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Following is the text of an article written by
Sir Stafford Cripps for the "New York Times." It is to be
published elsewhere only by BRITISH news papers. It must
also be stated that the article was written especially
for the "New York Times."

The tragedy of the present situation in India is not that different sections of the people should hold different views, or even that the Congress Party could not see their way to agree to the proposals for the self-Government of India which I took out with me in the spring of this year. The tragedy is that at a critical time in the cause of the United Nations' fight for freedom Mr. Gandhi should have persuaded the Congress Party to put forward and to insist upon a policy which is wholly impracticable, under threat of carrying out a campaign of civil disobedience which can do nothing except give comfort and encouragement to the enemy.

Without any desire to limit the legitimate field of political controversy the Government of India have been forced in the interest of the people of India and of the United Nations to take steps to defeat Mr. Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience, which had been carefully planned to exercise the maximum of inconvenience and so do the greatest harm to the Defence of India and to the cause of the Allied Nations.

The British Government determined early this year to make abundantly clear their view as to the self-government of India. They adopted a method somewhat analogous to that which the United States of America had adopted for the Phillipines. A date was fixed when full self-government for India should come into operation. It was fixed at the earliest moment possible, that is as soon after the cessation of hostilities as a new constitution can be devised by Indians themselves. There was no doubt or question, and there is none now, that as soon as the war is over every facility would be given to the Indian people to agree upon a new constitution for their own self-government.

As must always be the case in such vitally important transitions, there was a period of time - the rest of the war - during which the present constitution had to be continued until the new one, framed by the Indians themselves, could come into operation. It was impossible, especially in a state of war, to have some temporary or intermediate constitution.

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Such a constitution would either have had to be imposed by Great Britain or else arrived at by agreement - not with the single Party, the Congress Party - but with all the many diverse sections of opinion in India.

When I was in India it was not possible to get the leaders of the Congress Party and the Muslim League leaders even to meet, much less to discuss any constitutional question. Since then Mr. Rajagopalacharia, who left the Congress Working Committee after they had refused the offer of the British Government, and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Liberal leader, have both tried to bring about some such meeting and discussion - both have failed.

A British imposed temporary constitution would no more have been accepted by the Congress Party than the present constitution, and as the Congress Party and the others would not meet no agreement between them was possible.

For the transition period then there was no alternative but to continue with the present constitutions, adapting it as far as possible to Indian self-government. This is what we offered to do and this is what the Congress leaders refused.

A temporary compromise was necessary and in order to make that compromise possible the draft offer of the British Government was - upon this point - left as vague as possible.

It was in these terms:-

"During the critical period which now faces India and until the new Constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably 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 co-operation 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."

When I speak of compromise I do not refer only or mainly to an agreement between the British Government and the various Indian parties, but to accommodation amongst the Indians themselves.

There are in British India today - apart altogether from the Indian states which contain 93 million people - 296 million inhabitants who are divided amongst the following more important sections of opinion.

The Congress Party which is predominately Hindu though with some Muslim members and which is controlled by the High Castes and Brahmin class.

The Hindu Mahasabha which is a purely Hindu organisation, strongly anti-Muslim in its outlook. The above two parties represent broadly the Hindu population of British India of about 140 millions but do not represent

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The Depressed Classes or Untouchables consisting of some 40 million Hindus who are opposed to the political-dominance of the higher castes and so to the Congress Party.

The Muslim League which upon any communal or religious issue speaks for the great majority of the Muslim population of 90 millions or more.

The Sikhs a race of some 6 millions with a religion of their own but more allied to the Hindus than the Muslims.

The Indian Christians some 6 million in number. And a number of other 'minorities' such as the Parsees and Anglo Indians as well as including the organised Labour and Trade Union movement.

