

## XVI. What Must Be Done

*"The interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy."*—Indian National Congress, Resolution of September 15, 1939.

### I. THE BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS

Can a solution be found for the present dangerous situation in India?

Despite the extreme stage of crisis, deadlock and conflict which has been reached, and the narrow margin of time within which further steps may be attempted, there is every reason to say that a solution can be achieved, and rapidly achieved, given the will to overcome the difficulties and face the necessary conditions of a new policy. The very extremity of the danger should hasten the solution. But there is no time to lose.

We cannot afford to continue this suicidal conflict between two freedom-loving nations, with fascism battering at the doors of both. Although General Wavell, in his broadcast at the end of September, 1942, has discounted the likelihood of any imminent Japanese attempt at invasion, it is obvious that no responsible policy, whether of the Indian national movement or of the British Government, can base its calculations on the assumption of ignoring this menace. The urgent necessity of a settlement, before still more disastrous consequences follow, is recognized by all serious opinion. What must be done?

Events in India, as in the whole world situation, are moving

with extreme speed. New developments, whether they take the form of Japanese military invasion, or of further political moves or regrouping within India, or a modification of the British Government's policy, or even United Nations' intervention, may profoundly affect the situation in the near future. It is therefore only possible to deal with the general principles which must govern any settlement, in relation to the existing situation at the time of writing (October, 1942).

The necessary final basis of a permanent settlement, that is, the complete freedom and independence of India, with only voluntary association, entirely free from coercion, whether with Britain or with other States in the world, has already been indicated.

Our present problem is to find, within this general aim, the basis of a speedy and practical provisional settlement between Britain, India and the United Nations. The object of such a settlement must be to end the present conflict and enable India to co-operate as a free nation in meeting the dangers arising from the war.

That such a settlement is imperative, is widely agreed. It is true that British official policy up to the present still maintains a negative attitude, opposes new negotiations, regards the Cripps offer as the final word, and proclaims its satisfaction that the situation is "in hand." But this blind complacency, in face of the glaring dangers of the existing situation, is scarcely shared by any outside official circles. Even the moderate judgment of *The Times* found it necessary to comment on Mr. Churchill's speech of September 10, when he said that "the situation in India at the moment gives no occasion for undue despondency or alarm":

"The situation, nevertheless, is full of hazard....

Though no settlement could be reached by taking account of Congress opinion alone, it is equally true that no settlement can be made which ignores it; and it is also true that the demand for independence which is the basis of Congress policy is heard not less insistently from all the other leading Indian political groups. To rally the goodwill of all Indians at a moment when the enemy is at the gate is a task of supreme importance." (*Times*, September 11, 1942.)

Such a plea for a settlement which should meet, in place of repelling, the Indian national demand, could be widely paralleled from the most diverse quarters. In this connection the viewpoint of the Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India may be quoted:

"That force has been employed must not be allowed to rule conference out of court. Within the Congress there are strong elements on the side of active participation in the war effort and in complete alignment with the Allied Nations. The creation of a council chosen by the real leaders of the political parties of India with real executive power now would unite all in the common war front."

A settlement implies negotiations. The first step to be taken to end the present conflict and reach a settlement is to open negotiations with the National Congress leaders, whose co-operation is indispensable to an effective settlement, as with all representative Indian political leaders.

The opening of negotiations with the authoritative political leaders of India will be the most effective initial measure to create a new situation and suspend the present conflict, just as the reaching of a settlement will end its causes. The objection has been put forward that negotiations cannot be opened until Congress abandons civil disobedience. This is to put the cart before the horse. It should be remembered that Congress, up to the time of writing, had not yet launched the civil disobedience campaign, and was explicitly asking to negotiate before launching any campaign. In this context the demand for prior conditions becomes an obstructionist demand to hinder negotiations, when it is only negotiations which can remove the obstacles to agreement and thus remove the causes which led to the adoption of the civil disobedience resolution. The present urgent situation is no time for standing on punctilio, but requires the instant and unconditional opening of negotiations with a view to finding the common basis for agreement in the imperative interests of both nations.

What must be the basis of negotiations? This is the decisive question, if the negotiations are to be successful. We cannot afford to repeat the Cripps fiasco.

The conditions of the problem, as well as the declarations of representative sections of Indian opinion, have made clear the

indispensable basis of negotiations in order to make possible an effective and honorable settlement. Such a basis should comprise three main governing principles, the details of whose execution will need to be worked out by the negotiators:

1. Recognition of Indian independence;
2. Establishment of a Provisional National Government representative of all political sections and leaders willing to co-operate in the common task of armed resistance to fascist aggression as an ally of the United Nations;
3. Provision for the effective military co-operation of India and the United Nations.

