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# TWENTIETH-CENTURY EMPIRE

by the same author

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**ECONOMICS OF A CHANGING WORLD**

# TWENTIETH-CENTURY EMPIRE

by

H. V. HODSON

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To the men and women  
of the new British Empire, the grass-roots beneath the  
sward; all sorts and conditions of men and women,  
who in the war served the common cause in their  
manifold capacities, from the front-line to the fac-  
tories, from the skies to the sink; men and women of  
the Dominions and Colonies who have confirmed  
their sense of 'belonging together' with the harder-  
pressed people of Britain by sending food parcels dur-  
ing the war and since, especially my family's never-  
forgetful and never-forgotten benefactors Ernest Watt  
of Sydney and George Gore of Wellington; and the  
men and women of countries of different race from  
ours (coupled with the name of Rao Bahadur V. P.  
Menon) who know that nationalism is only the begin-  
ning of national greatness and that our nations can be  
greater, as well as safer and more prosperous, if they  
stand together than if they struggle alone.



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**Map**

*at the end of the book*



# I

## KINDS OF WAR AND WAYS TO PEACE

### WORLD MAPS

**T**he map of the world on Mercator's Projection is a cheat and a deceiver. From every school atlas, from every lecture-room wall, it stares as familiarly as one's own face in the mirror. It aggravates the popular misconception of the nature of the British Empire. The bloated red zones to north and south, dwarfing India to a mere Asiatic peninsula, and equating Africa to the area of Greenland, distort not only the sizes but also the relations of different zones to each other; while the centring of the world upon Western Europe, and the festoons of dotted lines denoting steamship tracks from Liverpool to Quebec, London to Gibraltar, Southampton to the Cape, Glasgow to Fremantle, and the rest, encourage the misguided notion of a 'Tar-flung empire', comprising scattered lumps of British territory lightly dangling from a Mother Country.

The British Empire is not far-flung, but relatively compact. By far the greater part of it, including both Dominions and dependencies, is concentrated in two ocean basins: the North Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. If we add to the countries of the Empire that front upon or drain into these two oceans those lying strategically along the two marine routes that link them together (West Africa, and the outposts of the Red Sea and Mediterranean) we are left with a small residue: New Zealand, historically and strategically an outlier of Australia, a bastion of the eastern wall of the Indian Ocean; a few more archipelagian territories in the same zone; Hong Kong, a remote and possibly embarrassing, if useful, part of the British Empire; the Falkland Islands; and, if you like, Wes-

## KINDS OF WAR AND WAYS TO PEACE

tern Canada, which in this regard is perhaps to be reckoned a separate zone from the Eastern Provinces.

Moreover, very few other countries face openly upon the two oceans which together form the vitals of the Empire. All western Europe, except France, Spain and Portugal, is screened from the Atlantic by the British Isles or the British-held orifice of the Mediterranean. Haiti, Cuba, San Domingo, the French and Dutch West Indian colonies, Greenland, Iceland, Mexico and the eastern United States, do not number many of the host of countries of the world, and apart from the United States none of them has any pretensions to being even a second-class military Power. As for the Indian Ocean, with the seas leading into it, by 1919 it was almost completely a British lake. Portuguese and French colonies in East Africa and India, Italian East Africa, Egypt, the Arabian principalities, Iran, Sumatra and a tiny frontage of Siam were literally the only exceptions to the rule. Here, indeed, in this vast basin draining three continents, was the trunk of the British Empire, not far-flung and scattered, but compact behind great natural barriers and a few defended passes, and unified by the ocean that formed an open road from one territory to another.

The geographical concentration of the British Empire in two great oceanic rings and a double axis between them is rooted in many historical causes, some growing out of trade and some out of war. The struggle for the British Empire was a struggle to preserve the hegemony of the North Atlantic and the Indian Ocean: wars were fought and treaties made primarily to this end. The most permanent strategic outcome of the Napoleonic wars, from the British point of view, was the withdrawal of France as a rival for that hegemony, through the loss not only of her naval superiority but also of her strategic colonies. In the same period the supplanting of the Dutch by the British at the key-points of Ceylon and the Cape was closely followed by the acquisition of Singapore.

The most permanent strategic outcome of World War I was likewise the ousting of Germany from those African colonies which had menaced British sea power in the Indian Ocean and the route thereto from the Atlantic;<sup>1</sup> together with the consolidation of

<sup>1</sup> During that war, Dr. Solf, German Colonial Secretary, wrote: *Tor our present unfavourable position in the Far East, England—apart from Japan—is*

## KINDS OF WAR AND WAYS TO PEACE

British authority in Egypt, Palestine and Iraq, barriers to the Indian Ocean, upon the collapse of the Turkish Empire.

To preserve this same order of things as a foundation of world peace is the permanent strategic objective of Great Britain. From the British point of view, the same system is the necessary strategic foundation of world order under the United Nations.

### POSSIBLE WARS

Indeed this conclusion does not depend upon any exclusive national viewpoint. The future world order must be based upon strategic calculation; for the problem of maintaining peace implies a danger of war, which casts the problem at once into a strategic mould. It may be said that strategy begins only when the enemy is known and the objective defined; but defence does not begin only when war is declared, and strategy is the bones of passive defence as well as active military action. Even in the ordered municipal society, the police, not knowing who may be the criminal or where the crime may be committed, must so make their dispositions as to have the maximum chance of intercepting, observing, or following up crime when it happens. These dispositions are based on the 'lie of the land' and on the existence of certain danger zones from the police point of view. Likewise the strategic dispositions on which the safety of a world order must be founded have to be based on geography and the known danger zones.

Strategy consists in the adaptation of the available material and human resources to the natural terrain and the strength of the possible opposition. The resources may be varied, moved, improved, reinforced: the natural terrain is a *datum* of which the strategist must make the best he can. Thus the world order, like

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chiefly responsible. The principal opponent of our expansion is Australia. But we shall never be able to exercise pressure on Australia from a base in the South Seas; we might very well do so from East Africa. . . . If we have a position of strength in Mittel-Afrika, with which India and Australia must reckon, then we can compel both of them to respect our wishes in the South Seas and in Eastern Asia' (quoted in *General Smuts* by Sarah Gertrude Millin). The quotation illustrates vividly, from a hostile viewpoint, the inter-dependence of the whole security system based on British Commonwealth hegemony in the Indian **Ocean** region.

## KINDS OF WAR AND WAYS TO PEACE

national order, must be based on defence, defence on strategy, and strategy on geography. A study of geography will also reveal the other basic factor in police dispositions, the known danger zones.

The international world is not, in fact, an ordered municipal society. Since there is no world government, there can be no world police. The Charter of the United Nations provides, indeed, that its signatories shall make available to the Security Council, at its call, armed forces and other means of assistance; that in particular they shall hold immediately available national air-force contingents for combined international enforcement action; and that through a military staff committee the Security Council shall be charged with the strategic direction of any armed forces placed at its disposal. This is an attempt to fake an 'international police force', in the absence of an international government. The report of the military staff committee dated 30th April 1947 suggested strongly that even the fake is at present unattainable.<sup>1</sup> But, even if it could somehow be fabricated, it still would not be a colourable imitation of the genuine article. All those provisions are subject, in the first place, to the sovereign will of the member nations in carrying them out. The member nations are bound by their signatures to provide their contingents for the defence of peace and the defeat of the aggressor, but they can be held to their word only by the use or threat of war itself. The provisions are subject, in the second place, to the veto of permanent members of the Security Council. A single Great Power can therefore inhibit the use, under the Charter, of any of the military or other resources made available by members of the United Nations.

The broad fact is that the United Nations is not a world society but a system of contract—with 'break clauses'—among sovereign States. The only means of 'sanctions', that is to say, of coercive action by and upon sovereign States, is war, or at least the threat of war. To the extent that the United Nations fails, it leaves war and defence against war as the final instruments of national

<sup>1</sup> After fifteen months' deliberation the committee had failed to reach agreement on (i) the size and proportion of ground, naval and air forces to be made available to the Security Council, (ii) the size and composition of the contingents to be furnished by the several members of the United Nations, (iii) the principles on which a supreme commander should be chosen, (iv) the means of obtaining permission for the international force to use the bases of individual **members of the United Nations.**

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policy. To the extent that it succeeds, it makes war and defence against war the final instruments of international policy. In either event, war is the mode of action. World peace, like national safety, thus depends on a study of possible wars and the geographical factors underlying their causes, their character, and their conduct.

### THE ATOM BOMB

The concept of possible wars, on which the ideal of world peace thus rests until we have a constitutional union of States in a world commonwealth, has of course been revolutionized by the invention of new methods and weapons of war, culminating, so far, in the atomic bomb. The use of atomic energy in warfare is not an isolated phenomenon. It is closely associated with the development of aircraft, radio, radar, jet propulsion, and other inventions. The atomic bomb can be used decisively only in combination with the most advanced devices in other fields, to which likewise the scientists and military experts look for the means of defence or retaliation against it. But it has an exceptional importance, if only because of its impact on the minds of the masses who are the instrument and the objective of total warfare.

It is destined to revolutionize the political world just as the invention of gunpowder revolutionized it in the Middle Ages, though on a vastly different time-scale.

Firearms enabled Europe to penetrate and master most of the remaining continents of the world; firearms gave decisive power to the State against the individual; firearms, in their various terrestrial, aeronautical and marine developments, identified the military Great Powers with the great industrial Powers. The political revolution which began when the first atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima will be equally decisive and far-reaching, and of course far more rapid.

The atomic bomb, together with other mechanical means of warfare, has immensely increased the relative advantage of the industrially advanced States in power politics. Before Hiroshima, a Great Power could be defined as one which possessed the industrial equipment, manpower and resources to maintain modern armed forces on a scale comparable with those of any potential

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enemy. No country without a machine-tool industry, or without an aircraft industry, could qualify as a Great Power. The qualification is now even simpler. It is the possession of, or ability to manufacture, atomic bombs. No country without the industrial and technical assets for this purpose will be a Great Power in the world of to-morrow. The world of to-day is a twilight world, containing only one Great Power, so defined; but the secrets of the atomic bomb cannot remain secret for ever, however jealously they may be guarded.

