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MR. L.S. AMERY. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA,
broadcasting to the Empire on Empire Day, said:

For what are we fighting today? We are fighting with a goodly company of allied nations to save our common civilization and the freedom of each one of us. But, above all - I at any rate am not ashamed to own it - we are fighting for our own existence, we are fighting to save our own British freedom, that freedom, born of order and nursed by law, that friendly, fair, tolerant and therefore truly democratic way of life, which we first built up and cherished through the ages in this green and pleasant land of England, and which is the life-blood and the bond of union of a Commonwealth and of an Empire which have spread across all the seven seas.

We are fighting for a glorious heritage from the past and for the hopes of a yet more glorious future.

Let us look back for a moment. Has there been anything more marvellous in history than the spread of freedom round the world by the adventurous settlers, pioneers and traders who came from this little island? The first main swarm from the parent hive broke away from us. That was in days before we had mastered the secret of reconciling freedom and empire. They became the world's greatest republic. They are joined with us today, and I trust for all time, in defence of those ideals of freedom which are our common heritage.

That was one miracle. Their successors who founded and built up the present British Dominions achieved an even greater miracle. For they have grown to a nationhood as free and unfettered as that of the United States, or of any nation in the world, without ever severing the link of partnership, the link symbolised for all of us in our loyalty to a common Crown. That combination of unity of ideals and of purpose with complete freedom is the greatest constitutional experiment that has ever been attempted.

Who can say today, when men from every nation of the Commonwealth are fighting side by side, when every one of these nations is freely and wholeheartedly dedicating itself to the common cause - who can say that that experiment has been a failure?

Parallel with the free partnership of the Commonwealth there grew up, over vast regions and over peoples of every race at every stage of civilization, a Colonial Empire for which we in this island have continued to exercise a more direct responsibility. It grew, not for the most part from any conscious desire for territory or domination, but as an almost inevitable consequence of the contact between European trade and enterprise and the more primitive peoples of the outer world. To many regions of the world which had known nothing but war and anarchy it brought peace, order and prosperity. It is the fashion just now to decry our Colonial administration. Let me give you an instance of what the British Colonial Empire has meant.

Two names have a very tragic significance for us today: Hong Kong and Singapore. A century and more ago we took over, in the one case, a barren rocky islet, in the other, a derelict patch of swamp and jungle. British law and administration, British fair play, drew to them the trade of every country and hundreds of thousands of willing workers from adjoining lands, to make of them two of the world's greatest and most prosperous maritime cities. With the example of Singapore before them the native rulers of Malaya, weary of their endless wars, unable to cope with piracy and poverty, invited our protection. Under that protection Malaya became one of the most prosperous, contented and friendly mixed communities in the world.

If we have for the time being lost these fair territories, if they have been ravaged and enslaved, it has not been for lack of loyalty on the part of their people nor because of incompetence or want of sympathy on the part of our administrators.

It is because we made all our plans on one assumption, which the event has falsified, the assumption that the British Navy guaranteed their peace. We neither trained nor taxed them for war.

The same is true of Burma, where Burman officials have done their duty and where the great majority of the population have remained loyal but helpless in the face of invasion. There is much we shall no doubt have to do after the war for the economic and social development as well as for the security of the Colonial Empire. But we have no reason, far from it, to be ashamed of our past record.

From these lesser examples of the meaning of Empire let me turn to India, an Empire, a continent, within the Empire. Two hundred years ago India was devastated by war and anarchy, by pestilence and famine. Our rule spread over India, and was accepted, because it brought peace and order and the reign of law. It justified itself by public works that averted famine, by measures of sanitation that confined within narrow bounds the ravages of plague and cholera. An immense and noble achievement. Yet we have never thought of that achievement as an end in itself. We have always regarded it as a stage, a stepping stone, in India's progress towards self-government. For many years past she has been advancing on that road.

In these last few weeks Sir Stafford Cripps went out in order to prove, beyond all doubt, the sincerity of our intentions with regard to India's future freedom and to invite Indian political leaders to lay aside their differences with us and with each other, in order to cooperate in the defence of their country. The rejection of our offer has not weakened our resolve that India shall yet find her honoured place as a free and equal member in the free association of peoples who constitute the British Commonwealth.

The British Empire, like all human institutions, may be an imperfect thing. But I believe it has been the greatest agency for freedom and justice that the world has yet seen. It is faith in the Empire - faith in the work it has done, faith in the work it is yet destined to do - that we need to sustain us in these stern days and through the difficulties and perplexities of the years of reconstruction. If we are in mortal peril today it is because we lacked that faith, just when we most needed it, in the critical years that followed the last war.

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Faith in ourselves, faith in our priceless heritage of British freedom, should have bidden us devote all our energies in those years to building up in cooperation the resources of the Empire and to strengthening its defence. Instead we spent those years in carping and self-depreciation, neglecting the true foundations of freedom in our fond chase after illusions. We are paying dearly for that lack of faith today.

We cannot afford to repeat that mistake. Let us see through this struggle, and look forward to the tasks which lie beyond it, with faith in ourselves, with faith in our destiny, with faith in the British Empire's mission of leadership to the world. Our first task on the morrow of victory will be to set our own house in order. Here at home we must create a better, fairer, healthier social life for all our people. We must make of this old country in truth a Merrie England.

We must each of us do the same everywhere for our country. But we shall only be truly prosperous, truly secure if in active, planned mutual cooperation we join together to build up the common prosperity and strength of a United Empire. We must do so, not by niggling, timid half-measures, but in the bold spirit, and on the great scale with which President Roosevelt has tackled America's difficulties. What we shall need, in fact, is a New Deal for the Empire.

Above all we must not weary in the task of increasing freedom, political, economic or social, wherever our flag flies. It is by attending, first and foremost, to these our own special tasks and duties that we can best give an example and best make our contribution to the regeneration of the world.

Meanwhile we must fight on - fight on in faith, proud of our past, believing in ourselves, confident in our future.

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