

FABIAN SOCIETY

DEMOCRACY FOR INDIA

by
H. N. BRAILSFORD

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NOTE

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By
H. N. BRAILSFORD

LONDON
THE FABIAN SOCIETY
11 Dartmouth Street SW1

NOTE *This pamphlet, like all publications of the Fabian Society, represents not the collective view of the Society but only the view of the member who prepared it. The responsibility of the Fabian Society is limited to approving the publications which it issues as embodying facts and opinions worthy of consideration within the Labour Movement. It is the aim of the Society to encourage among socialists a high standard of free and independent research.*

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DEMOCRACY FOR INDIA

WITHIN two months of the outbreak of this war Mr Chamberlain's Government has contrived to drive the greater part of the Indian nation into an attitude of revolt. The party that has behind it a majority of the electorate has proclaimed its dissatisfaction with the Empire's attitude to India in this war. One by one, by way of protest, the eight ministries it controls in India's eleven provinces are resigning office. This refusal to co-operate actively with us in the prosecution of the war is a dramatic indication of mistrust. Rightly or wrongly, the majority of Indians have no confidence in our professions that our purpose is to create a new world-order based on democracy. We have failed in our dealings with their country to convince them of our sincerity. Their leaders are acting, none the less, with caution and moderation. They have not resorted as yet to any of the forms of mass action that they have used on former occasions, and have begged their followers to avoid them. But Sir Samuel Hoare's threat, in his speech in the Commons, that he holds in reserve the weapon of repression, has reminded us that the future may confront us with an even uglier spectacle. It is not too late to review our policy and revise it, while friendly negotiation is still possible.

We must start by realising frankly that the clumsiness of the National Government has alienated India. This was a remarkable achievement, for the sympathies of Indians are wholly with the Western Democracies and against the spirit of Fascism. Their passion is to win democracy for themselves. They are, therefore, hostile to Nazism. They have the best reasons for loathing its racial doctrines. Finally, their own national struggle rendered them sympathetic to Poland, a recently resurrected nation. They wished to stand shoulder to shoulder with England and France in this struggle. But they have their self-respect. Unfree themselves, are they to fight at our bidding to free others?

The Lesson of Experience

They did that once before and learned their lesson. In the last war, with chivalrous generosity, they flung themselves into the battle on our side. They might have argued that England's danger was India's opportunity. That was not their spirit. They raised a volunteer force of 1,200,000 men for service in Mesopotamia, Egypt and France. They taxed themselves to make a free gift of £100,000,000 to our war-chest as well as an annual sum that ranged from twenty to thirty millions. Even Mr. Gandhi, pacifist though he was, recruited for us. For a moment we were touched,

and the first of several vague promises was given in 1917 by Mr Montagu as Secretary for India, to the effect that 'the progressive realisation of responsible government' was the object of British policy. Twenty months passed before that pledge bore fruit in a disappointing instalment of reforms that in due course was condemned as unworkable by Englishmen and Indians alike. In the meanwhile a vigorous movement for Indian Home Rule sprang up. The answer was the passage in double quick time of the Rowlatt Coercion Acts. Profiteering and the intolerable rise in the price of food had driven the peasants of the Punjab to the verge of revolt. Our aeroplanes were used for the purpose of intimidation and General Dyer at Amritsar slaughtered 379 peasants by mowing them down in an enclosed garden: some 1,200 of their wounded were left in their pain unattended. We then had the whole nation against us, Muslims as well as Hindus, and Mr Gandhi, hitherto a moderate, led the first, inexperienced movement of Civil Disobedience, and paid for his audacity with his first imprisonment. In this way we rewarded the spontaneous loyalty of a simple-minded nation. It remembers these experiences.

Half-way to Freedom

The dealings of the present Government with India, as the danger of war grew acute, showed a total lack of imagination. India since the last war has grown adult, and very much surer of herself. She had won for herself a measure of control over her own internal affairs that ought not to be minimised. Indian governments, responsible to Indian electors and to Indian parties, hold office in the provinces, which enjoy a substantial measure of autonomy. The scheme can be fairly criticised on several grounds: it is hampered by severe financial limitations and subject to vetoes from above, while the franchise is imperfectly democratic. But on the whole the provincial scheme has worked well: it has given Indians popular control over a wide range of their domestic affairs and enhanced their self-respect. But if much has been conceded, much has been withheld. Over their life as a nation, over foreign policy and defence, Indians have as yet no control whatever. Just because they come near to governing themselves democratically in the provinces, they are especially sensitive when they are reminded of their own impotence and subjection in the field of national policy.