### GREAT AND SMALL POWERS

It is worth pausing at this stage to consider why a country should wish to be a Great Power. Power for its own sake is indeed one of the main objectives of human endeavour, and this is no less true of national than of individual psychologies. We of the British Empire believe that we exercise power for good, but we must often ask our consciences whether we desire more the good that we do for others, or the power to do it. Undoubtedly we want the good for ourselves, and, in so far as it is not at the expense of others, that is a rational and right objective of power. A Great Power is one which has at least a chance of defending itself, and its own good, against all comers.

But static self-defence is not the usual form in which the needs and problems of international relations present themselves. The day-to-day questions of political and economic diplomacy, which make up state affairs and lead on to the great crises, are more complex and more positive. So long as power remains the basis of State relations—as it certainly does under the United Nations—a Great Power, and only a Great Power, can exercise an independent policy in international affairs, can *set* itself an objective and pursue it, can take its own decisions and carry them out

A lesser Power cannot do so. It is never really independent. It may proclaim objectives or principles but its policy must be opportunist. It may snap at the heels or bark at the approach of Great Powers, but it is the dog and not the man. So if the United Kingdom, or if the British Empire, wishes to pursue an independent policy in world affairs, it must aspire to be a Great Power

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among the few Great Powers. That requires, as a preliminary condition, the possession of the most up-to-date and decisive weapons of war, comparable in type and mass to those possessed by any other Power, together with the means of manufacturing or procuring such weapons.

No one of the member nations of the British Commonwealth can aspire to be a Great Power on its own. None but the United Kingdom has the necessary manpower or industrial equipment; the United Kingdom, on the other hand, lacks not only the necessary basic resources but also the geographical advantages which space and dispersal alone can give. True independence of policy is possible for the British Commonwealth as a whole, but not for its members separately.

While the world remains, as it is to-day, an anarchy of sovereign States, mitigated by compact as in the United Nations Charter, the necessary sanction of national policy is national power. International policy being no more than an aggregation of national policies, its necessary sanction is likewise international power, which can be no more than an aggregation of national forces and facilities. The Charter does not alter this fact, but indeed faithfully reflects it. Atomic power, and the attempts to control it by agreement, only serve to heighten the emphasis.

## BANNING THE ATOM BOMB

The United Nations has been struggling to devise means to 'take the atom out of war'. By all laws of logic, the attempt is futile. To ban the atomic bomb from war presupposes that there will be wars from which to ban it. If the United Nations cannot succeed in their major purpose of preventing war, how can they succeed in the minor purpose of regulating war? Again, to presuppose war presupposes either the total bankruptcy of the United Nations or the use of force by the Security Council against the war-makers. To ban the atomic bomb means that the Security Council itself could not use it; but the war-maker who defies the United Nations over the making of war is not likely to obey the United Nations over the manner of waging it—unless he fears instant retaliation for the second offence, far more devastating and decisive than the

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retort to the first offence. In other words, the use of the atomic bomb by individual nations can be prevented only by threatened use of the atomic bomb by the United Nations.

This is no more than the bare and simple logic of all public order. The forces maintaining order must have at their disposal weapons superior to those possessed by potential law-breakers. But on the international scale this implies that the United Nations should have an authority and power distinct from and superior to those of its member States—should become in fact a world government. The logical train always ends at the same point; world government is the prerequisite, not only of the outlawry of war, but equally of the outlawry of particular modes of waging war, such as the atomic bomb.

All attempts to ban the atomic bomb will be but facade until there is at least a rudimentary system of world government. Facade is not valueless; but for purposes of securing our national and personal lives and freedom it must be treated as what it is. The point is underlined by the possibility—so we are told—of weapons and means of war which are more devastating than the atomic bomb itself. If this is true, banning the atomic bomb falls into its due place, not as a crowning and decisive stroke, but as a secondary convenience, akin to banning gas or the dum-dum bullet: satisfactory if successful, but of relatively minor importance in the war against war. The fundamentals of the relations between States will remain the same: no law, only mutual compact; no governmental order, only balances and hegemonies of power; no police, but only a system of mutual aid based on the concept of possible wars.

## THE MILITARY TIME-TABLE

The atomic bomb as a weapon of possible war has this decisive property: that since there is no known or likely means of defence, since the effect is almost intolerable, and since one or two bombs might obliterate the enemy's whole apparatus for making or despatching any, an overwhelming advantage lies with surprise and speed. The late Lord Lothian and other students of world affairs in the inter-war years used to write of the military time-

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table whose grip, once it began to operate, was bound to overcome all efforts to save peace. The military time-table of the atomic bomb era may be on the scale of seconds rather than days. As a matter of fact the military time-table did not operate in September 1939, or in July or December 1941, quite as those inter-war prophets had theorized, with their eyes on July-August 1914. They were absolutely right in emphasizing that, once the decision is taken to use the military machine, everything depends on forestalling the enemy; in this respect, Pearl Harbour underlined the lesson of the smashing of the Polish air force and military concentrations in the few days after 1st September 1939. But what characterized the start of all three of the major aggressive phases of the war was the calculated and cynical pressing of the military starting-button by the political potentates. They had given up all intention of peace, long before their chosen enemies abandoned hope of peace because the military time-table had begun to operate. The significance of the military time-table was the tremendous advantage that it gave to the deliberate aggressor. This advantage has been further inflated by the advent of the atomic bomb.

Preparedness, more essential than ever as a defence against war, is given an immensely heightened degree of urgency. Atomic power must be ready at once or it is useless; no war-maker, however reluctant to use his own atomic power, could ever allow his enemy's to be built up once war had begun or had been decided upon by him. The only antidote to the atomic bomb is the deterrent of retaliation with the same class of weapon—immediately.

Furthermore, solidarity among such Powers as can achieve it for their mutual defence is more essential than ever. It is not a case of universal accord or nothing; on the contrary, the wider the breaches in general accord, the more vital the need for cohesion among friends. Absolute unity is not the only possible form of equilibrium among Great Powers; it may be that atomic force will never be launched in war simply because, while basic solidarity is growing up from the roots, at the top no Great Power tempted to commit aggression thinks itself safe against the rest. It is not an ideal prospect, but it is better than giving a green light to aggressors.

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## FOUR PHASES OF POWER POLITICS

Before the coming of the atom bomb, power politics were conducted upon three planes. Now they may be conducted upon four; the plane of diplomacy, the plane of *force majeure*, the plane of non-atomic war, and the plane of atomic war. The atom bomb is here treated as the prime example of the long-range weapon of mass destruction; and phrases like 'atomic war\*' must be interpreted to cover the use of all such weapons.

The first phase of pressure by national power upon other nations is that of peaceful persuasion: hard bargaining, backed by more or less veiled threats, economic pressure, bribery and cunning. The most respectable nations employ these means, though with restraint. Diplomacy is advocacy without a Court, legalism without law.

The second phase is one which in our own times Hitler perfected: the building-up of a situation in which a weaker nation must yield to *force majeure* or—take the consequences. It is the method of robbery under arms. The arms may not be loaded, but that the victim does not know; the feel of the gun barrel in his ribs is enough. Gunmen rarely fire. The characteristic action of this second phase is armed occupation, as when Hitler marched into the Rhineland or Austria, or Stalin into the Baltic States. The rest of the world is faced with *a. fait accompli*. Protest as it may, it can act only by starting a war. Its decision to confine itself to protests is usually a foregone conclusion.

The third phase, war, supervenes when the victim resists and the gun goes off, whether or not war was part of the aggressor's plan; or when the rest of the world applies force, not to anticipate, but to repel, his aggression. War is not always the choice of the aggressor; he may well hope and intend to get his way without war. Thus the second phase, which is usually decided upon deliberately, may give way 'automatically' to the third.

So likewise may the third give way to the fourth phase, that of atomic war. Professional warfare becomes more and more a struggle for industrial production and supply; and behind the economics of war lies public morale. The citizen and his cities are an instrument of war and thus an inevitable target for attack.

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Such attack uses all the weapons available, and may even in all sincerity adopt the most destructive of weapons in order to 'spare life by shortening the war'.

But the possibility that each phase may give way to the next without deliberate intention, nursed by one or more participants from the beginning, does not mean that the phases are not to be distinguished, nor that the process can never be halted at the boundary of any of them. The purpose of collective security is to ensure that ambitious or aggrieved Powers, however extortionate their diplomacy, dread to act by *force majeure*—that is, to draw the line between the first and second phases. The policy of the Western democracies from 1935 to 1939 was to draw the line between the second and third. By acquiescing in the seizure of territories, they bought off war. It is conceivable that an effective line might be drawn between the third and the fourth phases: that the collective power and will of a group of nations, while not successful in preventing war, might prevent atomic war.

Certainly it is folly to neglect the potential means of action required for any phase simply because it may in certain circumstances give way to a more deadly phase in which those means may be of little value. Nations do not abandon diplomacy because they may one day be forced into war. They do not cease to man their frontiers with relatively ill-armed troops because at some hypothetical time those frontiers may be passed by airborne armadas or flying bombs. Nor, then, should they neglect their navies, armies and air forces because it may happen that an enemy will try to smash their cities with atomic bombs. The fact that one man with a revolver can cow half-a-dozen weaponless citizens, and a company of soldiers mow down a mob of many thousands, does not mean that fisticuff brawls and robbery with violence are things of the past, or that state systems are impervious to demonstrations by the unarmed.

There is much to be said for the view that the critical boundary, for the preservation of peace, is that between the first and the second phases of power politics. This frontier can be defended with quite old-fashioned weapons, provided there are plenty of the new and more formidable weapons behind them to check the potential aggressor from overstepping the middle phases straight into the third or fourth.

## KINDS OF WAR AND WAYS TO PEACE

Occupation of territory is the most valuable prize of war. Fundamentally, it is also the primary method of war. Even atomic bombs must be delivered from somewhere, and their effect validated by occupation of surrendered territory. Occupation itself cannot be performed with atomic bombs, nor with any other kind of missile. It requires manpower, armed and embodied. A year and more after the surrender of Japan, there were tracts of territory formerly occupied by her forces which could not be re-occupied and pacified by Allied forces for lack of troops and their equipment for the job. Occupation, once achieved, cannot be flung back by atomic bombs or the like; for they slaughter friend and foe indiscriminately, and destroy what it is desired to recover. Occupation of territory is the characteristic of phase two, marking it off from diplomatic bullying. The means of occupying territory and of barring such occupation are thus the primary means of defending the critical boundary for the preservation of peace.