To understand the Indian situation it must be realised that today the following sections of opinion are not supporting the action of the Congress Party: The Hindu Mahasabha (the exact following cannot be calculated numerically but it is considered especially in some provinces, e.g. Bengal); the Depressed Classes (40 millions); The Muslims (90 millions); the Sikhs (millions); the Indian Christians (6 millions), totalling at a conservative estimate 160 millions in addition to great numbers of others who have no particular affiliations and to a very considerable block of opinion in the Congress Party itself.

These Indians who are considerably more than half the total population do not want Great Britain to walk out of India while the war is on; do not want the chaos Mr. Gandhi has suggested (quite rightly) that his plan would bring but they do ~~not~~ want to help the United Nations to defend India against Japan.

To arrive at any judgment in this matter we must also understand what the Government of India is like today and what steps have already been taken to build the bridge to the promised self-government immediately hostilities are over.

There are only 75,000 British civilians, including government servants, in the whole of India, and the British army in India, based largely near the warlike North-West frontier, never exceeded before the war some 50,000 troops. In 1941 the central and more important Indian Civil Service, from which the chief administrative posts are filled contained 1,200 members of whom only 585 were British. There are some one and a half million persons in the employ of the central, provincial or local governments as engineers, doctors, foresters, offices of justice, clerks, typists, messengers, administrators etc. The Superior grades represent some 6,000 of these of whom less than half were British. With this very small body of British, Great Britain has helped to administer the affairs of a sub-continent populated by 389,000,000 people of varied races and cultures. The British officials and British troops in India are no more numerous than those required to administer and police the Panama Canal zone.

Steadily over a period of years the Indian peoples have been taking over the powers of government, not only in administrative services, such as those described, but in the actual political direction of All-India and the Provinces of British India. Since 1937, the franchise in British India has risen from a few millions to some 36 millions, and the powers of the provincial governments are comparable to those of a state of the American Union or a province of the Dominion of Canada.

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When the war broke out, all of the 11 provinces were wholly governed by Indian cabinets responsible to elected legislatures and in seven of them the Congress Party were in control. Shortly after the outbreak of war the Congress Party Working Committee later ordered all Congress Provincial Governments to resign, thus making representative government no longer possible in seven provinces and compelling the Governors to carry on the administration without Ministerial advice. Four of the provinces of India are still governed by Indian Ministries and have Indian cabinets and premiers. Complete control of internal provincial affairs remains in the hands of these provincial governments and it is only because the Congress party so willed it and withdrew from the responsibilities of power that control is not now exercised in all of the British Indian provinces by Indian ministers and Indian elected legislatures.

The Indian share in the central government has, through the expansion and indianisation of the Executive Council which with the Viceroy constitutes the Central Government of India steadily increased. Today, of the 15 members of the Council, there are 11 Indians and four British. It is this Government, and not the British Cabinet, which determined to resist Mr. Gandhi's threats of mass civil disobedience and ordered the arrest of the Congress party leaders. That must be clearly understood. The action against Mr. Gandhi and his followers was a decision of the Government of India, supported fully by, but not proposed or initiated by the British Government.

These members are drawn from various sections of Indian opinion. Mr. M. S. Aney a former member of the Congress Party Working Committee and acting president of Congress in 1933 holds the portfolio of Indians Overseas. Mr. M. R. Sarkar is the manager of the Hindusthan Co-operative Insurance Society of Calcutta, and was formerly chief whip of the Swaraj (Home Rule) party; he is now the Member of Council for the Commerce Department. Sir H. P. Mody, the member for Supply, is a past President of the Indian Merchants' Chamber; and Dr. Ambedkar, the member for the Labour department, a Ph.D. and M.A. of Columbia University New York is the acknowledged leader of the Depressed Classes; Sir Jogenra Singh is a Sikh landowner, is Member for Education, Health and Lands. Sir J. P. Srivastava, a business man and industrial chemist, is Member for Civil Defence. Sir Muhammad Usman, for nine years a member of the Executive Council and for a time acting Governor of Madras, is Member for Posts and Air. Sir Syed Sultan Ahmed, former Advocate-General for Bihar, is Law Member. The Defence Member is a Moslem, Sir Firoz Khan Noon, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar is Member without Portfolio.