A Pawn among Nations

Two experiences on the eve of the outbreak of war shook them profoundly. In August contingents of Indian troops were sent abroad, to Egypt, Aden and Singapore. Doubtless this was, in the military sense, a necessary measure: secrecy, moreover, was desirable, though one may doubt whether it was attained. Several of the Indian party leaders were informed about this step in con-

fidence. But there was no vote, no debate, no sanction by India's elected representatives of an act for which their British rulers were solely responsible. A white hand moved these Indian soldiers like pawns across the chess-board of world politics, in a quarrel not their own. At Westminster, meanwhile, in one hurried sitting, six hundred English gentlemen, with not a dark skin among them, passed an amending Act which, in the event of war, authorised the British rulers of India to restrict Indian liberties by the exercise of the most formidable emergency powers. Again, it may be argued that such a measure was necessary and that we have ourselves submitted to similar, though much milder restrictions. There is this difference: that with virtual unanimity our elected representatives endorsed the policy that requires these sacrifices; we ration our own liberties and we have a Sovereign Parliament to check any abuse of authority. That is not India's case. Finally, in response to a cablegram from London, a Scottish nobleman at Delhi proclaimed India a belligerent in this European struggle. Without their consent, asked or given, and without the sanction of their representatives, three hundred million Indians found themselves at war.

Congress asks Questions

All of this was perfectly familiar. It had always happened in England's previous wars. Mr Chamberlain's government acted according to precedent. That was its error: it failed to realise that India today is no longer the docile nation of limited ambitions that passed through the Boer War and entered the Great War, naively loyal. To these customary steps of routine Indians reacted as though they had been deliberate provocations. That they were not: they sprang from the usual lack of sympathy and imagination that is the curse of most of the dealings of Englishmen with Indians. The National Congress, by way of protest, withdrew its representatives from the Legislative Assembly at Delhi. This body is a powerless shadow of democracy, which does, none the less, serve as some index of the movement of opinion over British India as a whole. The Working Committee of the Congress then drew up a manifesto which the full Committee subsequently endorsed. This impressive and dignified document was adequately summarised only in one English daily paper, with the unfortunate result that this crisis has taken public opinion by surprise.

In this document Congress made it clear that Indians will not be carried automatically into this war. Their support must be won.

The issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them. . . . Any imposed decision or any attempt to use Indian resources for purposes not approved by them will necessarily have to be opposed by them. . . . Co-operation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy.

A War for Democracy?

The document made it clear that Congress wholly disapproves 'the ideology of Fascism', its 'glorification of war', its 'suppression of the human spirit', and its violation of the 'recognised standards of civilised behaviour'. It 'unhesitatingly condemned the aggression of Nazi Germany against Poland'. It then recalled the bitter disillusionment that followed the last war for freedom, and the more recent record of betrayal that ran without a break from the Manchurian affair to the end of the Spanish Civil War. With this preface Congress came to the main point:

If the war is to defend the *status quo* of imperialist possessions, of colonies and vested interests and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. . . . If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end Imperialism in her own possessions and establish full democracy in India and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination to frame their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference and must guide their own policy. A free and democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

Three Demands

The document then went on to argue for a 'new equilibrium' in the world which must be based on 'the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another and on the re-organisation of their economic relations on a juster basis for the common good of all. India is the crux of the problem, for India has been an outstanding example of modern Imperialism.' After an ironical reference to the Indian princes, who have rushed to the defence of democracy abroad, while they maintain 'undiluted autocracy' in their own States, the spokesmen of Congress summed up their demands as follows:

The Working Committee, therefore, invites the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war-aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to at present. Do they include the elimination of Imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation, whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? A clear declaration about the future, pledging the Government to the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike, will be welcomed by the people of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. The real test of any declaration is its application in the present.