Occupation in this context need not always mean posting soldiers at every street corner and in every public building. It may include, or even be confined to, the control of key points by naval and air forces with their necessary landholds. Despite the atomic bomb, the long-range rocket, and all the rest of the armoury of terror, the shock troops in battle for world peace are still navies, armies and air forces, disposed and equipped for arresting or anticipating any disturbance of the territorial order.

This conclusion is of great importance for the British Commonwealth, as for any other group of like-minded nations. The advent of the atomic bomb may tempt them to neglect the immediate means of joint territorial defence, in favour of co-operation at the level of science, industry, and long-distance mechanical warfare. This may help them in the end to win wars, but it cannot serve to prevent wars. It will not spare them the destruction wrought upon them by their enemies before their superior mechanical and scientific power becomes effective. In a lower key, they may be tempted to neglect army co-operation for naval co-operation, or both for co-operation in the air. Each should be the adjunct of the others. More dangerous still, they may neglect co-operation in the actual disposal of their forces, in favour of potential co-operation

## KINDS OF WAR AND WAYS TO PEACE

**after** some hypothetical war has broken out. This is not the way to prevent wars.

**The problem** of joint defence for the British Commonwealth, then, though not unaffected, is certainly not outmoded or diminished, by the coming of the atomic bomb. That event has added to it on the scientific and industrial plane without subtracting from it on the military plane, more narrowly defined. Its essential objective is preservation of the territorial order, its essential means those adapted to securing that objective. Territorial—that is to say, regional—co-operation is therefore still vital element in British Commonwealth defence.

## II

### THEATRES OF POWER

#### THE MAP OF WORLD POWER

**T**he world, looked at with the eyes of the strategist, or the power politician, is divided into seven great theatres: (i) the Atlantic, (2) the European continent with North Africa and the Levant, (3) the huge land mass of Russia and Central Asia (Sir Holford Mackinder's 'Heartland'), (4) the Indian Ocean, (5) Africa bar the Mediterranean littoral, (6) the Western Pacific, and (7) the Americas. (See the map at end of the book.)

The definition of these zones depends to some extent on political as well as physical geography. Thus if a military Great Power were to arise in Latin America, or if the Monroe Doctrine had not been given that British endorsement which enabled it to succeed, the Americas would be divided into two strategic zones. The central land mass would be divided into two if it were not politically unified under the U.S.S.R., or if Russia and China were to become rival great Powers of comparable strength. If Japanese designs had succeeded, we should have had to extend the Western Pacific theatre to include continental East Asia.

The existence of the British Empire is of course a crucial datum of political geography in this connection. It means that the same power-group dominates not only the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic theatres, but also the African—which though literally a continental zone draws its prime strategic character from its bearing on the communications between oceans. Were it not for these political facts we should probably have had to mark out another great strategic theatre in the South Atlantic. The latter zone would then have been a field of clash and conflict instead of a corridor with peace upon its shores.

## THEATRES OF POWER

On any political hypotheses, however, the great geographical and strategic factors are paramount, and under present circumstances they define the seven theatres listed above. These are the bedrock geographical foundations on which any design of world order must be reared.

The Mediterranean is not to-day a separate theatre. Air power has reduced its straits to the dimensions of rivers, and made it a strategic appanage of Europe. From the British point of view (which is the oceanic or world point of view, as distinct from the continental) the Mediterranean has always been a secondary theatre—either a route between two oceans, or a means of bringing oceanic force to bear upon the European continent, or (as regards its eastern periphery) a borderland which must be defended if the Indian Ocean theatre is to remain secure. It was exactly the same in Nelson's day as it was when Italy became the 'soft under-belly of the Axis'. In all these roles the Mediterranean is as vital to world security as it is to the defence of the British Empire; but it is not a separate theatre, divided by any severe natural barriers from the main European theatre with which it is associated.

The seven great theatres are not precisely marked out, like countries with their frontiers delimited and guarded. They blend and overlap. Coasts and ports are as much an integral part of the oceanic theatres as is the sea itself; and their hinterlands merge into the continental theatres. More than one continental dividing line is undetermined by physical geography alone. It is at these overlapping or indefinite margins that the strains and stresses occur that lead to world war. These are the danger spots for a world system of law and order.

Britain's great land wars have been fought upon the no-man's-land between the Atlantic and European theatres, that is to say, France, Spain, and the Low Countries. Other vital struggles of modern world history have been fought in the no-man's-land between the European and Indian Ocean theatres, that is to say, Egypt, Palæstine, Iraq, the Black Sea. The establishment of the Americas as a separate theatre of world power cost the war of American Independence, the war of 1812, and the Spanish-American war, all fought on the margin between the new theatre

## THEATRES OF POWER

and the Atlantic theatre from which it separated. Great wars, including the two stupendous world wars of our time, have been fought between the leading powers of the European and Central theatres in the no-man's-land where Slav and Teuton mix, between the Elbe and the Volga. After the first down-payment of the Russo-Japanese war, the separation of the Western Pacific as a distinct theatre of world power cost the Sino-Japanese wars and the Far Eastern campaigns of the 1941-45 war.

The problem of world order thus resolves itself into two parts: to preserve peace within each great theatre of power, and to preserve peace at the borders between the different theatres. Of these tasks the first is both inherently easier and less important. It is inherently easier, because within any of the theatres federal or imperial solutions are possible which on the world scale are scarcely conceivable—or at any rate are far more onerous and difficult to sustain. It is less important, because wars that can be localized within one of the great power theatres are not in their nature world wars. Devastating as they may be to the participants, they do not threaten the whole foundations of civilization as world wars threaten it. If Bolivia fights Paraguay, or India fights Afghanistan, the rest of the world thinks of it more as a kind of civil war than as a threat to general peace. Once a war spreads beyond one of the great power theatres and involves the relations between two or more of them, sooner or later it almost inevitably drags in the whole world.

## THE PAX BRITANNICA

In the century from the Treaty of Vienna to 1914, the task of securing world order (in the sense of preventing world wars) by defending the frontiers between the different power theatres, and thus localizing wars within them, fell largely upon the British Empire. The factors which brought about this state of affairs and enabled it to continue successfully for a hundred years, though greatly altered by events of the twentieth century, are nevertheless too deeply rooted in the past, and in the unchangeable facts of geography, to be discarded in the construction of a new world order. Over a great part of the globe, that order must be either an

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adaptation or an enlargement of the British Empire system of world peace.

Of the seven major power theatres, three are oceanic (the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Western Pacific), and four are continental (Europe, Africa, the Americas, and the Central Land Mass). Of the four continental theatres, one, Africa beyond the Mediterranean littoral, played a subordinate part in world power politics during the nineteenth century. Factors external to Africa spared it those colonial projections of European quarrels which racked India and North America in earlier times. Its tropical character checked the growth of new white nations which might either fight among themselves or eventually develop into great powers raising world ambitions upon a foundation of continental hegemony. There was indeed one example of such international conflict between rival white peoples established in Africa—the Boer war—and this might well have led to world war had it occurred a dozen years later, when Germany was readier to challenge British naval power. Field-Marshal Smuts is reported as saying that the Great War was begun when Germany learnt to appreciate the meaning of the British fleet during the Boer war and decided to build a fleet herself.\* As it was, the Boer war—the only war in Central and Southern Africa from the earliest days of European settlement to the campaigns against the German colonies, bar wars of subjugation or attempted subjugation against the native Africans—was localized by British sea power. Thus for a century Africa's role in world power politics was secondary, being indeed that of a buttress to British command of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean theatres. Africa's subordinate strategic position, in fact, was a by-product of that double command.

One of the remaining continental theatres—the Americas—was primarily concerned during that century with its own colonization and development. It had its internal wars, but as a whole it played no large positive part in world power politics. Beyond its own shores, it was content to accept British naval supremacy, which was linked in interest with its own exclusiveness. The Monroe Doctrine was essentially an Anglo-American policy supported by British power. The exclusiveness and independence of the

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Gertrude Millin, *General Smuts*, ch. VIII.

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Americas depended on the command of the oceans **to the east** by a friendly Power having outposts on both sides thereof, **and** on the absence from the oceans to the west of any Great Power able to challenge such naval strength as Britain and the United States together could deploy there.

As Lord Lothian lost no opportunity of reminding the American people, an ocean is in these days a sound defensive barrier if, and only if, the defender can prevent his enemy from using it as a highway and from denying it to himself as a highway; and this he can do successfully, in the absence of completely overwhelming naval forces, only if he or his friends possess bases on the farther side as well as the hither side of the ocean. The Atlantic was a sure shield to the Americas because Great Britain was established in her own islands and at Gibraltar, and saw in American inviolability her own interest. In other words, the American continental theatre of power was a ward of British hegemony in the Atlantic theatre.

Until the rise of Japan to Great Power status, British hegemony in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean theatres was also sufficient to insulate the Western Pacific theatre from such European or American penetration, or such Asiatic expansion, as would give it a positive role in world power politics or raise a threat of world war along its margins with other theatres. The Russo-Japanese war, which helped to define one of these margins, was masked by British power, and thus prevented from turning into world war.

All these facts combined to eliminate from the list of danger-spots for world war a great many of the inter-theatre borderlands. Before the rise of Japan, virtually only three remained: namely, the frontiers of the European theatre with the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and the Central-Land-Mass theatres respectively. The last-named zone of conflict was chronically a field of struggle, as it had been throughout history; but until 1914 these wars of Eastern Europe did not expand into world war mainly because the *cordons sanitaires*, which were drawn round Europe to the west and the south-east, barred these continental infections from the oceans and from the lands beyond.

Here was the key to world power and to world peace. The *cordons sanitaires* were held by the strength of the British Empire, not

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by naval strength alone, but by the whole complex of sea power, including the command of strategic points within the border zones themselves: the British Isles, Gibraltar, the Suez Canal. These, with Britain's industrial and mercantile strength, were part and parcel of her sea power. Had not the mouths of the Scheldt and the Rhine, and the coasts of the Iberian and Scandinavian peninsulas, been in the hands of small, generally friendly Powers, or had France in this period been capable of challenging British supremacy at sea, or had Turkey not been decadent and Russia muscle-bound, the story might have been very different. As it was, the British Navy and British-commanded key-points held the two danger-zones and preserved world peace. In addition, the British Empire maintained peace and order within its own wide bounds, and insulated the American and African theatres of power from the rest of the world.

