³ War Cabinet conclusions, 30 April 1945, CAB 65/50/19.

¹⁴⁴ Amery to Churchill, 8 May 1945, L/PO/6/108c: f 10. Also, Churchill to Amery, 10 May 1945, L/PO/6/108c: f 9.

that if he could make a prompt statement in the House of Commons it would be supported by Attlee and Cripps.¹⁴⁵ Wavell also wrote to Churchill, failing to conceal his frustration at the way he had been treated during his eight weeks in London.¹⁴⁶ Churchill's reply was ungracious, stating that, at no point, had he wanted Wavell to come to London at all.¹⁴⁷

It is difficult to trace from the available primary sources how progress was finally made, but following Churchill's unpromising letter, events moved to a final Cabinet approval of Wavell's amended plan with considerable suddenness. On 30 May, matters were discussed at two meetings of the Cabinet. At the first session, Wavell's plan and mandate for discussion were approved with little debate, or even dissent from Churchill once Amery had stressed that the Viceroy was taking proposals back to India to be accepted or rejected, without negotiation.¹⁴⁸

Later in the day, Churchill telephoned Amery to say that he no longer wanted to make an early decision on Indian constitutional reform merely to avoid electoral difficulties, and in support of his view, quoted similar misgivings by three Conservative members of the India Committee.¹⁴⁹ Amery was relieved that, at the second Cabinet meeting he was able to persuade Churchill not to postpone the reform initiative until after the General Election, or at least until

¹⁴⁵ Amery to Churchill, 23 May 1945, L/PO/6/108c: f 8. Amery had noticed that Laski had been causing trouble over India at the Labour Party Conference that was being held in Blackpool at this time, in conjunction with the India League.

¹⁴⁶ Wavell to Churchill, 24 May 1945, R/30/1/5: f 35. Also, Moon, *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 24 May 1945, p. 131.

¹⁴⁷ Churchill to Wavell, 28 May 1945, L/PO/6/108c: f 4.

¹⁴⁸ Cabinet conclusions, 30 May 1945, CAB 65/54/1.

¹⁴⁹ Amery diary, 30 May 1945, AMEL 7/39. The three Conservative members were Butler, Grigg and Simon. Amery's diary recorded that he would resign if matters went against him at the second Cabinet meeting, but he chose not to mention this to Churchill.

Wavell had been allowed to speak to their colleagues.¹⁵⁰ At the decisive Cabinet meeting on the following day, after enduring a long polemical statement from Churchill, Wavell was permitted, without interruption to make a highly detailed case that assuaged the Prime Minister's anxieties.¹⁵¹

For all his efforts, Amery did not emerge with credit at the end of this meeting. Firstly, the official minutes barely concealed the judgement that the Viceroy's proposals had not been advocated with sufficient rigour or clarity.¹⁵² Secondly, Wavell noted that, even at the eleventh hour, 'Amery could not leave well alone', and made a long verbose contribution that was truncated by the Prime Minister.¹⁵³

Wavell's Return to India and the Simla Conference

When Wavell made a verbal presentation of the proposals to his Executive Council on 6 June, they received a mixed, but generally unfavourable reception. On the following day several members gave him a written indictment of the scheme and submitted a list of their own proposals, the most serious of which was the immediate grant of dominion status to India. Wavell summarily rejected this particular demand, but was more prepared to accept the others, especially the release of the remaining political prisoners in advance of any announcements about the reforms. After twenty four hours of constant meetings, Wavell managed to persuade his Council to give him the necessary support to take the

¹⁵⁰ Cabinet conclusions, 30 May 1945, CAB 65/53/2.

¹⁵¹ Cabinet conclusions, 31 May 1945, CAB 65/53/3.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Moon (ed.), *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 31 May 1945, p. 135.

proposals to a conference.¹⁵⁴

Amery finally made his statement about this latest British plan in a poorly attended House of Commons at the same time that Wavell broadcast to the Indian people. The circumstances of his final major parliamentary speech were somewhat irregular since, to the irritation of some Labour members, he chose to read verbatim, a Command Paper that he had placed, only a few hours earlier in the Vote Office. Amery, well supported by Attlee who was now on the opposition benches, followed his declaration with a statement that reaffirmed Cripps' proposals, and also stressed the need for agreement amongst Indians of all communities before there could be progress. These comments could have been expected, but his remark that 'agreement between Hindus and Muslims on any form of Indian unity may be unattainable' was his first public concession to partition.¹⁵⁵

The bipartisan atmosphere in Britain was also maintained by Cripps on 14 June when he endorsed Wavell's declaration, and also supported Amery's frequently stated views on such matters as the inappropriateness of parliamentary government to India.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, despite the generally favourable reaction to Wavell's broadcast in the Indian press, the Viceroy encountered considerable difficulties with both Gandhi and Jinnah in making the

¹⁵⁴ Wavell to Amery, 7 June 1945, L/P & J/8/522: f 214. Also, Wavell to Amery, 7 June 1945, L/P & J/8/522: f 213. Also, Wavell to Amery, 7 June 1945, L/P & J/10/18: f 183. Also, Wavell to Amery, 7 June 1945, L/P & J/8/522: f 198. Also, Moon, *Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal*, 7 June 1945, pp. 138 – 140. Note that the full text of the proposals that Amery took to the Simla Conference is reproduced at Appendix III.