The reader who studies this document* in full will be impressed by the breadth of its outlook. While Indians must think firstly and all the time about the liberation of their own country, the men who drafted this manifesto saw India in an international framework. They do not forget the rest of the dependent empire, and they see as the goal for which with us they wish to strive, the establishment of a new world-order. The document is plain-spoken, but it contains no threats. It conveys, none the less, a warning that no one familiar with recent history could fail to understand. Its demands are not stated in detail, doubtless for the reason that Congress expected them to lead, as in fact they did, to conversations with the Viceroy. The meaning is, however, clear enough. Congress asked for three things:

(1) A statement of war aims and peace aims, which should include a declaration that the new world-order shall be based on democracy, and shall include the ending of imperialism.

(2) A declaration that Great Britain will 'establish full democracy in India'. This means, in precise terms, that Indians 'must have the right of self-determination' which they will exercise by framing 'their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference'. The context makes it reasonably clear that Congress is asking here for an explicit promise, which can be completely fulfilled only at the end of the war.

(3) The new status of independent nationhood promised in this declaration must come into 'immediate effect to the largest possible extent', if its sincerity is to be trusted. This means, in plain words, that while the adoption of a new constitution may be impossible in war-time, Indians ask that they shall enjoy at once the reality of responsible self-government, *de facto* if not *de jure*.

The Viceroy's Talks

The sequel to this manifesto was that the Viceroy held several conversations with Mr. Gandhi, the spiritual father of Congress, and with Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, the head of its emergency triumvirate of leaders. Properly and rightly he asked the leaders of other parties to meet him and state their views. In all, as Lord Linlithgow tells us, he saw fifty-two persons. This was, it may be, to display an excessive receptivity. The effect if not the intention was to underline the fact that many varieties of opinion exist in this Indian Sub-Continent, more particularly if one searches for them. These 'marked differences of outlook' are stressed in Lord Linlithgow's lengthy reply. They bulked

* All the documents discussed in this pamphlet will be found in full in the White Paper: *India and the War* (Cmd. 6121, 4d.)

even more largely in Lord Zetland's speech for the Government in the House of Lords. The Archbishop of Canterbury dwelt on them to the exclusion of every other consideration. *The Times* in two leading articles played on them with a practised skill made perfect during many generations of British rule in India. Mr Gandhi's comment on the Viceroy's despatch—that he had fallen back on the old policy of dividing to rule—was bitter, but it was not unjust.

Moderate Support

Three documents are included in the White Paper by way of illustrating these differences of opinion. The first of them is in effect an endorsement of the main demand of Congress. It comes from the Working Committee of the National Liberal Federation of India. The Indian Liberals have never won the support of the masses, but they include many distinguished and able individuals. Their resolution states that 'this is not the time for bargaining, though India's grievances are grave and many'. It offers 'unconditional' support to the Democratic Powers. None the less, it asks, among other things, for the main point :

In particular, the Committee appeals to the Government to hasten the replacement of the present form of Central Government by a Government responsible to the public.

In particular, the Committee appeals to the Government to hasten the replacement of the present form of Central Government by a Government responsible to the public.

That is a bold and explicit demand for Moderates to make.

Muslim Opposition

The Government of India has thought fit to publish also a collective telegram to the Viceroy from seven individuals belonging to various minor parties. Some are distinguished by their undoubted wealth, while one of them claims to be the spokesman of 'Independent Labour'. On the main point this sorry document has nothing to say, and it does not appear that its authors have any views about world order, the future of India or the political conduct of the war. They make it clear, however, that they violently dislike both Congress and the Muslim League. It should be noted that Congress inflicted at the polls a crushing defeat on all these minor parties.

What is serious and important is the resolution of the All-India Muslim League. This is a sectarian document, which has nothing constructive to say either about India's future or about war-aims. It also expresses its hostility to Congress, which it accuses of oppressing Muslims in the provinces it governs—a charge for which there has been no corroboration from English observers, official or unofficial. More bluntly than ever before

the League expresses its opposition not merely to the scheme of federation embodied in the Act of 1935, but to federation itself :

The Working Committee appreciate the declaration of His Excellency the Viceroy, which is in the interests of India and particularly the Mussalmans, that the federal scheme embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, has been suspended. They wish that, instead of its being suspended, it had been abandoned completely, and desire to convey to H.M.'s Government that they should do so without further delay. The Committee desire to make it clear that they do not endorse the 'federal objective' of H.M.'s Government . . . and strongly urge upon the British Government to review and revise the entire problem of India's future constitution *de novo*.