That, then, was the system of world order in the century from Waterloo to Sarajevo. It did not prevent wars altogether: on the contrary, this was a period of constant war, international, colonial, revolutionary. But it localized wars: it confined them to the several great power theatres wherein they originated. And it did so with the minimum of organization and effort. This system was the main boon that British imperialism afforded to the world at large, and in the eyes of the world it was the Empire's main justification. It was tolerated, despite the natural jealousy of masterful strength, because Britain was not a land Power with territorial ambitions in its own continent, and because the interests of Britain were also the interests of most nations, particularly the smaller nations of Europe and the New World. Its success and its simplicity were such that no durable scheme of world order can fail to build on it and adapt it to the conditions of the twentieth century. Adaptation to new conditions is at the same time necessary for the survival of the British Empire itself. It will help in showing what changes are necessary, and how a single imperial hegemony can be woven into a world-wide co-operative system, to see why the old system broke down when political circumstances changed and when there appeared new weapons and new methods of war.

### III

## WORLD POWER OR DOWNFALL

### LITTLE ENGLAND

Whether the British Commonwealth or Empire as such has a peculiar and necessary contribution to make to world peace and order is not a question that answers itself. Dominion independence, coupled with the existence of the United Nations, seems to some people to have made the Commonwealth an anachronism as a political and defensive concept. Such people admit that a family it must remain; since none can escape his genealogy, but a family, they argue, does not necessarily run a family business. To them, the concept of the Commonwealth is vague and unreal, the concept of Empire is obsolete; the word Empire they associate with narrow protectionism, with a selfish capitalism, with exploitation of weaker peoples, with bombast and flag-wagging, in the Dominions with a curbing of their new sweet national freedom, in the dependent Empire with the thwarting of national aspirations and with the racial supremacy of the white man. Such sentiments, it is true, once so popular with those in the United Kingdom who like to think of themselves as abreast of the times, went rather out of fashion when members of a Labour Government, given the practical experience of office, not only praised the British Commonwealth, but even claimed primacy in zeal for developing Empire resources. Many British people, however, while having nothing *against* the Empire, know of *nothing for* it that would make it world while to take any trouble to preserve and develop it.

These people do not often pursue the logic of the Little-Englandism which they tacitly adopt. Britain without the Empire is a small European country. Small European countries can be happy

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and prosperous places so long as they are left alone; but they are not left alone if it suits greater Powers to interfere with them. Conscious Little-Englandism was pore rife before the war, when those who were disillusioned with the Empire and tired of greatness would say: 'Why should we not become another Denmark or another Norway?' The answer came to them in 1940.

Is it, however, certain that Britain without the Empire need sink to small-power status? Britain was great before she had so vast an Empire, and these territories beyond the seas are military liabilities as well as military assets. Is not Britain, with her wealth in capital and skill, her island situation, the courage and steadfastness of her people, the character of her leaders, the prestige of her history and her culture, able to stand by herself as a Great Power among the greatest? Proof that the answer is 'No\*' is to be found in another look at the atlas.

## BALANCE OF POWER IN EUROPE

The British Isles are geographically part of Europe. The 'anti-tank ditch' of the English Channel saved Britain—and probably saved the world—in 1940. But it has little meaning for the long-distance weapons of the future, even omitting the atom bomb. Britain's position in a world of power politics depends on her relationship to the continent of which she is physically a member. Strategically, Europe including the British Isles is one theatre of power. Politically it is divided into national fragments. Its peace through history has depended upon an internal balance of power, and Britain's history in turn has depended on her relationship to that balance.

An imperial peace for Europe, under the domination of one nation or ruler, is in theory a possible alternative, but it is not one that has ever been acceptable to Britain. Domination of the Continent of Europe implies domination of the British Isles. Denying national freedom to Continental countries, such a system would deny it equally to those on the fringes of the Continent, including the British Isles and the small countries of North Africa and the Middle East.

As for the alternative of balance, a balance of power is a state

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of unstable equilibrium, whose breakdown spells war, unless one of two conditions is fulfilled: either, whenever the balance is temporarily disturbed, it must be redressed by some outside element—for instance a third party, which straddles the balance, or a rallying of small countries, not being regular parties to the balance, to the aid of the weaker side; or there must be some inherent inertia in the balance, such as a strong natural frontier, or the acknowledged whiphand of defensive weapons, which will check the action of the stronger side unless its margin of superiority is immense. In Europe to-day there is no such strong natural frontier, nor does the state of military technique afford any self-operating inertia to a balance of power. That inertia might, indeed, derive from a general fear of war: from a knowledge that retaliation, even by a weaker enemy, may be very painful, and that victory may be almost as costly as defeat. But experience shows that a mild dose of propaganda at home and abroad can easily reverse the effect of this factor, by making it unnecessary for a stronger side even to fight a frightened enemy; the friends and allies of the weaker party, equally fearful of modern war, with one accord find reasons for not honouring their alliance or proving their friendship in practical aid.

So we are left with outside redressment as the condition of a stable balance of power in Europe. The League of Nations was one attempt to provide this, by securing that when the balance was disturbed by an act or threat of aggression (which would presumably be offered only by a country that felt itself in possession of superior power) all the major and minor countries would rally to the defence of the victim. This plan failed, partly because of the universal fear of war, which makes cowards of us all, and turns into scraps of paper those general pacts which are neither founded on plainly recognized national interest, nor supported by any reliable machinery of common action. It failed partly also because the universal and hypothetical character of such pacts makes any previous military plans impossible, and enables the diplomatic or military aggressor to pick off his victims one by one. Military collusion is possible only where the probable common enemies are recognized in advance—where, in fact, the colluding parties already form an integral unit in the structure of world

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power. This is as true of the United Nations as it was of the League.

There remains the possibility of an outside country or combination of countries straddling the balance and throwing in its weight whenever the balance is seriously disturbed. This has been the traditional role of Great Britain in Europe. In 1914 she flung herself into the balance, yet still not to decisive effect either in maintaining peace or in assuring her own victory. The role of making weight in the balance passed to the United States, who assumed it reluctantly and only just in time in 1917.

The intended League of Nations system (combined with the Anglo-American guarantee to France) could have been interpreted as designed to secure peace by adding the United States to Britain as the outside redresser of a disturbed European balance. This conception was destroyed by the American defection both from the League and from the guarantee. Locarno, taken with the French system of alliances, was an attempt to reconstruct the balance-and-straddle, with Great Britain again in the third-party role. In its formal terms, the Locarno pact of guarantee was a classic of symmetry and reciprocity. But the balance balanced only so long as the French alliance system in Eastern Europe remained taut and reliable; if that system broke down, France alone was no match for Germany alone, once Germany re-armed. Locarno then boiled down to an Anglo-French alliance. The balance was restored by importing Britain as a permanent weight on one side of it. The straddle system disappeared, and the old story was then repeated. The United States had once again to assume the third-party role, in order not to save Europe from itself, but to save Britain from Europe.

History repeats itself because geography remains a constant. The necessary conditions of a successful system of balance of power in Europe are still the initial balancing and the contingent straddling. But if the European balance of power proved unstable in the past, can it be stable now? The emergence of Russia as a world Power of the first order is a new fact of critical importance. Britain and Russia alike to-day occupy positions in relation to the rest of Europe such as Britain alone previously occupied: attached to it geographically, yet politically detached. Stronger than either

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is the United States, whose relations with Europe are now pledged to a permanent intimacy.

In these circumstances the old bogey of a Europe united under the leadership of one Power—provided that Power is not Russia herself nor an ally of Russia—holds to-day little or none of its traditional menace for Britain. The unity of Europe, as far eastward as the influence of Western Christendom is paramount, is now a British national interest. The question for her is no longer whether her diplomacy in Europe can maintain a balance of power and her strength keep it permanently tilted against any ambitious European imperialism, but whether she can exert such influence in Europe as to further its unity, and such power outside it, relative to Russia and the United States, as to prevent Europe from becoming a cockpit of struggle between East and West. If she turns her back on Europe, she commits it to Russian hegemony as surely as she would have committed it to German hegemony by turning her back on it in two previous generations. If, on the other hand, as 'little England', reduced to the status of one of a number of European countries, she becomes absorbed in the Continent, she can neither save Europe from becoming a battleground of world war, nor have a decisive influence on the outcome of that struggle.

### BRITAIN'S SEA POWER

Her position in Europe is not now distinguished from that of others of its greater Powers merely by the formerly decisive fact of her being an island. The atomic bomb makes light of that. But we do not have to assume that future warfare will be atomic, as indeed it may not be. Once enemy air-power is decisive over the English Channel, invasion is hindered but certainly not prevented by the sea frontier. Britain is extremely vulnerable to attack both on her industries and on her lines of communication. She can be starved of food and raw materials. Moreover, no country, least of all Great Britain, can indefinitely endure a defensive war without a chance of positive victory. Positive victory against a European foe, or one with a strong foothold in Europe, can be won only on European soil.

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It is sea power which has afforded Britain not only the means of avoiding defeat, but also the means of achieving victory, in the great wars of the past. It is sea power which to-day distinguishes her from other European countries and enables her to help solve Europe's own security problem by standing outside it as an equal of any nation in the world. Sea power does not consist only in a fleet of ships. Ships must be manned, watered, victualled, fuelled, munitioned, repaired. They need friendly ports across the seas, including actual naval bases, capable of effecting major repairs, and supplying munitions and equipment. All these ports must be assured and defended, and their defence in turn requires adequate land and air forces on the spot. Assured oversea connections, both strategic and political, are vital to that kind and degree of sea power which Britain needs to secure her life on the edge of Europe and to exercise her historic role in helping to keep the European peace. Spengler's slogan, '*Weltmacht oder Medergang*'—world power or downfall—was never true of Germany, for Germany could not merely survive but actually dominate Europe without world power; but it is certainly true of the British Isles.

World power need not mean imperial power, certainly not in the old sense of a centrally mastered *imperium*. It may be based on a Commonwealth of like-thinking and (for the most part) blood-linked nations, like the self-governing members of the British Commonwealth. It may be based on alliance, or solid *entente*, with foreign nations. In the post-war world the Empire as we know it is certainly not enough by itself. But the raw material of world order includes the British Empire.