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There are only four British members of Executive Council, General Sir Archibald Wavell, The Commander-in-Chief, who is War Member; Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member; Sir Jeremy Raisman, Finance; and Sir Edward Benthall, War Transport.

These 15 men with the Viceroy are the men who govern so-called British India. They represent Moslems, Sikhs, the Depressed Classes and Indian business men; they represent too the great territorial divisions of India. These men - most of them ardent nationalists, some of them formerly prominent members of the Congress Party itself - are not mere mouthpieces of the British raj. They are today bravely conducting the Government of India in what, according to their convictions are the best interests of India herself.

This is not to assert that India is as yet fully self-governing. The British Government still has the final word on defence and the direction of military operations. The British Government has also reserved the final word on policies that may give rise to conflict between Hindu, Moslem and other communities. These, and similar reservations are important since they constitute the protection for the minorities. The last word, if it has to be uttered, rests with the Viceroy and the British Cabinet.

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But in practice, very rarely does such intervention take place in fiscal questions, there has been no intervention since 1921. The All-India government has had and has exercised full control over taxation, tariffs, and trade. It may be added that two Indians are now on their way to take their place in the British War Cabinet in which they will have a full voice upon all questions relating to the conduct of the war which affect India, and will have exactly the same status as the representatives of the Australian Government.

That these final aspects of subordination, few as they are, should be removed and that India should have self-government as free as that of Canada or the United States is the policy of the Government and people of Britain; a simple and precise procedure for its establishment when the fighting ceased was defined in the proposals I laid before the Indian leaders last spring. The practical obstacle to its immediate achievement was the war itself. What prevented the immediate setting up of an executive fully representative of all the great interests and parties was the influence of Mr. Gandhi upon the Congress party. They were offered full participation but they refused.

For the British to "walk out" of India today would mean that India would be left without any constitution or any Government. There would be no election law, no constituencies, no elected assembly, no civil service administration, no courts of justice, no revenue, no police; indeed it would be the ideal of the true anarchist, and an irresistible temptation to Japan.

It 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.

This is not speculation; it is a simple fact and it is because of this simple fact that some period of transition under the present constitution, is essential before the new constitution - yet to be devised by agreement amongst the Indian peoples - can come into operation.

I fully realise and sympathise with the desire of the Indian people for self-government, but they will not attain it by admitting the Japanese or any other Axis power. The war must first be won by the United Nations and I believe that the majority of the Indian people know and realise the truth of that fact.

Mr. Gandhi, who does not believe in war or violence who thinks the Japanese can be defeated by passive resistance, is determined to do his utmost to enforce his beliefs, and he has chosen the moment which is most difficult for the United Nations to make his attempt.

I am sorry that he should have done so as it will make harder and not easier the task of creating the united and self-governing India that we and the Congress Party alike desire to bring into being. It will make no difference to our promise, but it will embitter the feeling between different sections of Indian opinion and so make agreement upon the new constitution more difficult. He has, unwittingly perhaps but nevertheless to a damaging extent, given an opportunity for violence and lawlessness which has most unfortunately led to a few instances of bloodshed and suffering.

It was the duty of the Government of India - largely consisting of Indians - to deal with the difficult situation which he created and there was no other path open to them but to accept the challenge he flung down and to take every step possible to minimise the resulting dangers to India. To this end they have detained Mr. Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress Party and as long as the threat of civil disobedience persists every step must be taken to curtail its adverse effects.

Bitterness and recrimination on either side or amongst different sections of Indian opinion, will provide no solution and will not hasten self-government.

While the British Government give their fullest support to the Government of India in the action that they have taken, they do it without rancour and with no desire to embitter feelings. They have given their backing to the Viceroy and his executive council because law and order in India is the first essential for the successful Defence of India and for the attack upon the Japanese which later must be launched from the Indian base of the Allied Nations.

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