The Muslims Divided

If Mr Jinnah's League spoke for the entire Muslim community, the outlook for any form of national unity would be depressing. What Muslims of its school of thought really desire is probably the separation of the North-West from Hindu India. But powerful as this League doubtless is, it is far from speaking for all Muslims. Many of them are within the Congress fold and these are chiefly the younger, better-educated men: Congress is, moreover, in some regions winning over the Muslim peasantry. It has a firm hold on the solidly Muslim North-West Frontier Province, which has a Congress ministry. The League represents chiefly the upper stratum of Muslim society, though this can usually draw the masses in its wake. Congress, on the other hand, has a mass membership even in the villages, and an elaborate democratic organisation. The broad fact is that over India as a whole Congress won at the last provincial elections a majority over all other parties, and that this enabled it in eight of the eleven provinces to form the Ministry. The Muslims have the power to which they are entitled: they control three provinces. This miserable feud has been stereotyped and perpetuated by the disastrous arrangement that emphasises the sectarian outlook by segregating Muslims and Hindus in separate electoral constituencies. The consequence is a division of opinion that bears no relation to the real cleavage of interests in a modern community. Workers and peasants cannot unite across these barriers—though it should be remembered that even under the relatively democratic provincial franchise it is only the more prosperous peasants who possess votes. Whatever the intention may have been in creating these separate communal constituencies, the effect has been reactionary. It is fatally easy in a Muslim constituency for a candidate to burke every social and economic issue, and to present himself simply as a stout defender of the faith. Once elected, he becomes a champion of property and the *status quo*. That is, one suspects, the real reason why this unreal division is perpetuated by the British rulers of India. The tendency of Conservatives is certainly to exaggerate these dissensions. It is a grave mistake to represent Congress as a Hindu party. Doubtless the majority of its members, like

the majority of the population of India, are Hindus. But it has never stood for sectarian interests, and it includes, both in its membership and in its governing committees, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis as well as Hindus. The determination to protect minorities may be a creditable trait in the British tradition, but it must not blind us to the fact that the majority also has rights. A religious minority may fairly claim the most ample guarantees for its cultural rights, and for equal treatment in such matters as the distribution of public appointments. But it is not entitled to veto the will of the majority for national unity and responsible self-government.

A Routine Answer

The Viceroy's reply opens by underlining these differences of opinion. It misses the opportunity to state our war-aims in a form that might have touched Indian sympathies. No doubt, as Lord Linlithgow reminds Congress, our allies the French would have to be consulted over such a statement. Would that have involved an undue amount of trouble? Indians are accordingly referred to Mr Chamberlain's speeches, *passim*. The request for a declaration about India's future is treated in the same spirit of routine. At this hour, embarking together on a war that may be perilous and prolonged, we have nothing new to say to this nation about its future relationship with us, its comrades in arms. Lord Linlithgow is content to recall the vague pledges of former Viceroy and Secretaries of State, to the effect that 'the natural issue of India's progress is the attainment of Dominion status'. He then reaffirms his belief in the soundness of the federal scheme in the Act of 1935, but recognises that amendment of its details may be necessary at the end of the war. He promises for that purpose that the British Government will then 'enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian Princes'. In effect India is promised yet another Round Table Conference.

Not Self-Government

Equally disappointing is the Viceroy's reply to the third demand of Congress for something in the present, which the Moderate Liberals phrased more bluntly as a request for 'responsible government' at the Centre. He offers to form 'a consultative group' drawn from spokesmen of the chief parties and the princes. The parties are to present him with panels from which he will select persons suitable for this distinction. With this 'group' he proposes from time to time to discuss the conduct of the war. As a substitute for 'responsible government' this device has not impressed Indians.

Let us consider these concessions, if they deserve that name, in relation to the demands of Congress. It asks for a declaration

that India at the end of the war shall exercise the right of self-determination through a Constituent Assembly. We need not enquire how that Assembly would be elected, composed and guided. It is obvious that if it is to do its work satisfactorily, a responsible Indian Government must first work out the draft of a constitution to lay before it. Again, this Indian Government would have to conduct at several stages the most delicate negotiations with the British Government, to determine the arrangements, notably over defence, that would obtain during the inevitable period of transition. The final Act embodying the new Constitution would, of course, have to be passed at Westminster. We may take it, then, that Congress is actually asking that an Indian Government shall play a creative part in shaping the lines of India's future Constitution and that an elected Assembly of Indians shall freely discuss it and adopt it. So stated, this is not an extreme claim, but it implies that at the outset of the process an Indian Government, however provisional it may be, must exist with the power to speak and negotiate for a majority of the Indian people. This and nothing less than this would be democratic self-determination.