### SEA POWER IS WORLD POWER

How little of world power does Britain need to support her sea power and sustain her as a first-class military force? She needs, clearly, command of the Atlantic; but command of the Atlantic can never be hers alone; she can exercise it only in partnership with, or by the acquiescence of, the United States. American friendship is the first condition of British world power. But if Britain cannot do without the United States, the United States

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cannot do without Britain.<sup>1</sup> The Atlantic, in the absence of British sea power around its European shores, is a highway for America's potential enemies in Europe. If, indeed, given firm American friendship, Britain could dispense with imperial bases on the western side of the Atlantic, the United States cannot dispense with British bases on its eastern side. Gibraltar (or some other base able to command the mouth of the Mediterranean) is the southern key, as the British Isles are the northern key, to Atlantic command by a western European power. Gibraltar is the beginning of the minimum strategic empire for Great Britain. Halifax and the mouth of the St. Lawrence, and the West Indies, are dispensable as actual Empire territory, but on condition, of course, that they are in the hands of countries friendly to Britain and unfriendly to her enemies.

We do not always recognize how much British sea power has owed to the negative fact that certain territories, little regarded in peace time, are not in the hands of our enemies or our enemies' friends. It is only necessary to imagine starting the war of 1939 with Lisbon, the Azores, Iceland, and some of the non-British West Indian islands under Germany's thumb to realize how vital

<sup>1</sup> This is what the greatest exponent of the theory and practice of sea power, the American Admiral (then Captain) Mahan, wrote about the common interest of Britain and the United States in sea power as the foundation of world peace:

'Partners, each in the great commonwealth of nations which share the blessings of European civilization . . . they must depend upon the sea, in chief measure, for that intercourse with other members of the body on which national well-being depends. . . . To Great Britain and the United States, if they rightly estimate the part they may play in the great drama of human progress, is entrusted a maritime interest, in the broadest sense of the word, which demands, as one of the conditions of its exercise and its safety, the organized force adequate to control the general course of events at sea. . . .

\*I would avoid all premature striving for alliance, an artificial and possibly even an irritating method of reaching the desired end. Instead, I would dwell continually upon those undesirable points of resemblance in national characteristics, and in surrounding conditions, which testify to common origin and predict a common destiny. . . .

'In this same pregnant strife [among European nations] the United States doubtless will be led, by undeniable interests and aroused national sympathies, to play a part, to cast aside the policy of isolation which befitted her infancy, and to recognize that, whereas once to avoid European entanglement was essential to the development of her individuality, now to take her share of the travail of Europe is but to assume an inevitable task, an appointed lot, in the work of upholding the common interests of civilization.'

*The Interest of America in Sea Power* (London), 1898

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this point is. The complicity of French West Africa (Dakar) in the German war effort after 1940 was an object lesson to the same effect. These negative conditions are unlikely to be fulfilled without positive assets to support them. Britain cannot count on those decidedly friendly neutral territories all round the Atlantic unless she herself, and her associates in the British Empire, are themselves firmly ensconced around that ocean. An Atlantic empire, then, is the minimum basis of the world power that Britain needs.

A British Empire confined to the North Atlantic is a possible strategic conception. It is intriguing to imagine what might have happened if England had concentrated her imperial energy upon this in past centuries. But it does not meet the case to-day, not only because we cannot write off history and abandon the rest of the Empire as if it had never been, but also because we cannot write off geography and forget that the Atlantic is accessible to Europe from the south as well as the north-east.

The so-called neck of the Atlantic, which divides the northern from the southern ocean, is not a narrow strait. It is a thousand miles across. True, it is a natural highway for inter-continental air transport, and a natural hunting ground for submarines or surface raiders which must seek their prey where the mathematical chances of finding it are highest. But it is not a defensible line. It is an open door for a Power dominating the northern ocean to penetrate into the southern ocean, or vice versa. Command of the North Atlantic and the western coasts of Europe would be a hollow boast if a rival Great Power dominated the South Atlantic and the western coasts of Africa or the eastern coasts of South America. The Monroe Doctrine protects the South American side, but American naval power alone, with two oceans to care for, is scarcely more capable now than it was in the days of President Monroe, or at any time in the nineteenth century, of guaranteeing the security of South America without the aid of British power throughout the Atlantic Oceans. Britain's Monroe Doctrine is 'hands off Africa'.

In the war of 1914, German East and German South-West Africa had to be cleaned up before the British naval position in the South Atlantic and the South Indian Ocean could be assured. In the war of 1939, Italian East Africa and (after the defection of

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France) Madagascar, had likewise to be rendered unusable by the enemy. Until the occupation of French North Africa, the port of Dakar and the north-west African coast were thorns in the flesh. The dangers were real, despite\*<sup>1</sup> the fact that the enemy's home bases were two oceans' breadth away from South Africa—two oceans alive with British naval power.

A negative policy of 'Hands Off Africa' is most unlikely to be effective unless a large part of the continent is actually held by British power. An exact parallel with the Monroe Doctrine is impossible because so much of Africa is presently incapable of political independence. Thus not only an Atlantic but also an African empire is an essential buttress of the world power that Britain needs.

Even if Britain has command of the North Atlantic, and even if we assume an impenetrable zone of desert and mountain and tropical forest barring the Mediterranean basin from the territories to the south, there is another maritime road from Europe to Southern Africa, the road through the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf. The Middle East affords no natural barriers to a Power with the punching-force of Europe or of the great Asiatic land mass behind it. In the absence of a rival Great Power in the way, as Britain has stood in the way of French and German ambitions in successive centuries, the Indian Ocean is wide open from the north-west. 'Hands Off West Africa' would not be much good as a pillar of Atlantic command if East Africa and the Indian Ocean were commanded by a rival. If the Union of South Africa were not a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations it would soon be obliged to swing into the orbit of any other Great Power having a footing in Africa and an open road thereto via the Middle East. Thus a defensive line in the Middle East is essential for Britain's minimum needs of world power, as a condition of African supremacy and thus of command of the Atlantic.

## MIGHT-HAVE-BEENS AND MIGHT-BES

All this may seem very far-fetched, a piling of hypothesis on hypothesis, a telescoping of many stages of potential enemy expansion, which would cumulatively take a very long time—time

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to think again. This criticism is based on an illusion. We have only to study the might-have-beens of World War II. How near we came, in the autumn of 1940, and again in June 1942, to losing command of the last defences of the Nile delta! How long thereafter could the defence of the southern end of the Suez Canal have lasted, with supply routes incomparably longer and more hazardous than those of the enemy? How close a shave was it for us in Iraq after Rashid Ali's revolution? If our position in the Middle East had been liquidated, how soon would Turkey have bowed to Axis pressure and ceased to stand athwart the land routes to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea?

Suppose there had been no India under the British flag to provide the forces that subdued Iraq and Iran. Suppose there had been no India to furnish food, equipment and munitions for the British forces in the Middle East, let alone the Indian armies themselves. Could the Kenya frontier, which the Italians menacingly penetrated in the summer of 1940, have proved a defensible line against the Germans and Italians combined, with the backing of an East African empire and command of the Suez Canal? If Madagascar under the Vichy French was a grave menace to our ocean traffic, how utterly untenable would have been our maritime position in those waters, had Tanga and Mombasa as well as Mogadiscio been controlled by the enemy. If Madagascar was subservient to him, even under the circumstances that existed, how could Portuguese Africa have resisted him under such circumstances as we are now imagining?

These might-have-beens are enough to show that, given the initial breakdown or absence of a British front guarding the north-western gates of the Indian Ocean, a single determined campaign would have enabled the enemy to drive to the Cape and open up a South Atlantic front which in due course could have imperilled even North Atlantic supremacy.

Nor need we think only in terms of military campaigns. Between the Balkans and the Cape of Good Hope, Turkey is the only substantial Power, and the only one standing upon a natural defensive line, the Taurus mountains. If Imperial Germany could make Turkey her tool, if Nazi Germany could browbeat every Danubian country (save, at the last moment, Jugo-Slavia) into

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servicing her ends, and wipe up Jugo-Slavia and Greece in one short sharp campaign, even in face of British and (in the earlier phases) French military and diplomatic power in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and with a Russian menace on her flank, who can doubt that in the absence of British resistance it would not need a great war for a major Power to secure the hegemony of the whole Middle East and to open up the whole Indian Ocean to pressure?

A Middle East dominated by Russia is a conceivable basis for the organization of world power. But a south-bound Russian imperialism would hardly stop short at the Middle East. To turn the major part of the Indian Ocean basin into a field of Russian imperial influence, if not absorption, would almost certainly spell a great war sooner or later. There is no point in throwing away the British Empire solution in order to substitute one so sacrificial for ourselves, so perilous for the world.

Another possibility, on paper, for the defence of the Middle Eastern inter-theatre zone is a strong union of Muslim States, from the Bosphorus and the Nile to Pakistan. But the Muslim nations are no more naturally and permanently at one than are the Christian nations. Egypt is as different from Afghanistan as Britain is from either of them; and they are certainly less likely to be cemented in durable alliance. Even if the dream were somehow to come true, the whole Muslim Middle-Eastern bloc would not together form a military Great Power unless it was backed by a major industrial nation.

## THE WORLD NEEDS THE EMPIRE

Thus, although we have now entertained rival hypotheses and blurred our former clear-cut certainties, the original postulate of Britain's survival as a Great Power has been seen to lead on by logical stages to the need for an Eastern as well as an African and an Atlantic empire. Once in the Indian Ocean, there is no natural stopping place or defensible frontier until the other side is reached. The Indian Ocean basin is one strategic unit. It cannot be left wide open to the East, if the West is to be secure. Suez and Aden imply Singapore. British Africa implies an India friendly to Britain and unfriendly to her potential enemies.

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The British Empire is not only justified by the logic of its own existence. It is *required* by the same necessities as brought it into existence and sustained it through trials within and without. It is required as the condition of Britain's survival as a Great Power, which in turn is required by the world to make peace possible. In the past, the British Empire in the Atlantic, in Africa, in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific has been the means of securing peace for most of the time for most of the world; it is the best foundation for a still more successful system of world peace in the future, not only because it exists, and because its dissolution would be the signal for a deadly struggle to inherit its resources and its power, but also because, if it did not exist, it would have to be constructed anew. Without it, the world would be due for a catastrophic struggle among the great continental blocs of power for the command of the oceans and the lands which the oceans defend. And amid all this, the British Isles themselves, home of the people who have led the world in freedom and fair play, would sink to insignificance and subjection.

## IV

### THE THIN RED LINE

As a necessary foundation for a world order, then, the British Empire, if it did not exist, would have to be invented; for to knit into one complex so many lands, so various in the degree of their advancement, must needs involve empire as well as alliance.