¹⁵⁵ *Hansard*, 14 June 1945, vol. 411, cc1831 – 1873.

¹⁵⁶ *The Scotsman*, 14 June 1945, Report of speech by Cripps in Edinburgh.

final arrangements for the conference at Simla. He observed that both men were 'manoeuvring for position', whether in connection with their representation at Simla, or the number of seats that their parties might secure in a reformed Executive Council.¹⁵⁷

Amery had already told Wavell on 18 June 1945 that as he would be occupied during the next three weeks 'in an electioneering mudbath', and away from the India Office, the Viceroy would be largely on his own.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, until the General Election on 5 July, Amery was a virtual spectator as Wavell fought his brave, but doomed battle to negotiate a settlement. In these circumstances, a detailed account of the Simla Conference is outside the scope of this thesis.

When Amery returned to the India Office before the announcement of the election results on 26 July, the outcome of the conference had practically been decided. After some suggestions and encouragement from Amery, Wavell made an eleventh hour attempt to salvage a solution by producing his own list of Muslim members for the Executive Council.¹⁵⁹ When the Cabinet met on 10 July to approve Wavell's latest proposal, Amery spoke strongly in support of the Viceroy, notwithstanding the usual pessimistic expressions from Simon and Grigg. Despite the worry of John Amery's appearance in court in London on a charge of high treason, his father was clear headed enough to soften the Cabinet

¹⁵⁷ Wavell to Amery, 17 June 1945, L/P & J/8/522: f 115. Also, Wavell to Amery, 17 June 1945, L/P & J/8/522: f 114. Also, Wavell to Amery, 17 June 1945, L/P & J/8/522: f 113. Also, Wavell to Amery, 17 June 1945, L/P & J/8/522: f 110. Also, Wavell to Amery, 18 June 1945, L/P & J/8/522: f 109. Also, Moon, *Wavell the Viceroy's Journal*, 16, 17 and 19 June 1945, pp. 142 – 143.

¹⁵⁸ Amery to Wavell, 18 June 1945, L/PO/10/22.

¹⁵⁹ Amery to Wavell, 7 July 1945, L/P & J/8/522: ff 47 – 48. Also, Wavell to Amery, 9 July 1945, L/P & J/8/522: ff 32 – 33. Also, Wavell to Amery, 9 July 1945, L/P & J/522/8: ff 33 – 34.

instructions to Wavell, and even suggest that Jinnah should be shown the Viceroy's entire list. Above all, he did not want the Muslim League to take the entire blame for the breakdown.¹⁶⁰

The unfortunate end to the conference came quickly. At his meeting with Wavell on 11 July, Jinnah maintained his insistence that the suggested Muslim complement of five representatives in the Executive Council should all be League members. He also persisted with his demand that any proposal in the Executive Council to which Muslims objected could only proceed with a two thirds or three quarters majority; effectively creating a Muslim League veto. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 12 July recorded an appreciation of Wavell's efforts to secure an interim settlement, although Amery was sure that some members could barely conceal their relief that the Viceroy's initiative had failed.¹⁶¹

Amery praised Wavell's generosity in taking official responsibility for the failure of the Simla Conference, although his own thoughts on how to apportion blame between the Muslim League and Congress were to change.¹⁶² On 12 July his letter to Wavell stated that 'our plans have for the moment broken down in the face of Jinnah's intransigence' and seemed to suggest that, at this point, Britain had few difficulties with Congress.¹⁶³ A week later, his stance had hardened, especially after Azad had attached conditions to their continued

¹⁶⁰ Amery diary, 9 July 1945, AMEL 7/39. Also, Amery to Wavell, 10 July 1945, L/PO/10/18: ff 188 – 189.

¹⁶¹ Cabinet conclusions, 12 July 1945, CAB 65/53/14. Also, Amery diary, 12 July 1945, AMEL 7/39. Amery was unusually discreet in not mentioning any names.

¹⁶² Wavell to Amery, 13 July 1945, L/P & J/8/524: ff 36 – 37. Also, Amery to Wavell, 14 July 1945, L/PO/6/108d: f 27.

¹⁶³ Amery to Wavell, 12 July 1945, L/PO/10/22.

support in the war against Japan.¹⁶⁴

His pessimism was not confined to the state of affairs in India, since he did not believe that the Cabinet would willingly encourage any further attempts at reform. Evidence for this view was provided by Grigg, who had broken cover, and now denounced Wavell's proposals as 'handing over India to a small gang of greedy industrialists'.¹⁶⁵

While Jinnah had been blamed in Britain, and also by Congress in India for the breakdown of the talks, it is difficult to find a balanced perspective. As Gandhi had wanted Congress to be regarded as a national rather than a communal organisation, their non-Hindu members were recommended for minority places on the Executive Council. Not surprisingly, this alarmed the Muslim League who feared the consequences of a permanent Congress majority.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Jinnah deplored attempts by Congress to court Sikhs, or even Unionist Muslims such as Khizar, the Prime Minister of the Punjab.¹⁶⁷ Possibly the most decisive verdict came from the Reforms Commissioner, Menon, who suggested that, as long as Churchill was Prime Minister, the overriding goal of winning the war against Japan made it impossible to force through any plan that excluded the Muslim League.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Amery to Wavell, 19 July 1945, L/PO/10/22.