The Round Table Method

The Round Table method was the antithesis of this procedure. India's so-called representatives were not elected: they were hand-picked by the bureaucracy. There was no representation of the broad masses of the people: not a single peasant sat among these princes, merchants and lawyers. Into the Conference Room were packed the spokesmen of every distinguishable separate party, creed and interest: they came in as Muslims or Sikhs and Muslims or Sikhs they remained to the end. From such a Conference no Indian idea, no decisive majority and no coherent plan could emerge. Indians talked; Whitehall drafted and Westminster legislated. The result was a Federal Constitution that every Indian party repudiated. Congress was pledged to resist it. The Muslim League rejected its basic idea. Even the princes, who began by welcoming it, killed it in the end by pronouncing its terms for their adherence 'unacceptable'. It was an imposed constitution and it is better dead. Yet this is the method which Lord Linlithgow proposes to revive after the war. Indians will not again countenance it, for the good reason that this device of consulting each rival and separate party, creed and interest, together with the princes, cannot elicit the popular will. It lends itself only too obviously to the tactics of those who would divide to rule.

On this analysis, the first step would seem to be to bring into being a responsible government, that could speak and act for British India. This is the proposal of the Indian Liberals, and it is, presumably, what Congress meant by its less definite phrases.

The suggestion is, at this stage, to ignore the Indian States. The proposal to bring in the princes, while they retained their often mediæval autocracy, was the deadliest of the quicksands on which Federation was wrecked. It should be remembered that no responsible popular government exists in any of these States, and only a few of them possess even a consultative council. In few of them is there any distinction between the State budget and the prince's privy purse. The prince, that is to say, taxes and spends as may suit his pleasure. In some of these States forced labour still survives, with feudal servitudes so oppressive that they would have shocked our ancestors in the fifteenth century. In only a few of the more enlightened States is there any vestige of a free press, or of the right of meeting and association. A large number of these States are, moreover, so small that they never could develop a modern apparatus of government. The tactic of the modern Imperialist school, when it smiled on the idea of federation, clearly was to use the princes to outvote the popular and democratic movements of British India. The States cannot send their elected representatives to the Federal Chambers; they will be 'represented' by the prince's nominees. Of most of the princes, who rely in the last resort on the British Army to coerce their own subjects, one may safely say two things: on major imperial issues they would vote as the Viceregal government expected them to vote; left to themselves, their votes would be likely to go to the Extreme right. This is the chief of several reasons which led Congress to oppose the federal section of the India Act with uncompromising hostility, while the Liberals criticised it unsparingly. In the meanwhile, in several States, in spite of rigid repression, the princes' subjects are struggling to win the first rudiments of democracy. Nothing is lost and much may be gained by postponing federation. If the princes come in as autocrats, while their subjects enjoy neither civil nor political rights, the Federal Legislature, in which they would command a third of the votes, would be the impregnable fortress of property and reaction. These States should enter an Indian Federation as equals, only when their peoples enjoy the rights that prevail in the self-governing British Provinces. In any event Federation is a project too ambitious for war-time. What can be done at once must be done without legislation or by the briefest Emergency Bill. It is perfectly possible and very much easier to treat British India, the eleven self-governing provinces, as a unit, and to endow it with a responsible Central Government. That would in no way prejudice the future of Federation. The States could adhere at a later date, one by one, or in groups, when they attain the level of political development that prevails in the British provinces. The smaller of them, which are often merely parishes in extent, ought certainly to be amalgamated.

We may now venture on an outline of a plan that would

certainly reconcile India. The first suggestion is bold and simple. The government of India has meant, from the earliest days to our own, the Governor-General in Council. In fact, his Council consists chiefly of civil servants, but it may include one or two eminent Indians. Why not make a fresh start and compose it entirely of Indians? Nothing would be gained by choosing men of the tame official type. They must be leaders who enjoy the confidence of the people—such men as Mr Jawaharlal Nehru for example, a man of outstanding ability, whose books reveal an international mind and a trained historical sense, while his character commands universal respect. It would have to be a Congress Ministry, since this party commands eight of the eleven provinces, but it is equally obvious that Congress would be wise to admit to it men of other groups on whose friendly co-operation it could count, with the more liberal Muslims well and even disproportionately represented. No legal change would be necessary, but it should be understood and plainly stated that the Viceroy would accept the advice of his Council.