But the British Empire, as it is, is not enough, either to subsist securely by itself or to discharge its historic role in the prevention of world war. It is not enough, for three reasons. It is geographically inadequate. Nor has it yet built a sure system of military integration, even regionally, to replace the old system dominated by the United Kingdom. And, even when that problem is solved, the British Empire will remain incapable of mustering, within itself, all the force necessary to accomplish the task, save by efforts which its peoples are unlikely to make year after year in times of outward peace.

The British Empire, geographically, falls short of its task. When France threw in her hand in 1940, and a hopelessly ill-prepared England, with a weaponless remnant of an army, faced Germany at the peak of her power, the great strategic asset that the British Empire possessed ready-made (apart from the just-enough navy, the just-enough air force, the just-enough merchant marine to bring the just-enough supplies from overseas) was that it stood already in the key places for fighting a world war. It stood at the gate of north-western Europe, and at the eastern and western gates of the Mediterranean, Europe's inland sea, with a sturdy outpost, well fortified by nature and by man, in the midst thereof. It stood at all the gates of the Indian Ocean, over most of whose

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shores already waved the British flag. It had bases in the Western Atlantic. Of the other main key-points in world military geography, the Panama Canal was commanded by England's friend, the United States, whose outposts spread across the far Pacific. These were the assets that saved the Empire and saved the world.

They were tremendous, but to be enough they had to be supplemented. Iceland and the Faroes had to be occupied, to reinforce the command of the sea lanes from North-Western Europe. Syria and Iraq had to be occupied, again not merely to deny them to the enemy, but in order to complete the barrier around Europe; and they were followed, when the German pressure took a different turn, by Iran—and for the same reasons. Madagascar was on a different footing; for it had no defensive importance to the British, only an offensive value to the enemy.

Even then, the geographical stance of the strongly armed United Nations was clearly imperfect. From start to finish of the war, the British Empire line of defence, by itself, had many gaps and soft spots. Evacuation of Egypt and the Suez Canal area would make another gap even more vital than those which weakened it from 1939 to 1945.

## COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION

In these circumstances, it would seem the course of prudence for the countries of the British Commonwealth to close their ranks and try to make up by co-operation and common action the shortcomings of their defensive position in the world. In war a remarkable solidarity was achieved. While each Dominion service unit, be it squadron or army corps, retained its identity, and while the use of such units in one theatre of war or another was governed by decisions of the respective Dominion Governments in consultation with their fellow Governments of the Commonwealth, there was complete unity of command in operations. Many U.K. troops served, for example, under Canadian commanders, as well as vice versa. At the same time, especially in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, men from all over the Empire were enlisted and rose to the highest ranks in Services controlled by the U.K. Government. There was almost complete common use of equip-

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ment of all kinds, from uniforms to aircraft. And in the Commonwealth Air Training Scheme was exemplified the pooling, not merely of men, equipment, and technique, but also of geographical advantages, so variously distributed among the member nations of the Commonwealth.

This practical and highly successful experience could well have been adapted to the conditions of peace, when defence is static and preparatory. The soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the Dominions would, it seems, have welcomed such a projection of war-time practice, no less than their colleagues of the United Kingdom. But, in the absence of the dominating and dynamic aim of winning an actual war, the political element in the problem begins to overshadow the strategic and technical. Decisions on the character of Dominion forces, where and how they shall be used, are taken not so much on grounds of the ultimate security of the British Commonwealth as on grounds of popularity with the electorate or relationship to other burdens on budgets or manpower. Electorates are not, indeed, blind to issues of security, nor incurably determined to buy social luxuries at the expense of strategic essentials; but they have not, as a rule, very long sight, nor are their political leaders inclined to lengthen it for them.

Hence we see to-day, both in the Dominions and in the United Kingdom itself, a strong tendency not only to reduce total forces, but also to take a local view of defence, and to disfavour military commitments far away, however vital the war itself may have shown these to be: the ending of specific commitments, such as India or Palestine, is treated as if the total defence problem of the Commonwealth in those regions—the Indian Ocean or the Middle East—were in a corresponding measure solved. This double tendency after the war of 1914-18 produced the situation in which the total defence forces of the British Commonwealth were far below safety mark, and the system of joint defence, as defined by the Imperial Conferences of 1923 and 1926, amounted to scarcely more than this, that the Dominions had local garrisons (including air forces and naval squadrons) while the whole burden of extra-territorial defence—the real heart of the security of the Commonwealth as a whole—was borne by the United Kingdom.

That state of affairs fundamentally contradicted the supposed

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independence of the Dominions in international affairs. No nation is independent—even in the limited sense allowed by the facts of international life—which contributes less than its share to the defensive system on which its national security depends. The debtor on security account is the client State on political account.

Every member nation of the Commonwealth now recognizes the need for more adequate military forces; and the policy of Australia, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa, if not of Canada, appears to be based by unchallenged national decision on extra-territorial defence: for the first two of those Dominions, on the defence of an outer perimeter in the South-West Pacific;<sup>1</sup> and for South Africa, on the defence of the African continent, certainly the whole of it except the Mediterranean littoral, and perhaps without that exception. Moreover, leading statesmen of all the Dominions, as well as those of the United Kingdom, have openly recognized the fact—previously as unmentionable as the problems of sex in a prim Victorian household—that the United Kingdom will not, because she cannot, continue to bear virtually the whole burden of the defence of the British Commonwealth.

In these developments Canada has shown herself the least forward of the Dominions. Her internal racial division is her first explanation of this; but that division would not be so paralysing if one of the parties to it, the French Canadians, were not so introspective and isolationist. That characteristic the division itself does not explain; nor does it explain why so many of the leading publicists and intellectuals of English-speaking Canada, backed by a voting mass whose centre of gravity is in the Prairie Provinces, should think along the same lines, though for different ostensible reasons.

The peculiarity of Canada is not its division but its remarkable degree of unity behind a policy of no explicit commitments, in the British Commonwealth or otherwise; a unity to some extent induced by, but much more certainly accounting for, the long reign as Prime Minister of the adroit Mr. Mackenzie King.

<sup>1</sup> See the Australian-New Zealand Agreement, 1944: 'The two Governments agree that within the framework of a general system of world security a regional zone of defence comprising the S.W. and S. Pacific areas should be established and that this zone should be based on Australia and New Zealand stretching through the arch of islands north and north-east of Australia to western Samoa and Cook islands.'

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### ISLANDS AND CONTINENTS

Insularity is a peculiar epithet and one deliberately too abrupt—for the policy of the geographically least insular of all the major countries of the British Commonwealth. In that terminological paradox lies an important clue to the puzzle of Canadian policy, so recessive and cautious in peace, so expansive and ardent in war. In foreign policy and defence, it is the continental countries that tend to be most 'insular'<sup>5</sup>, the islands the most inter-continental. The reason is plain: islands are surrounded by all the world, continental countries only by their neighbours. Islands have no buffer States; their defensive glacis is the global ocean with all its further seaboard. They give the New Testament answer to the question, 'Who is then thy neighbour?'

Few countries being wholly land-locked (or ice-locked, which amounts to the same thing), most countries share to some degree in the global intimacy of islands. Canada, for example, with her long Atlantic and Pacific seaboard, is far from wholly continental in her outlook. And when countries of continental neighbourhood grow in power and stature until they dominate their land-linked fellows they become, in effect, islands of continental dimension.

Such is the position of the United States to-day. Canada is now more continental in outlook than her neighbour to the south. So anxious has she been not to allow the British Commonwealth connection to take her ahead of the United States in commitments to wars overseas, implied in peacetime co-operation in defence, that she has now actually fallen behind the United States. The American Government has given a pledge, backed by both Republicans and Democrats, that so long as occupying forces are needed in Europe the Americans will be there; but the Canadians have already been entirely withdrawn. The contrast is as sharp across the Pacific as across the Atlantic. Isolation, however, is impossible for a country of Canada's size or of Canada's position in the world. The less she identifies herself with the defence of the British Commonwealth, the more she automatically becomes identified with the defence of the North American continent, and assumes the role in world power-politics of northern buffer State to the United States.

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Yet the student of affairs who ponders these things will not forget that in 1914 and 1939 alike Canada came instantly into two great European wars, by the almost unanimous will of her people, whereas the United States entered the first world war reluctantly after three years of hesitation, and was pushed into the second by the unprovoked attack of Japan; and he will wonder whether a view of Canada's peacetime behaviour may not likewise be too superficial to-day. Canada remains a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, as conscious as any fellow-member, in her people's hearts, of the inevitability of Commonwealth destiny and the dangers of Commonwealth weakness. She is very distinctly in the picture of British Commonwealth defence.

### CO-OPERATIVE WEAKNESS

Despite the growing realization by the Dominions of their mutual defensive responsibilities, the actual mechanism for conducting that mutual defence of the British Commonwealth is even weaker than it was. The Committee of Imperial Defence, which was open for the attendance of Dominion Ministers or Service representatives when matters specially concerning them were under discussion, has been abolished. Lord Hankey has testified to the valuable use made of the Committee, between the two wars, for discussions with Dominion representatives; moreover, certain of the Dominions found it very useful to appoint liaison officers to sub-committees of the C.I.D., where they became intimate with the problems and conduct of imperial defence and could put the views of their Governments at the moment when policy was being formulated by experts. To-day, the mechanism of Commonwealth co-operation in defence has become merged in the general system of interchange of information and discussion through High Commissioners' offices and departmental liaison.

This is right in a way; for purely military collaboration would be of little value, and might even be dangerous, if there were not political understanding and agreement to back it up, as well as necessary co-operation in ancillary matters like munitions supply, merchant shipping, and so on. But defence collaboration now suffers all the imperfections of the general system of Common-

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wealth co-operation, which are many, and is apt to drift into the status of a mere branch of administration; whereas it is vital to the reality of the Commonwealth, and has characteristics of its own which can be dealt with only by the Service people themselves, working together on the specific strategic problems that the nations of the Commonwealth share. In war it was unity of command that mattered, and unless the peacetime system can produce some equivalent to unity of command—something that will say to a potential enemy, 'If you move there you are up against the forces, not of the United Kingdom or some Dominion, but of the whole Commonwealth, quite apart from international guarantees of security'—then it is falling down on its job.