## 2. RECOGNITION OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

The demand for the recognition of Indian independence is common to all sections of Indian opinion, not merely the National Congress, but equally the Moslem League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Liberals and non-party political leaders.

This demand (partly owing to the misleading form of its summary presentation in the Congress "Quit India" slogan) has been widely misrepresented as a widely unpractical proposal for the sudden withdrawal of all British civil and military representatives from India, leaving chaos and anarchy. So Sir Stafford Cripps:

"For the British to leave India would endanger the life and safety of every European, American and Chinese soldier and civilian, and would create a wide breach in the United Nations' front.

"It would mean that India would be left without any constitution or government. There would be no election law, no constituencies, no elected assembly, no civil service administration, no courts of justice, no police. It would be the ideal of the true anarchist and an irresistible temptation to Japan." (Sir Stafford Cripps, *New York Times*, August, 1942, quoted in the *British Press*, August 24, 1942.)

On this fanciful picture, given in similar terms by Mr. Amery in the House of Commons on July 30, and by Sir Stafford Cripps on August 5, the brief comment of the Indian National

Congress President, Maulana Azad, was, "Absurd." He proceeded to explain the elementary fact that the demand for the withdrawal of British power from India was a demand, not for the collapse of political authority, but for a transfer of power.

The recognition of Indian independence means, not a proposal for the sudden disappearance of all governmental authority in India, leaving a hiatus and chaos, but *the transfer of effective governmental power from British to Indian hands.*

The method of this transfer requires to be negotiated in the settlement to be reached and in the constitution of the Provisional National Government. The final regulation of the future relations of Britain and India can only be reached in long-term negotiations, possibly even after the war, between British and Indian representatives. The immediate settlement will of necessity be short-term and provisional in character, and even full of superficial contradictions.

The National Congress leaders, in the Cripps negotiations, showed themselves perfectly ready to agree to the formation of a National Government which would in form operate as the Executive Council of the British Viceroy under the existing constitution, providing an understanding were reached that it would have real collective power and responsibility, with the Viceroy acting like a constitutional sovereign; and they showed themselves similarly ready to co-operate with a British Commander-in-Chief in supreme military control.

This possibility of a rapid provisional settlement, in which the effective powers of the Indian National Government would be established by convention, even within the existing constitutional forms (or by a brief special enactment), disposes of the difficulty often put forward by official quarters as insuperable, that such far-reaching constitutional changes as are involved in the independence of India cannot be put through in wartime. On the contrary, it is precisely in wartime that the most rapid and far-reaching constitutional changes may be necessary, if statesmanship is not to lag behind the practical needs of the situation; war is no respecter of legal niceties or routine; and the Japanese have not been held back by insuperable constitutional difficulties from very considerably changing the constitutional status of Burma at short notice. At the time of the collapse of France in the spring of 1940 it was not found impossible for the British Government

to propose at a moment's notice such a considerable constitutional change as the merging of Britain and France into a single State. But in the case of India a speedy provisional settlement is possible, even within the existing framework, provided the principle of independence is recognized, leaving ultimate constitutional forms to be elaborated through the machinery of a democratically elected constituent assembly after the termination of hostilities.

The one essential principle of the provisional settlement, implicit in the recognition of Indian independence, is that *effective control of Indian affairs must be in the hands of a Government representative of the Indian people*. Whatever temporary limitations in the exercise or form of that power may be mutually agreed to, in response to the practical needs of the war or to the conditions of the transition, should be reached by voluntary consent and not by coercion.

This is the principle of Indian independence which should be unreservedly recognized.

### 3. A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

The Provisional National Government to be formed and to take over supreme political control in India should be a Government of National Unity. It should not be the monopoly of any single political section or party. It should draw in all political sections and leaders prepared to co-operate on the broadest common platform of the maintenance of Indian independence and armed resistance to fascist aggression.

All political sections and leaders should be invited to participate, on a basis of representation to be mutually agreed by negotiations. But none should be empowered to veto the formation of a National Government by refusal to co-operate, or to impose prior conditions. All controversial questions of the ultimate constitutional settlement should be held over till the termination of hostilities.

Can such a Government of National Unity be formed in the present situation in India? Spokesmen of British official policy emphatically deny that this can be achieved, owing to Indian political divisions. Thus a correspondent in *The Times* of September 25, 1942, repeats the familiar argument:

"Mr. Jinnah, who leads 90,000,000 Moslems, and Dr. Ambedkar, who leads 50,000,000 Depressed Classes, have vigorously and unequivocally set their heart and mind against the Congress, and this puts the tin hat on the prospects of any National Government being formed in India now or in the near future."