A Responsible Ministry

To whom would this Ministry be responsible? British India has a Legislative Assembly, but its Indian members are chosen by an absurdly plutocratic electorate, and they are diluted by nominated official members. An emergency measure would make of it a tolerably representative Parliament. It might be dissolved and re-elected by the electorate qualified to vote for the provincial Councils. This slight change would require only a single clause in an amending Act. It would then be understood, and should be clearly stated, that the Ministers sitting on the Governor-General's Council would hold themselves responsible to the Assembly. It would also be necessary to abolish the statutory provision that three members of this Council must be Civil Servants.

Too Daring?

These are changes that could be made rapidly, in the spirit of war-time improvisation, without interminable conferences and endless debates at Westminster. They would be provisional and experimental, but they would create a responsible organ of a self-governing India that could make its long-range preparations for the future constitution.

Is this too daring a proposal? At present each of the provinces has its responsible Indian Ministry, most of them drawn from the Congress Party. If Bengal with a population larger than that of the United Kingdom can safely be so governed, is the risk of entrusting British India as a whole to such a Ministry appreciably greater? In Calcutta, Bombay and Madras law and order, the interests of British traders, and the rights of minorities are as

safe under responsible Indian Ministers as they were before. If you gather the ablest of the same men at Delhi, and make them an All-India Government, is there reason to suppose that they would behave with less sanity and less responsibility? It would not be a leap in the dark.

World Opinion

To complete this scheme let us at last date that vague promise of Dominion Status. Let us undertake that subject to agreement over the inevitable transitional arrangements for defence, India shall become a Dominion in the first, or at latest the second year of peace.

Routine minds will parade their fears. Not every one of the new Ministers would prove adequate to his task. Was there never an inadequate bureaucrat, and never, if one may risk *dés-majesté*, a disappointing Viceroy? At least these Ministers would have to survive the searching criticisms of the nation they governed. The other side of the account has brilliant gains to attract us. If we dared to act on this plan, or on some variant of it, we should at a stroke win the devoted friendship of this generous nation, and we should keep it for ever. India would play her part in this war with a zeal that would astonish us. We should never require a Coercion Act again, and we might erase to-morrow from the Penal Code all the formidable clauses that anticipate disaffection. If, on the other hand, we make our fears our counsellors, and dole out our concessions only when agitation has forced our hands, the free India that will one day emerge in spite of us will owe us neither gratitude nor respect. In this dangerous world the friendship of three hundred millions of our fellows is worth winning, even at some risk.

Before this scheme is rejected, let us look at it as belligerents with the world as its background. This war will be won as much by political intelligence as by military prowess. Four great Powers are neutrals, whose opinion about us and our purposes may be decisive, both during the war and at its end. America, above all, is sympathetic, but she has not forgotten her disillusionment after the Versailles Peace. It is the better and more idealistic half of the American nation that is apt to be critical of British Imperialism. If with bold generosity we could bring ourselves to give India her freedom, we should win the trust and respect of all America at a stroke. A dark hour may come when we shall need her friendship. For Americans, and indeed for the whole civilised world, India is the crux—the criterion by which our Empire is judged. In the last war it was Ireland that hung about our necks, like the murdered albatross that cursed Coleridge's mariner. The Easter Rebellion and its suppression chilled our friends across the Atlantic, heartened our enemies and delayed America's adoption of our cause. If we continue to blunder in India and provoke her to

open revolt, if above all we add coercion to our initial mistakes, can we expect that Americans will mistake our rulers for the champions of democracy?

In Germany also our conduct in India may be a factor in deciding the war. If the German masses watch us, with the help of an always malicious propaganda, resisting this Indian demand for democratic self-determination, they will expect from us at the war's end, if victory falls to us, a settlement no better than Versailles. But if they see us true in India to the principles that led us to take up arms, they will trust us to act honourably with them as partners in a new world-order. Opinion more certainly than arms will decide this war, and for the judgment of civilised men our conduct towards India may be decisive. In India we may lose this war or win it, for by our conduct there men will decide whether this is in truth a war for the liberation of Europe or a struggle for *Lebensraum* between rival Empires.

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