Central unity of command for Commonwealth defence will not come in peacetime, for obvious political reasons, unless and until there is in effect a British Commonwealth Government. It is the old story of the international peace force, written a little smaller. But regional unity for a specific regional purpose agreed to be held in common is another question. As the White Paper of October 1946 on 'Central Organization for Defence' observed, 'the national starting-point for future progress in Commonwealth defence has been the idea of regional association'. The White Paper, however, could go on to outline the next steps in such progress only in the most misty terms: the United Kingdom Government had proposed an interchange of liaison officers to join the respective Chiefs of Staff in London and the Dominion capitals 'in studying regional security problems'. This was only a project, though one hopeful of adoption; even so, it was no more than a project of study, not of joint action. Defence means action; mutual defence means action in common—it means, for example, the use of airfields, naval bases, and military training areas in common, and the maintenance of joint forces at points of common interest, such as Singapore or the Middle East. There is more of this in practice than the White Paper expresses: the existence of a joint British Commonwealth Force under an Australian Commander in the occupation of Japan is one example, the development of Darwin as a main naval base for the Royal Navy is another, and even more expressive of a will to common action in the defensive tasks of the future is the agreement to test and de-

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velop long-range projectiles in Central Australia. But much more could be done. It seems that the will to common action is not as strong as it might be; and, when the need for common action shows itself, the general mechanism of co-operation in defence is not well adapted to filling the need readily and at once. That is a dangerous weakness.

## WE ARE TOO FEW

If it were overcome, then the British Commonwealth would still be, alone, inadequate to the task of defending itself and incidentally a huge sector of the foreign world from great wars, a task the like of which it discharged for a century before 1914. It was not only the pre-war lack of defensive unity of the Commonwealth that tempted the aggressors in 1914 and 1939, and nearly brought about our downfall, though this was a contributory factor. Unity alone could not have made up for the lack of adequate resources in man-power, wealth, industrial capacity and materials within the Commonwealth alone.

Defensive power is relative to the power extant elsewhere, whether permanently friendly or potentially hostile. In relation to the past and present aggregations of world power the twentieth-century British Commonwealth is not very strong. The high industrial development of parts of it, though weighing heavily by comparison with less advanced blocs like the Central Land Mass, brings the counter-danger of vulnerability to attack, so long as it is so largely concentrated in one country which has to double the role of base and front line, headquarters and outpost. Nor does the industrial capacity of the Commonwealth entirely compensate for its actual and prospective lack of large numbers. Machines as well as men make for military power; but without enough men to manufacture and mind the machines, and to operate the weapons produced, mechanical superiority is a qualitative factor only.

The vast population under the British flag—one-quarter of the people of the world—was an illusory basis of military power, even before the second world war. The defence of the Empire has rested in the past on the wealth and man-power of the United Kingdom, aided in a small measure by the Dominions (whose

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total white population is barely half her own), and on a relatively small professional Indian Army, drawn from limited areas, castes, and communities, together with some minor African and Asiatic territorial forces. The mechanisation of the Indian Army, which was begun shortly before the war, had to be paid for largely by the United Kingdom taxpayer.

The problem of India's defence in the new conditions has still to be solved, but, even if the Union and Pakistan remain in the Commonwealth, no solution can turn them yet awhile into countries fiscally and industrially capable of supporting great modern forces. Eight battalions of Gurkhas to be henceforward recruited into the British Army are a valuable adjunct, especially in the straightened man-power circumstances of the United Kingdom, but they do not look large by comparison with the world-wide commitments and needs of imperial defence. Sixty million coloured African British subjects could doubtless furnish men for bigger forces than were thought possible or desirable before 1939—but they could not pay for it or furnish it with arms. The main burden of imperial defence, in money, industry, and skilled men, must rest on the sixty million white people of the British Empire in five self-governing nations, the second largest of which is a North American Power.

These five countries will not be much better able, in terms of man-power, to shoulder this burden in the coming generation than in the past. On the contrary, the United Kingdom has already reached the point where the number of men of working age is stagnant and about to decline, while the number of pensioners whom they have to support still increases. Australia and New Zealand are but a stage behind on the same type of population curve, while Canada and the Union of South Africa are saved only by their more prolific French-Canadian and Afrikaner stocks. To hope for the best about the birth-rate is foolish. More babies now do not make more mothers and fathers until twenty to thirty years hence; whereas the fewer babies of the past generation mean, without possibility of alteration, fewer mothers and fathers for a generation to come—and therefore correspondingly few babies, as well as few workpeople and soldiers, sailors or air-men.

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How great is the burden of defence upon the narrow man-power resources of the British Commonwealth can be recognized at once from a review of the past weakness of the Commonwealth. Admittedly much more could have been done, then, just as more can be done now; but when we examine the true state of defence of the British Commonwealth in the first part of the present century we shall be forced to ask ourselves whether, even if political and military errors had not been made, and even if the lassitude of apparent security had been overcome, the Commonwealth could ever have sustained the full burden of self-defence in the twentieth-century conditions.

### THE OLD SYSTEM

Although the aeroplane, the submarine, the tank, the armoured car, and the light automatic gun changed the scale of strategy, they left intact the seven great theatres of world power, whose great distances, natural barriers and relative positions preserved them as distinct fields of force. In themselves these new weapons did not fundamentally alter the position of the British Empire as the pivot of a system of world peace. Their advent, however, coincided with political changes which, in alliance with them, shook that system to its foundations.

The first new political fact was the German attempt, begun with the Navy Laws of 1898 and 1900, pressed in 1914-18, and renewed in 1939, to harness a military hegemony of the European continental bloc to such naval and counter-naval power as would smash through the Western European and Near Eastern screens into the oceanic theatres. The second new political fact was the rise and self-assertion of Japan as a world Power commanding the newly identified Western Pacific theatre. Between them these two evoked the third new political fact: the appearance of the United States as a positive element in world power-politics outside the Americas.

Of these new developments the first by itself undermined the old structure of world power depending on the British Empire; for it compelled a concentration of Britain's forces on two fronts (Western Europe and the Near East) out of many that she had

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contingently to face, and mainly on the first of those two. It forced the Empire to take out reinsurance policies to cover its other risks. There resulted the Triple Entente, which reinsured against dangers from the General Land-Mass theatre, and the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which reinsured against dangers from the Western Pacific theatre. The withdrawal of all major units of the British fleet from Eastern waters in 1906, as a direct outcome of the latter event, was the most significant development in world power-politics since the rise of Bismarck.

These policies enabled the whole disposable land power of the British Empire to be concentrated in France and Flanders and the Near East during the first world war, and its whole naval power upon the task of containing the German fleet and protecting the near-European sea routes. The Dominions and India were drained of man-power to serve those two fronts, leaving the Far Eastern and Far Western faces of the Empire almost wholly exposed. As allies in this first death-struggle of the nineteenth-century system, the Empire had three other major Powers, France, Russia, and Italy, giving it a strong foothold in continental Europe itself. After three years of war, this combination was nevertheless exhausted, and the whole system for which the Allies stood was threatened with disaster; from which plight it was rescued only by the intervention of the United States. From April 1917 until November 1917, when the Russian front collapsed, six of the seven great theatres of world power were waging war against the seventh. Even so, the ultimate result was in doubt, and some of the most perilous moments of the first world war were experienced within six months of its end.

The old system asserted itself at last, but only with the greatest difficulty. Even with its allies of Western Europe, the British Empire *alone* had plainly proved unequal to the task that it had discharged for the previous century. It had been compelled first to treat with Japan, in order that its forces might be concentrated in the west, and then to accept the aid of the United States. The two-hemisphere Empire, as a self-sufficient pillar of world order, was finished a generation before the fall of Singapore.

This was a situation which had to be faced and set right, if the British Empire were to survive and if the system of world order

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dependent upon it were not to break down. Unfortunately the British public (and most emphatically the public of the Dominions), having fought a war to end war, were in no mood to face that situation realistically and to make the sacrifices necessary to set it right. There was indeed some attempt at adjustment. The first means adopted to replace or transform the old system was the League of Nations. Article 16 aimed at permanent peace on the basis of universal alliance against the aggressor. Regionalism, which was the core of the old system, was thrown over. The absence of the United States and Soviet Russia, however, virtually confined the probable operation of Article 16 to Europe and its borders: to the maintenance of internal European order and the insulation of European conflict.

## THE RISE OF JAPAN

Outside Europe, the issue was forced by the Washington Conference. Great Britain and the Dominions were there faced with the choice between renewing the Anglo-Japanese alliance (which had always displeased American opinion) and joining with the United States in the latter's conception of a Pacific and Far Eastern order. Canadian opinion felt strongly that Empire security and world peace could be founded only on Anglo-American unity, and that this was incompatible with a Far Eastern policy which might seem inimical to China and to the United States as China's champion. The Canadian view prevailed. The Anglo-Japanese alliance was discarded and the British Empire adhered to the Washington political and naval system which for the best part of twenty years regulated—or, rather, defined—the power politics of the Pacific.

The Washington system was compounded of three elements: the 5:5:3 ratio for capital ships, later extended by the London Conference to medium naval craft; the prohibition on the future fortification of naval bases, in effect east of Singapore by the British Empire, south of Formosa by Japan, or west of Pearl Harbour by the United States; and the Nine-Power Treaty pledging the integrity of China. The first two elements, examined in terms of power-politics, contradicted the third. Together, they

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mapped out three exclusive fields of naval predominance for the three Powers: the Western Pacific and China Seas for Japan, the Eastern Pacific for the United States, and the South-Western Pacific and Malay archipelago, for the British Empire. No likely combination of two of the Powers could, it was imagined, upset the hegemony of the third in its own field.

The Washington treaties thus made the North-Western Pacific and the coasts of China a Tom Tiddler's Ground for Japan. At the same time they pledged all the participating Powers to respect the integrity and independence of China. They made the law with one hand and removed its principal sanction with the other. This anomaly would not have been so acute if the participating Powers had been firmly pledged to band together in all military and economic measures necessary to defeat the aggressor against China or against any other Pacific country; for their combined force would have been sufficient in the end, if promptly exercised, despite the demarcation of naval spheres. But the United States, true to her besetting tradition of righteousness without responsibility, would have none of this. She was not even a member of the League of Nations.

The Nine-Power Treaty was thus born dead. There remained only the task of embalming it ten years later, when Japan marched into Manchuria and nobody had the single-minded will or the single-handed power to stop her; and of burying it after another decade, when Japan, having with impunity conquered half China, did not even wait for the United States to make up her mind to resist these affronts, but deliberately attacked her, paralysing the American fleet and then using her own dominant power in the Western Pacific to mop up the island territories of the United States, the Netherlands, and the British Empire.