Similarly Mr. Churchill in his speech to parliament on September 10:

"The Congress Party does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. ... Outside that party and fundamentally opposed to it are 90,000,000 Moslems, who have their rights of self-expression, 50,000,000 Depressed Classes... and 95,000,000 subjects of the Princes, to whom we are bound by treaty. In all, there are 235,000,000 in these three groups out of a total of about 390,000,000 in India."\*

And Sir Walter Citrine at the Trades Union Congress in September warned delegates not to assume "a unity that did not exist in India. 70,000,000 Moslems said that if self-government were handed to the Hindus there would be civil war; and to say the 70,000,000 Untouchables would be content if their destiny were put into the hands of Congress was utter nonsense. If tomorrow so-called self-government were handed to India there would be such internal strife that the Japanese could walk in."

While no one would wish to minimize the serious problem which the Indian nation must solve in achieving national unity and a United National Government, this kind of presentation is a fantastic distortion of the real problem. It is no use presenting to the British public an imaginary picture of Mr. Jinnah and the

\* Unfortunately for Mr. Churchill's arithmetic, he has counted his Moslems in the Indian States twice over; once in the total of Moslems for all India, including the States, and then again in the total of subjects of the States. But this is only a minor illustration of the fanciful partisan character of this total calculation, in which the 90,000,000 Moslems, the majority of whom, through their elected representatives, have rejected Mr. Jinnah and the Moslem League and are striving for a basis of unity with the Congress, are counted as supporters of Mr. Jinnah against the Congress; the alleged 50,000,000 Depressed Classes, the majority of whom have elected Congress candidates, are counted as opponents of the Congress; while the 95,000,000 subjects of the Princes are coolly added, whose opinion has never been allowed to be expressed.

Moslem League leading a solid block of 90,000,000 Moslems, when he has not been able to win 5 per cent of the Moslem vote in the elections; when two of the three Moslem Premiers repudiated the Moslem League, while the fourth Moslem province elected a Congress majority. It is equally no use presenting an imaginary picture of 50,000,000 Depressed Classes (or whatever number is preferred, for the number has been given at all levels from 15,000,000 to 70,000,000, according to the fancy of the propagandist) supporting Dr. Ambedkar against the Congress, when of the 151 Depressed Classes constituencies Dr. Ambedkar was only able to win 13, or less than 9 per cent, while Congress candidates won 78, or the majority.

It is necessary to make a more realist approach to this question. For present purposes we need not concern ourselves too closely with the representative or unrepresentative character of the various minority and splinter groupings and organizations, without figures of membership or electoral support, which have been inflated and publicized to an artificial importance by the conditions of foreign rule and special encouragement and protection of their anti-national sectionalism.

In the present national crisis the national movement must be prepared to make far-reaching concessions for the sake of national unity; and the Congress leaders have shown understanding of this, just as the most serious and responsible representatives of other sections have shown similar understanding. The Provisional National Government must be a Coalition Government of all the principal political sections and leaders willing to participate, without too close scrutiny of the representative basis of their claims.

In order to establish a united national front, it is essential that the national movement should make full recognition of the right of self-determination of all nationalities within India, on the lines already indicated (see page 104). This would strengthen the basis for full unity and agreement of all sections within the common national front.

The principal obstacle to such agreement is the refusal of national self-government. This perpetuates the divisions, which are then made the excuse for refusing self-government. So long as self-government is refused, and British absolute power is maintained, it follows inevitably that the maximum intransigence of every sectional and splinter grouping and organization is encour-

aged, because every such organization looks to the paramount Power to protect its sectional claims, and finds in these, instead of in consideration for the well-being of India, the sole reason for its political existence.

But so soon as this artificial sustaining prop is removed, normal political considerations hold sway as in other countries, and common danger, common national need and common emergency become the cement which binds together national unity.

If once the firm policy of the establishment of a responsible National Government is definitively adopted, with invitation to participate to every political section and leadership willing to cooperate in the common effort, but with the no less firm declaration that no veto or self-exclusion of any section will be allowed to hold up the scheme, then the imagined insurmountable obstacles will be possible to be overcome, and a government of representative men of goodwill from all political sections can be established with the enthusiastic support of the Indian nation.

This is the path of statesmanship and of serious mobilization of India against fascism.