¹⁶⁵ Grigg, Cabinet memorandum, 11 July 1945, CAB 66/67/26.

¹⁶⁶ Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p. 128.

¹⁶⁷ Mohammed Iqbal Chawla, *Wavell and the Dying Days of the Raj: Britain's Penultimate Viceroy in India*, Karachi, OUP, 2012, pp. 88 – 96.

¹⁶⁸ Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 216.

Amery's Departure from the House of Commons and the India Office

When the results of the landslide Labour victory were announced on 26 July 1945, Amery had lost his seat in Birmingham by a majority of over five thousand votes. His earlier fears about adverse demographic changes in his constituency were borne out, rather than any concerns stemming from his local vilification at the hands of the Indian Communist, Palme Dutt. His immediate reaction to loss of office was gracious as he expressed some faith in his Labour successor's ability to work with Wavell. Although he did not claim to have settled the Indian constitutional problem, he took the credit, rightly or wrongly, for the selection of such key personnel as Wavell, Colville, Casey and Auchinleck.¹⁶⁹ He was less generous to his Cabinet colleagues, whom he felt did not really deserve a fresh mandate. He complained in his diary that they had never given him any real support, and also castigated Linlithgow for letting him down in 1940 over the August offer.¹⁷⁰

Amery's final letter to Wavell was world weary to the extent that he regarded his departure as for the good, especially as he believed that Churchill would have become even more difficult over India, without the restraining influence of being part of a coalition.¹⁷¹ Wavell's own valedictory note was friendly, but not effusive, and generally confined itself to a review of the possible next steps in India.¹⁷²

However, he did associate himself with the comments of a robust letter in

¹⁶⁹ Amery diary, 26 July 1945, AMEL 7/39.

¹⁷⁰ Amery diary, 27 July 1945, AMEL 7/39.

¹⁷¹ Amery to Wavell, 28 July 1945, L/PO/10/22.

¹⁷² Wavell to Amery, 8 August 1945, AMEL 2/3/32.

support of Amery that had been sent to *The Times* by Coupland, who was now back in Oxford. Coupland's letter was a rebuttal of an editorial in the *Hindustan Times* that welcomed the departure of Amery, who had been described as the man who brought the curse of Pakistan and 'Jinnahism' to the country. Coupland maintained that Amery had supported Wavell in the Indianisation of the Executive Council, and had worked tirelessly to maintain the unity of India in order to 'avoid the insuperable problems that partition would bring'.¹⁷³

Amery received a number of consolatory messages on his departure from both the House of Commons and the India Office. Letters from Casey, Templewood, and Lady Tweedsmuir might have been expected, but political opponents such as Hugh Dalton and Sir Walter Jowitt revealed that many on their benches had thought well of him as Secretary of State for India.¹⁷⁴ Even more surprisingly given their previous differences over India, he received a sympathetic letter from the editor of *The Times*, Robert Barrington-Ward, who with real sincerity or not, said it was unfortunate that he was leaving the India Office, when a constitutional settlement seemed possible.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Coupland, letter to *The Times*, 31 July 1945.

¹⁷⁴ Casey to Amery, 27 July 1945; Dalton to Amery, 11 August 1945; Templewood to Amery, 31 July 1945; Jowitt to Amery, 2 August 1945; Lady Tweedsmuir to Amery, 31 July 1945. All at AMEL 1/6/37.

¹⁷⁵ Barrington-Ward to Amery, 27 July 1945, Amery Papers, AMEL 1/6/37.

CONCLUSION

It is one of the mysteries of politics why Amery did not ordinarily command a greater authority and reach a higher, perhaps the highest position. Hard-working, well informed, a ripe scholar, imaginative and passionately sincere, he had a far better grasp of world affairs than all the Hoares and the Simons put together. He also had what many lacked; courage, physical and moral.¹

This thesis has attempted to provide at least a partial answer to the mystery that the admittedly biased Harold Macmillan quoted in the second volume of his memoirs. Clearly, in assessing the achievements of all politicians, perspective is critical. When attempting to evaluate Amery's success or failure at the India Office, this is particularly the case. As Philip Williamson has bluntly asserted, the vast size of Amery's diary and personal archives are invaluable to scholars, but their sheer volume should not be taken as an indication of his ability as a politician capable of holding a front rank ministerial post.² Furthermore, his diaries, not only from 1940 to 1945, but also for his entire period in public life, were the work of someone who believed that he had achieved more than was the case, and who lamented that he should have held one of the main offices of state.

The context of Amery's period as Secretary of State for India should be kept in mind at all times. He was not able to enjoy a peacetime stewardship during which the issues of Indian economic development and constitutional reform could be addressed in stable conditions. Instead, both in Britain and in India, the effects of war influenced most decision making. In the first few months in office the demands

¹ Harold Macmillan, *Blast of War*, London, Macmillan, 1967, p. 69.

² Philip Williamson, review of Louis, *'In the Name of God, Go!*, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 439 (November 1995), p. 1329.

of the Battle of Britain gave Beaverbrook the pretext to kill, at birth, Amery's plans to establish an Indian aircraft industry. Soon after, the Cripps mission failed and the 'Quit India' movement was born. Finally, in the months before and after the Second Front, Britain, if perhaps not Churchill became increasingly interested in post-war reconstruction at home, and as shown by poor attendances at debates on India in the House of Commons, there was less interest in the subcontinent.

Later in this conclusion there will be the inevitable audit of his achievements and failures, but firstly it is only fair that there should be a brief examination of his life before the India Office, and how it left him prepared for such a task. From his days at Harrow, Balliol and All Souls, through his periods of inspiration from Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Milner, he had developed an almost theological belief in the British Empire. In addition to his view that it represented moral goodness, he believed that an imperial *zollverein* would provide a buffer from American and European competition, Nevertheless, his first practical attempts to promote such economic federation in East Africa while Colonial Secretary in the 1920s were unsuccessful, and managed only to engender lasting hostility amongst Indians, wherever they were living.

While he was able to develop his policies on imperial preference in relation to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, especially during his leadership of the Dominions Office, his views on India's potential status within the British Empire were far more cautious. As early as 1922, he had maintained that any changes in India should be incremental, a principal that demonstrated his condemnation of the liberal philosophy of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Similarly he supported the careful recommendations of the Simon Commission against the more radical

message of the declaration made by his friend, Lord Irwin. Although, as a backbencher during the passage of the 1935 Government of India Act, he had opposed such diehards as Churchill and George Lloyd, he nevertheless made an early assertion that Congress would be the sole party profiting from any political system that permitted irresponsible government by a majority.³ He never wavered from this view.

Bearing in mind that Amery made little or no further comment on the constitutional situation in India until he became Secretary of State for India, it is unlikely that he would have been very aware of the difficulties arising from the implementation of the 1935 legislation, especially the initial unwillingness of Congress to take part in provincial government, the humiliation of the Muslim League in the 1937 elections, and the reluctance of the princes to join a federated centre. The conclusion must be that he entered the India Office with very little up to date knowledge.

The deep disappointment felt by Amery at his appointment is plain from his diaries and private correspondence, where he revealed his nervousness about performing his duties under such a diehard premier as Churchill. Although he loyally accepted office, this study has clearly revealed that it was not what he wanted, and it is arguable that he only showed interest in matters that really inspired him, such as maintaining imperial preference in the face of American disapproval, and attempting to have the machinery of wartime government reformed.

The nature of both the personal and official relationships between the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy were critical to the governance of India. Although

³ Amery, *The Forward View*, pp. 211 – 217.

the final responsibility for India affairs rested with the Secretary of State and, of course the British Parliament, Amery was adamant in his draft memoirs that the views of the Viceroy and the Executive Council had been decisive. Indeed this account made the extravagant claim that during his period in office, his relationship with the two Viceroys was 'more like that of a Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and a settler government before the Statute of Westminster, although with a more frequent interchange of letters and telegrams'.⁴

Even more questionable was his assertion that, during his five years in office, the constitutional views of the Viceroy and his Executive Council had never been overruled from London. Certainly, as was shown in Chapter IV of this thesis, when in 1940 and 1941, Linlithgow applied to be given sole discretion to employ the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance he had been denied by a War Cabinet in which the main objector had been Amery. As explained in Chapter VIII, Wavell had suffered a similar fate in 1944, when his draft reply to Gandhi, who wanted to resume negotiations with Britain, had been rejected by the War Cabinet, with Amery unable to prevent the substitution of a petulant letter that the Viceroy was obliged to sign.

Amery and Linlithgow were able to cooperate satisfactorily on the practicalities of India's war effort, as was demonstrated by Sir Alexander Roger's industrial mission and the Eastern Group Supply Council that was established as a successful clearing house for equipment in the region. Unfortunately their agreement on these matters did not extend to the continuing problem of initiating constitutional reform, which was not surprising as Amery had little regard for Linlithgow's capacity for original

⁴ Amery, draft memoirs, Volume IV, Chapter I, pp. 7 – 8, AMEL 8/84.

thought. In 1942, he did not want the Viceroy's term extended, and almost ten years after leaving the India Office, was still complaining about his intransigence. Such critical opinions were mutual. Linlithgow clearly resented that as the man with local knowledge, his opinions did not always seem to be respected, and certainly before the Cripps mission, complained that he was not being given enough protection by his Secretary of State. On handing over to Wavell in 1943, he made his most telling criticism, when he cited Amery's lack of influence in London.

Amery was almost certainly to blame for his difficulties with Linlithgow in the first months after taking office. Although he had already indicated that there would be no abortive initiatives that might diminish Britain's standing in the world, he impulsively attempted to build on Zetland's scheme for reform by producing a typically complicated plan that would provide for Indian self-government after the war. The loss of trust felt by Linlithgow, when he believed that he had been deceived by Amery into thinking that these ideas had been approved by the War Cabinet, would never entirely disappear. Their differences persisted through such episodes as the release of the *satyagraha* prisoners, and above all, Amery's attempt to send his All Souls *protégées*, Hodson and Coupland, to Delhi in order to energise thinking on reform.