There are strong grounds for declaring that the overwhelming majority of all sections in India would support such a solution. On the same day that Mr. Churchill made his statement in the House of Commons parading Indian political divisions, a united statement was issued in India urging him to declare India's independence forthwith to enable representatives of the major political parties to form a truly representative National Government. The signatories included the Moslem Premiers of Bengal and Sind, the Nawab of Dacca, the President of the Momin Conference, and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders. The same demand has been supported by Liberal and non-Party leaders such as Sir Tej Sapru and Mr. Jayakar; by representatives of moderate opinion such as Mr. Rajagopalachariar, the former Congress Premier of Madras, who resigned from the Congress in order to promote Congress-Moslem League agreement, with the sympathetic support of influential elements in the Moslem League; by Mr. N. M. Joshi, Labor representative in the Legislative Assembly and Secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress; by the Communist Party of India; by the All-India Akali Sikh Conference; by the Indian Christians; by the All-India Kisan Sabha (Peasant League) and other bodies. Indeed, it may be said that this de-

mand is supported by 95 per cent of political leaders in India.

The basis undoubtedly exists for the establishment of a Provisional National Government in India which would be both widely representative, associating the National Congress and other sections and elements in a broad national front, and would command real authority.

Finally, the objection is raised that, in the absence of democratic institutions in India, such a Provisional National Government would be an "irresponsible dictatorship," since it would not be answerable to any elected body. The argument is a curious one to come from the upholders of the existing really irresponsible and dictatorial system of foreign rule in India. These passionate opponents of dictatorship would seek to maintain the absolute dictatorship of a Linlithgow or an Amery over the Indian people in order to save them from the supposed "dictatorship" of their own national leaders. In practice it would not be difficult, even without new elections, to constitute some emergency representative organ for present purposes, possibly on the basis of the elected Indian representatives in the present Central Legislative Assembly or of the Provincial Assemblies, or on some wider representative basis. But in the immediate crisis with which we are faced, even in the absence of such machinery, it is obvious that such a National Government, composed of the principal leaders of Indian national life and of the great popular organizations, would be infinitely more representative and more capable of mobilizing the support of the Indian people than the present system.

#### 4. TREATY OF ALLIANCE BETWEEN INDIA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

A Treaty of Alliance would need to be drawn up between the Indian National Government and the United Nations, in order to insure effective military co-operation for the defense of India and in the common war against the Axis.

Such a provision is equally essential in the interests of the defense of India, and in the interests of the United Nations, who cannot afford to be in any uncertainty as to the full participation of a free India in the common struggle and full provision of all requirements for practical co-operation. There is no question here of imposing from the outside any obligation against the wishes of

the Indian people. The explicit declarations of all representative Indian political leaders and organizations have made clear their support of the cause of the United Nations against fascism and their desire that India should mobilize its full strength as an ally of the United Nations. The personal pacifist views of Gandhi are not an obstacle to prevent the realization of this policy, since he has made clear that he will subordinate his personal views to the pledged policy of the Congress for armed resistance to fascism in alliance with the United Nations.

Such a Treaty will need to insure the supreme military authority of the United Nations, and of the Commander-in-Chief appointed by the United Nations, in co-operation with the Indian National Government, in all questions of the direct conduct of the war. It may well be that the most effective machinery for securing such a policy will be through the establishment of a United Nations War Council in India, or in Southeastern Asia, uniting the representatives of the principal Allied Powers engaged in hostilities in this region with a representative of the Indian National Government.

The relationship between the Indian National Government and the United Nations Commander-in-Chief in India would be comparable to the relationship between the Australian Government and General MacArthur.

Once the principle of Indian independence and voluntary alliance with the United Nations is established, the difficulties which proved so insuperable in the Cripps negotiations, in respect of the demarcation of functions of an Indian Minister of Defense and the Commander-in-Chief in India, would prove capable of practical solution, because the basis of co-operation would exist.

This is the only basis on which the effective mobilization and co-operation of the 400,000,000 of India can be secured, which can and must play such a decisive role in the defense of Asia against fascism. The recent announcement that no "scorched earth" policy will be attempted in India (since a "scorched earth" policy, as the examples of the Soviet Union and China have shown, can only be carried out by a popular Government with the active support and participation of the people), or the subsequent announcement that offensive operations against Japan must be delayed, because of the difficulties of communications, supplies and the uncertain situation in India, illustrate the urgency of such a settlement, even if viewed only from the military standpoint.

## 5. BRITISH OPINION AND INDIA

Can such a solution be acceptable to British opinion?

Despite the present stonewall opposition of British Government expression, there is reason to judge that such a settlement would be welcomed by the majority of British opinion, and that the demand for such a settlement is growing in all political camps.