In terms of Amery being able to influence events, his differences with Linlithgow over constitutional reform had ensured Churchill's lasting suspicion. The consequence was that the Prime Minister shared the Viceroy's prioritisation of the Indian war effort over the search for a new Indian constitution. For the remainder of Linlithgow's time in Delhi, Amery was obliged to confine himself to supporting the

Viceroy's more modest reforms such as increasing the size of the Executive Council through the inclusion of more Indians.

Amery's relationship with Wavell proved to be more intense, and on occasion, troubled; almost certainly because they spent more time together in London, discussing political initiatives. In fairness to Amery, throughout his partnership with Wavell, he made few pejorative remarks about his personal qualities, although as with Linlithgow, he did not believe that he belonged in the intellectual first rank. However, he was unusually prescient in forecasting that Wavell would turn out to be far more radical than Churchill expected, although he did not predict the extent to which this would be the case. Wavell's criticisms of Amery were harsher. On the one hand, while praising his courage in answering Churchill back, he deplored his verbosity, and repeated failure to carry his political and official colleagues with him. On the other hand, he believed that Amery's judgement was frequently suspect, typified by the plan he put forward in January 1945 to grant immediate independence to a unified India, thereby bypassing Gandhi and Jinnah. To Wavell such an idea represented both a triumph of academic theory over practicality and an ignorance of the realities of Indian politics, as they had developed during the war. Although Wavell could not blame Amery for not having the same feel for matters as someone, who was resident in India, he could castigate him for not having the political weight to press the case of his colleagues who were working there.

In London, Amery's most important dealings were with Churchill, who had his own, yet still unexplained reasons for sending him to the India Office. Much is often made of their contemporaneous schooldays at Harrow, but despite a well-

documented incident, when Churchill threw the diminutive Amery into the swimming pool, the aristocratic scion of the Marlborough family and the aspirational outsider had little in common. William Roger Louis' published version of his *Chichele* Lectures gave a substantial amount of detail about Amery's relationship with Churchill during the war, and stressed how he had been brave enough to stand up to a grumpy premier at many meetings of the War Cabinet.⁵ However, the research for this study has revealed that while Amery may have often been bold enough to take part in shouting matches with Churchill, this rarely altered the outcome of the meeting. Similarly, from 1940 to 1945, his diary recorded that he considered resignation on several such tense occasions, but of course, never actually did so.

Although Amery managed to get his way on a few important matters such as Gandhi's release in 1943 and the final British refusal to amend the financial arrangements by which the sterling balances had accumulated, there were far more instances when he had to give best. For example, as early as August 1940, the first of a number of occasions when Churchill was so aggrieved at the course events were taking, that he drafted the correspondence himself. Later in the summer of 1943, Amery had been active in seeking a successor to Linlithgow, intriguing enthusiastically to secure Eden, only for Churchill to exclude him from the decision making process, and make his unilateral, and surprise selection of Wavell.

Even when matters did not go as far as this, policy discussions and decision making about India invariably took place in the shadow of Churchill's potential displeasure. This was especially the case in 1945 and 1945 at the India Committee that had largely replaced the War Cabinet as the body for the detailed consideration

⁵ Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!*, pp. 123 – 179.

of policy, and was chaired by Attlee, in the absence of Churchill, who was often abroad at conferences. Despite Amery's best efforts to produce definitive conclusions at these meetings, Attlee's chairmanship often left matters of controversy undecided until Churchill had been able to see the papers.

The real decline in Amery's influence over events started with the preparation for Cripps' mission, and its control from London, when the latter was in India. Although we have seen that this was not the first time that he had been excluded from the composition of a key document, he was also unable to follow the detailed course of the negotiations in India. Consequently, he could not protect Linlithgow from Cripps' takeover of the bargaining, or more unfortunately from the Viceroy's point of view, the snubbing of the Executive Council. Throughout this period, Amery cut a lonely political figure, with very few allies in the War Cabinet. As had often been the case during his time in public life, he chose confidants who were not Westminster insiders. During the first two years of the Great War it had been Lord Milner and General Sir Henry Wilson. This time his correspondents were his former adversary, Jan Smuts, and Samuel Hoare, by now exiled in Madrid.

As the end of the war drew nearer, his sway at the India Committee and the War Cabinet diminished still further at the hands of coalition colleagues, from all political parties. Although in 1944, he was eventually able to obtain sufficient shipping capacity to alleviate the food shortages, he had first to endure a number of acrimonious meetings at which the dour Minister of War Transport, Leather, and the spiteful Cherwell, who undoubtedly had Churchill's prejudices in mind, raised any number of practical difficulties.

However, Amery met his greatest resistance in the drawn out process of drafting the new declaration on constitutional reform that Wavell would eventually take to the Simla Conference. Both in the doomed presentation of his own scheme, and the repeated India Committee redrafting of Wavell's plan to create a politicised Executive Council, he managed to attract the ire of his own colleagues and the Viceroy. It was not surprising that such a confirmed diehard as Percy Grigg refused to countenance any reform, but there was also resistance from Simon, who had not really wanted to deviate from his own proposals, Anderson, who was sceptical, if not so obstructive, and Butler, who for all his subsequent attachment to consensus, felt bound by the 1935 legislation. Furthermore, during this process in the spring of 1945, Amery enjoyed little support from his officials at the India Office. And it was only really with Cripps' assistance that Churchill was persuaded to allow Wavell to take his proposals back to India.

As well as having an unenviable reputation for verbosity and a lack of political pragmatism, Amery also made errors of judgement that confirmed the opinions held about him in London and Delhi. In April 1941, he rejected reform proposals put forward by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, not in itself a provocative step. However, the manner in which his statement in the House of Commons dismissed Sapru's scheme for an all-Indian Executive Council was, at best clumsy, and at worst insensitive, drawing opprobrium from moderate opinion in London, and less surprisingly from Gandhi. Similarly, when pressed to reveal his true opinions on the Atlantic Charter, his dogged and ill-advised public support for Churchill's denial of its relevance to India attracted powerful expressions of anger.

Amery had long been annoyed by American opposition to not only imperial preference, but also to the very existence of the British Empire. As the war progressed, he feared and resented the potential consequences of the American conditions for Lend-Lease and the perils of the most favoured trading nation clause. He also shared Linlithgow's considerable irritation with two Americans, Louis Johnson and William Philips, who both travelled to India, promising not to become involved in constitutional matters, but who actually intervened in no small measure, and reported back to Washington in terms unfavourable to Britain. However, whatever his reservations, Amery had to bear in mind that, in the context of winning the global war, Britain could not afford to offend American public opinion with perceived colonial attitudes. For example, his successful opposition to Churchill over the release of the ailing Gandhi in 1943 was motivated as much by likely American disapproval if the Mahatma were to die in captivity, rather than any concern with a reaction from Congress.

These various constraints on Amery's freedom to perform his duties as he would have wished were real enough, but his greatest difficulties occurred because he was not the man on the spot. Both his Viceroys, anxious to retain their status in India, discouraged Amery from visiting the subcontinent. It is probable that they were well rid of the danger of poorly informed pep talks by a Secretary of State, who had a poor reputation in India, but the consequence was that they were able to act as a filter on items of information, especially reports from provincial governors that were later sent on to London. Amery did not receive candid reports, free from the blandness of typical ICS prose, until Casey became Governor of Bengal in 1944, and

began a series of correspondence that went directly to the India Office, and not via Delhi. Amery was only too aware of the value of such frankness, because as an intelligence officer, a quarter of a century earlier, he had despatched political and military letters and telegrams from the Balkans, often grasping the issues better than the ambassadors or diplomats in post.⁶

It is sad to relate that Amery's poor reputation in India did not improve after he had left office. In early 1947, he had hoped to visit India with his wife, not with the intention of interfering in politics, but by way of a holiday to get over the death of his son, who had been executed little more than a year earlier. The Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, who was uneasy about even a private visit, consulted Wavell, who in turn sought Nehru's opinion. The latter's reply was polite, but unequivocal, and stated that while there were no legal grounds for barring Amery from India, his reputation was such that a strong reaction in the press would be inevitable.⁷ Amery reluctantly accepted Pethick-Lawrence's request not to go to India, but wrote to Bevin, now Foreign Secretary, sarcastically suggesting that he had been blackballed as a 'notorious opponent of Indian aspirations'.⁸

If the sole criteria judging Amery's period in office is visible progress on constitutional reform, then he must be deemed to have been unsuccessful. He was not helped by factors such as a diehard premier, the trauma regarding Jack, unsupportive colleagues in the War Cabinet, a lack of imagination in his senior officials at the India Office, interference from the USA, and diminishing interest in

⁶ Whittington. MA dissertation, UWE, 2010.

⁷ Nehru to Wavell, undated, probably 22 January 1947, AMEL 1/6/27.

⁸ Pethick-Lawrence to Amery, 22 January 1945 and Amery to Bevin 23 January 1945, both AMEL 1/6/27.

India in Britain. Above all, he had to promote change from a great distance, without detailed information about the views of ordinary Indians, and within the practical constraints of the working relationship between a Viceroy and his Secretary of State.

That said, he contributed in no small measure to his own difficulties. A career in public life characterised by creativity and innovation, juxtaposed with a tendency to intrigue, and an obsession with imperial finance had left his senior colleagues suspicious of his political judgement. Despite the need to trim in order to avoid Churchill's displeasure, he did not deviate from two principles; India's unfitness for government based on parliamentary democracy, and the need to obtain a large degree of consensus between Hindus and Muslims before any reforms could be implemented. Almost a year after leaving office, he was still repeating these opinions.⁹

His slowness in appreciating the changing political situation in India was best illustrated by his attitude to the partition of the country. His preference for federal systems, and dislike of 'Balkanisation' ensured that he only recognised the possibility of a separate Pakistan at a late stage in the war. Although he had often expressed his disapproval of Jinnah in the same language that he used for Gandhi, there is no doubt that he underestimated the Muslim leader and did not detect the rise in his political influence. Sadly, he also proved to be delusional about his own efforts in promoting constitutional change, as was shown by his valedictory diary entry that contained a claim to have 'set Indians on the right lines towards making their own constitution'.¹⁰ Even after independence had been granted, his views had not

⁹ Speech by Amery at the Sorbonne, 8 April 1946, AMEL 1/6/27.