The contrast between the present policy of repression and refusal of self-government pursued in India, and the democratic outlook of the majority of the British nation, or the democratic aims of the war against fascism, is too glaring to be easily accepted.

Further, the powerful military arguments of the present situation daily reinforce the urgent need of a settlement.

There is a growing body of opinion in all sections which has directly expressed the demand for the opening of negotiations and for a settlement along the lines indicated. It is true that the National Council of Labor declaration of August 12, immediately following the arrests, wholly endorsed the action of the Government, and directed its criticism only against the Indian political leaders, opposing negotiations until the abandonment of civil disobedience by the Congress. This declaration was ratified by the Trades Union Congress in September, although in the face of considerable opposition.

But it can be confidently stated, as the increasingly critical note in subsequent parliamentary debates has shown, that this uncritical support of the Government's negative policy is not representative of the general body of labor and democratic opinion. A wide range of leading political personalities, and of religious leaders, and such representative press organs as the *Manchester Guardian*, *News-Chronicle*, *Evening Standard*, and also the *Daily Herald* (until the official Labor declaration compelled a reversal of policy), and to a certain extent *The Times*, have taken a critical line in respect of the Government's Indian policy and urged the necessity of negotiations.

The Amalgamated Engineering Union National Committee, representing 600,000 key workers in war industry, unanimously adopted the following resolution on June 20, 1942:

"This National Committee expresses its opinion that the complete freedom of the Indian people is an essential prerequisite in a people's war for freedom, democracy

and victory over the barbaric bestial order of fascism. . . .

"We further declare our conviction that the freedom of the Indian people would be a strategical move, insuring that unity, superiority of resources and manpower in the Pacific that would include an early victory in the war against the Axis Powers. We feel that in view of the serious situation in the Pacific and the Far East, it is essential that the freedom of these peoples be obtained now."

The Miners' Federation National Conference on August 1, 1942, representing half a million miners, unanimously adopted a resolution for the re-opening of negotiations on the basis of recognition of India's claim to independence:

"This Conference of the Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain recognizes the grave situation which has arisen from the failure to settle the question of Indian relations, and the resulting deterioration that has taken place.

"We reaffirm our belief in the absolute necessity for securing the whole-hearted co-operation of the Indian people in the common struggle against fascism and to preserve democracy.

"We therefore call upon the Government to reopen negotiations with the Indian National Congress in an endeavor to secure a reasonable settlement of outstanding problems immediately with a view to the ultimate granting of complete independence. . . ."

Trial ballots in big factories have shown a ten to one vote for Indian independence.

The campaign of the 50,000 members of the Communist Party has followed the lines of the National Conference resolution adopted on May 25, 1942, which declared:

"To win the co-operation of the 400 millions of India in the common struggle, we must recognize the independence of India as an equal partner in the alliance of the United Nations, and reopen negotiations with the National Congress for the establishment of a National Government with full powers, subject only to such restrictions as the Indian people are willing to accept in the interests of India and of the common struggle against the Axis Powers."

This demand has won enthusiastic support at crowded mass demonstrations all over the country.

There is no doubt that the influence of world opinion, and especially of the other chief partners of the alliance of the United Nations, is making itself increasingly felt in relation to the present Indian crisis, and is seeking to assist towards a solution. While much of American press comment has been withheld by censorship from appearing in this country, correspondents have been unanimous in reporting that the overwhelming majority of American comment has been critical of the negative line pursued and has urged the necessity of negotiations to reach a settlement ("American opinion is predominantly critical of the British official attitude," *Times*, October 6, 1942). The Chinese Government press has been open in its expression of sympathy with Indian national aspirations and pleas for a settlement on this basis. Thus the Chinese Government organ, the *Central Daily News*, wrote in August, 1942, following the arrests:

"We receive the news of the arrest of Gandhi, Nehru and Azad with the deepest regret. The arrests, irrespective of right and wrong, would inevitably affect Indians' confidence in the United Nations, and furnish Axis propaganda. Gandhi, Nehru and the others had the support of a majority of Indians, and their arrest will not solve the problem. If the conflict were allowed to continue, it would affect the entire war...."

But, important as is the expression of opinion of the United Nations, it is here in Britain that the decisive responsibility rests. Democratic opinion in this country must play the foremost role in fulfilling this responsibility.

It is in the power of the British nation, by an act of statesmanship which would redound equally to its honor and practical advantage, to close the unhappy chapter of the past relations of Britain and India, and to open the new and fruitful chapter of the equal association of Britain and India and the nations of the world advancing in common partnership and comradeship as free nations in the struggle for human freedom and world co-operation.