¹⁰ Amery, diary 27 July 1945, AMEL.

changed as was shown by an address to the East India Association in 1953.¹¹

Furthermore, his claim to have been largely responsible for the appointments of Wavell, Auchinleck and Casey was, to say the least, exaggerated. He certainly had a hand in choosing Casey, but the other selections bore the stamp of Churchill.

Even if Amery fell short on the matter of constitutional reform, his contribution to India's war effort is less open to challenge. By 1945, more than 2 million Indians had been mobilised, and the country's industries placed on a war footing. Most of the detailed policies to achieve these successes originated with Linlithgow and Wavell, but Amery's efforts by way of support were considerable. In the end he had proved to be a better technocrat than constitutional reformer.

¹¹ Amery, speech to the East India Association, 16 July 1953, AMEL 1/6/25.

APPENDIX I

The Viceroy's Statement: August Offer 1940

Note In reproducing the documents in Appendices I – III, the original punctuation and use of capital letters has been retained.

1. India's anxiety at this moment of critical importance in the world struggle against tyranny and aggression, to contribute in full to the common cause and to the triumph of our common ideals is manifest. She has already made a mighty contribution. She is anxious to make a greater contribution still. His Majesty's Government are deeply concerned that the unity of national purpose in India which would enable her to do so should be achieved at as early a moment as possible. They feel that some further statement of their intentions may help to promote that unity. In that hope they have authorised me to make the present statement.

2. Last October, His Majesty's Government again made it clear that Dominion Status was their objective for India. They added that they were ready to authorise the expansion of the Governor-General's Council to include a certain number of representatives of the political parties, and they proposed the establishment of a consultative committee. In order to facilitate harmonious co-operation, it was obvious that some measure of agreement in the Provinces between the major parties was a desirable pre-requisite to their joint collaboration at the Centre. Such agreement was unfortunately not reached and in the circumstances no progress was then possible.

3. During the earlier part of this year I continued my efforts to bring political parties together. In these last few years I gladly entered into conversation with prominent political personages in British India and the Chancellor of the Chamber of the Princes, the results of which have been reported to his Majesty's Government. His Majesty's Government have also seen the resolutions passed by the Congress working Committee, The Moslem League and Hindu Mahasabha.

4. It is clear that earlier differences which have prevented the achievement of National Unity remain unbridged. Deeply as His Majesty's Government regret this, they do not feel that they should any longer, because of those differences postpone the expansion of the Governor-General's Council and establishment of a body which will more closely associate Indian public opinion with the conduct of the war by the Central Government. They have authorised me accordingly to invite a number of representative Indians to join my Executive Council. They have authorised me further to establish a War Advisory Council which would meet at regular intervals and which would contain representatives of Indian States and of other interests in the national life of India as a whole.

5. The conversations which have taken place and resolutions of bodies which I have just mentioned made it clear however that there is still in certain quarters doubt as to the intentions of His Majesty's Government for the Constitutional future of India and there is doubt, too as to whether the position of minorities whether political or religious, is sufficiently to any future Constitutional change by assurances already given. There are two points that have emerged. On these two points His Majesty's Government now desire me to make their position clear.

6. The first is as the position of minorities in relation to any future Constitutional scheme. It has already been made clear that my declaration of last October does not exclude examination of any part of either of the Act of 1935 or of the policy and plans on which it is based. His Majesty's Government's concern that full weight should be given to views of minorities in any revision has also been brought out. That remains the position of His Majesty's Government. It goes without saying that that they could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to coercion of such elements into submission into such a Government.

7. The second point of general interest is machinery for building within the British Commonwealth of Nations the new constitutional scheme when the time comes. There has been very strong insistence that the framing of that scheme subject to certain matters for which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility, obligations arising out of their long connection with India, should be primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves and should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic and political structure of Indian life. It is clear that a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence is not one in which fundamental constitutional issues can be decisively resolved. But His Majesty's Government authorize me to declare that they will most readily assent to the setting up after the conclusion of the war of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new constitution and they will lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters to the utmost degree. Meanwhile they will welcome and promote in any way possible every sincere and practical step that may be taken by representative Indians themselves to reach a basis of friendly agreement, first upon the form in which the post-war representative body should take, and secondly upon the principles and outlines of the constitution itself. They trust, however that for the period of the war (with the Central Government reconstituted and strengthened in the manner I have described and with the help of the War Advisory Council) all Parties, communities and interests will combine and co-operate in making a notable Indian contribution to the victory of the world cause which is at stake. Moreover, they hope that in this process new bonds of union and understanding will emerge

and thus pave the way towards the attainment by India of that free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which remains the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament.

APPENDIX II

Draft Declaration for Discussion with Indian Leaders, March 1942: Cripps Mission

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

His Majesty's Government therefore make the following declaration:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislature shall, as a single electoral college proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one tenth of the number of the electoral college.

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

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

APPENDIX III

Declaration Taken by Viscount Wavell to the Simla Conference: June/July 1945

1. Since the offer by His Majesty's Government to India in March 1942 there has been no further progress towards the solution of the Indian constitutional problem.
2. As was then stated, the working out of India's new constitutional system is a task which can only be carried through by the Indian peoples themselves.
3. While His Majesty's Government are at all times most anxious to do their utmost to assist the Indians in the working out of a new constitutional settlement, it would be a contradiction in terms to speak of the imposition by this country of self-governing institutions upon an unwilling India. Such a thing is not possible, nor could we accept the responsibility for enforcing such institutions at the very time when we were, by itself, withdrawing from all control of British Indian affairs.
4. The main constitutional position remains therefore as it was. The offer of March 1942 stands in its entirety without change or qualification. His Majesty's Government still hope that the political leaders in India may be able to come to an agreement as to the procedure whereby India's permanent future form of government can be determined.
5. His Majesty's Government are, however, most anxious to make any contribution that is practicable to the breaking of the political deadlock in India. While the deadlock lasts not only political but social and economic progress is being hampered.
6. The Indian administration, over-burdened with the great tasks laid on it by the war against Japan and by the planning for the post-war period, is further strained by the political tension that exists.
7. All that is so urgently required to be done for agricultural and industrial development and for the peasants and workers of India cannot be carried through unless the whole-hearted cooperation of every community and section of the Indian people is forthcoming.
8. His Majesty's Government have therefore considered whether there is something which they could suggest in this interim period, under the existing constitution, pending the formulation by Indians of their future constitutional arrangements, which would enable the main the communities and parties to co-operate more closely together and with the British to the benefit of the people of India as a whole.
9. It is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to introduce any change contrary to the wishes of the major Indian communities. But they are willing to make possible some step forward during the interim period if the leaders of the principal

Indian parties are prepared to agree to their suggestions, and to co-operate in the successful conclusion of the war against Japan as well as in the reconstruction in India which must follow the final victory.

10. To this end they would be prepared to see an important change in the composition of the Viceroy's Executive. This is possible without making any change in the existing statute law except for one amendment to the Ninth Schedule to the Act of 1935. That Schedule contains a provision that not less than three members of the Executive must have at least 10 years' service under the Crown in India. If the proposals of His Majesty's Government meet with acceptance in India, that clause would have to be amended to dispense with that requirement.

11. It is proposed that the Executive Council should be reconstituted and that the Viceroy should in future make his selection for nomination to the Crown for appointment to his Executive from amongst leaders of Indian political life at the Centre and in the Provinces, in proportions which would give a balanced representation of the main communities, including equal proportions of Moslems and Caste Hindus.

12. In order to pursue this object, the Viceroy will call into conference a number of leading Indian politicians who are the heads of the most important parties or who have had recent experience as Prime Ministers of Provinces, together with a few others of special experience and authority. The Viceroy intends to put before this conference the proposal that the Executive Council should be reconstituted as above stated and to invite from members of the conference a list of names. Out of these he would hope to be able to choose the future members whom he would recommend for appointment by His Majesty to the Viceroy's Council. Although the responsibility for the recommendations must of course continue to rest with him, and his freedom of choice therefore remains unrestricted.

13. The members of his Council who are chosen as a result of this arrangement would of course accept the position on the basis that they would wholeheartedly co-operate in supporting and carrying through the war against Japan to its victorious conclusion.

14. The members of the Executive would be Indians with the exception of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, who would retain his position as War Member. This is essential as long as the defence of India remain a British responsibility.

15. Nothing contained in any of these proposals will effect the relations of the Crown with the Indian States through the Viceroy as Crown Representative.

16. The Viceroy had been authorised by His Majesty's Government to place this proposal before the Indian leaders. His Majesty's Government trust that the leaders

of the Indian communities will respond. For the success of such a plan must depend upon its acceptance in India and the degree to which responsible Indian politicians are prepared to co-operate with the object of making it a workable interim arrangement. In the absence of such general acceptance existing arrangements must necessarily continue.

17. If such co-operation can be achieved at the Centre it will no doubt be reflected in the Provinces and so enable responsible Governments to be set up once again in those Provinces where owing to the withdrawal of the majority party from participation, it became necessary to put into force the powers of the Governors under Section 93 of the Act of 1935. It is to be hoped that in all the Provinces these Governments would be based on the participation of the main parties, thus smoothing out communal differences and allowing Ministers to concentrate upon their very heavy administrative tasks.

18. There is one further change which, if these proposals are accepted, His Majesty's Government suggest should follow.

19. That is, that External Affairs (other than those tribal and frontier matters which fall to be dealt with as part of the defence of India) should be placed in the charge of an Indian Member of the Viceroy's Executive so far as British India is concerned, and that fully accredited representatives shall be appointed for the representation of India abroad.

20. By their acceptance of and co-operation in this scheme the Indian leaders will not only be able to make their immediate contribution to the direction of Indian affairs, but it is also to be hoped that their experience of co-operation in government will expedite agreement between them as to the method of working out the new constitutional arrangements.

21. His Majesty's Government consider, after the most careful study of the question, that the plan now suggested gives the utmost progress practicable within the present constitution. None of the changes suggested will in any way prejudice or prejudge the essential form of the future permanent constitution or constitutions in India.

22. His Majesty's Government feel certain that given goodwill and a genuine desire to co-operate on all sides, both British and Indian, these proposals can mark a genuine step forward in the collaboration of the British and Indian peoples towards Indian self-government and can assert the rightful position, and strengthen the influence, of India in the counsels of the nations.

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