The Washington Conference decision thus implied, on the face of things, a bad bargain for the Empire. In return for a firm alliance with the one Power liable to menace the borderlands of the Indian Ocean theatre, which formed a central pillar of the Empire's strength and security, it bought only the unguaranteed favour of a Power which never menaced it and which had no apparent intention of turning favour into alliance when there came the moment of danger or the need for common action. Yet the

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alternative policy would have been a house built on sand. Many British people—and in particular many Australians—deplored the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, an action which, they said, offended Japan's pride and robbed Britain of the moderating influence that she might otherwise have exerted over Japanese policy. Yet even these critics did not claim that Britain could have prevented Japanese expansionism, nor did they deny that sooner or later she would have been forced to choose between consenting to and opposing an aggressive policy that was fatal in the end to her own vital interests.

The basic fact, however, had been obscured by the League-Washington system. The rise and self-assertion of Japan, following the unification and ambition of Germany, had undermined the old order under which world security rested upon a very small quantum of British power. The British Empire, which in 1914 had proved inadequate to its existing task of maintaining world peace by defending itself, had now to shoulder a new burden of danger and responsibility. Where previously its isolation might have been splendid, now it was merely foolhardy. Isolation was in fact exchanged for a League policy, but the League of Nations, without the United States, never could exercise decisive power in the Far East, the new danger spot. At best, it could serve—as the old Anglo-Japanese alliance had served, but in reverse—to reinsure in the West and thus release forces for the East.

The practical British answer to the new situation was the building of the Singapore base, to which the natural corollary (alas! remaining an aspiration until too late) was a two-hemisphere navy. It was the right kind of answer. The Far Eastern borderlands needed a new Gibraltar and a new Portsmouth. Singapore was the former and Darwin (though developed far too late for the needs of the hour) might have been the latter. Yet, when the testing-time came, this new security line was swiftly penetrated and smashed.

## WHY SINGAPORE FELL

The main reason for the collapse was the general inadequacy of British armed power. When the war came, in 1939, the Empire's

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military preparedness was pitiful. Of the Dominions all that need be said is that, in proportion to their resources and their dangers, they were substantially less well prepared than the United Kingdom herself. After nearly a year of war, when the collapse of France threw all the calculations out of joint, the resources of the Empire had still not proved sufficient to build up an ample defence force of all arms to guard the Eastern frontier. Fortune then gave the Empire another eighteen months to prepare in the Far East: even with this grace, although a small Eastern battle-fleet had been constituted and a large number of troops poured into Malaya, a high proportion of those troops and their leaders were raw to their job, the air defences were negligible, and the battle-fleet itself was thin and lacking in the indispensable aircraft carriers.

Yet there had been even less excuse for unpreparedness in the Far East than in Europe. The danger flag was run up in the Far East in 1931, two years before Hitler seized power. Japan's expansionist designs were far less cloaked and dissembled than those of Nazi Germany. In Europe there were potential allies, and some hope could still be placed, before Munich anyway, in the League of Nations and the French system of alliances; whereas in the Far East the writ of the League had manifestly never run, and the only strong potential ally of the British Empire was the United States, who gave no sign of wishing to translate her friendship into the practical terms of military arrangements or explicit guarantees. The fact was that the people of the British Empire, untutored by their political leaders, never took to heart the lesson of the 1914-18 war, that the easy days in which a great empire could be defended and world peace maintained on light armaments and small sacrifices were gone for ever. They had departed if only because in the Far East there had arisen an ambitious major Power which charged the Empire with another huge front to defend.

Failure to appreciate this lesson gave rise to a further error, forming the second great reason for the rapid puncture of the Empire's Far Eastern defences under Japanese assault. It was the error of failing to turn to full account the assets of the overseas Empire in the cause of its own defence. When the chief task of Empire defence was to maintain the cordons round Europe and the Near East, it was but natural to regard the Dominions, India and

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the dependent Empire, from a defence point of view, as, first, providers of bascs for British naval and land forces, secondly as a reserve of man-power which would be equipped by the industrial power of the United Kingdom, thirdly as a source of raw materials for that industrial power and of foodstuffs for the United Kingdom population, and lastly as minor liabilities for an imperial military system provided and led by the Mother Country. There was no pressure, then, to build up countries or zones of the Empire as self-sufficient defensive units, in terms of industrial power as well as actual military equipment.

In particular, the Indian Ocean area, practically self-sufficient in raw materials, industrial capacity, and man-power, was never turned into an independent asset in Empire defence and world order, but remained in many respects a liability charged upon United Kingdom resources. (The reference is, of course, to manufacturing resources, not merely to finances: the important question, from a strategic point of view, was where the war material was made, not who paid for it.) This neglect nearly brought disaster in late 1941 and early 1942, although meanwhile there had been some attempt to remedy the defect through the efforts of individual Empire countries and of the Eastern Group Supply Council.

Closely linked, again, with the general insufficiency and industrial over-centralization of the Empire's means of defence was the third and more particular reason for the ease and rapidity of Japanese victories: the neglect of air power. The Singapore base—as we knew, long before it was attacked, from experience in Britain and above all in Malta—was useless without adequate air defences. Yet, when Japan launched her long-anticipated assault, the R.A.F. in Malaya consisted of a few score planes, all of them pre-war types. It was air force, against which we could put up virtually no airborne opposition, that sank H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* and so smashed the Far Eastern battle-fleet on which all our strategy relied.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the Malaya, Java, and Burma campaigns of 1941-2, the Japanese had overwhelming air

<sup>1</sup> The misfortune which deprived the fleet of its intended aircraft-carrier at that moment may have accelerated disaster, but it did not alter the fundamental conditions.

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superiority. With impunity they sailed huge convoys of troopships within striking distance of our air forces—if, after the first few days, we had had any air forces capable of attacking them. It seems to have been an air action—the fight in April 1942 between aircraft based on Ceylon and those flown off a cruising Japanese squadron which was reconnoitring the defences of Colombo and Trincomalee—that persuaded Japan to go south towards Australia instead of west to conquer India and the Indian Ocean; but it was a victory which could with difficulty have been repeated, so weak were our forces.

Britain's pre-occupations in other areas even more vital to ultimate victory, combined with some special local accidents, may be pleaded in extenuation of this Far Eastern air weakness, but the causes went much further back. It was typical that, until Japan attacked, there was no first-class aerodrome in eastern India, and that before the war officialdom had poured cold water on efforts to explore new air routes across the Indian Ocean. It was equally typical that neither India nor Australia was then or is now capable of building up-to-date first-line aircraft.

There were indeed special opportunities in the Far East, as well as special needs; for military aviation could have been linked with a system of civil air lines that would have unified that part of the British Empire as nothing else could. As for the needs, not only were the dangers of air power to unprotected sea power obvious, but air forces were the obvious means of high-speed reinforcement for any threatened point in the Commonwealth's perimeter. The Empire's small land forces could be brought up to adequate strength against a major Power only by the slow-speed methods on which the Empire had relied in former times.

Moreover, air co-operation avoided many of the difficulties inherent in naval and army co-operation in peacetime among the different independent nations of the British Commonwealth. Apart from the United Kingdom, only Australia among those nations found it possible to sustain a navy of her own strong enough to operate by itself at any distance from her shores. As for armies, apart from the constitutional and political obstacles to their use by the Dominions outside their own territories, they inevitably raised the acute question of unity of command. On the

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other hand every Dominion was capable of sustaining an air force sufficiently strong to operate independently, but ready to move swiftly, if necessary, to a theatre of common strategic interest with other member-nations of the Commonwealth, where it would come under unified higher command with them.

The land forces which the Empire permanently maintained on its Far Eastern borders were tiny compared with their potential tasks. This was true even of the garrisons of the key-points on which the whole defensive system was founded. In Singapore, at the outbreak of war in 1939, there were a few thousand British and Indian troops. There were no regular troops in the Malayan hinterland on whose security Singapore itself depended. In Hong Kong there were two British regular battalions and one Indian. Even at the outbreak of war with Japan, Hong Kong was defended by the equivalent of only one weak division. Why, when forces adequate to defend the place were not available, or at any rate were not stationed there, these troops were thrown away is an unsolved mystery; for the War Office had been warned long before by experts that Hong Kong was indefensible without much larger forces.

Any idea of upholding the prestige of the Empire by putting up a forlorn defence was puerile: nothing could have done more harm to British prestige than the prompt collapse of defences which we had sworn would be maintained. The defensive arrangements of Hong Kong were but a gesture in the gigantic system of bluff which took the place of a genuine fabric of defence in the eastern Empire.

Bluff is not too harsh a word. British leaders behaved as if the Empire had defensive resources which it had not. They talked lightly about trusteeship for other races under the shelter of the Union Jack; they assured subject peoples that the greatest boon which they gained from their membership of the Empire was the security guaranteed to them by British might. These things were not merely said, but believed. The leaders and people of the British Empire bluffed themselves even more successfully than they bluffed others. Using unconsciously the standards of the Boer War and of an era when there was little but a piratical menace to the Empire's Pacific front, they came to believe that in India there

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was a great army, which had to be justified by special pleading to the Indian people who paid for it. This supposed great army consisted, at the outbreak of war in 1939, of some 57,000 British troops and 157,000 Indian troops.<sup>1</sup> It had no armoured divisions nor up-to-date weapons like sub-machine guns or the latest anti-aircraft or anti-tank guns. The tasks of this force included reinforcing the civil arm in policing half a continent, defending a long land frontier against constant marauders with a bigger threat behind them, and furnishing a pool of trained reserves for the defence of lines, thousands of miles long, to east and west of the Indian Ocean. That combined burden thus fell on a very small-scale army, by modern European standards, without up-to-date equipment and with virtually no air support.

Look where we might on the strategic frontiers of the British Commonwealth—in the Middle East and Egypt, in Kenya, in Western Canada—we saw in peacetime air and land forces pathetically small. Britain's acquiescence in Mussolini's aggression and Laval's perfidy in 1935, despite the hair-raising vulnerability of Italy, was at bottom attributable to this military weakness; it was probably the moment when Hitler's criminal ambitions were decisively liberated. Whatever the personal responsibility of Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel Hoare at that moment, the British public had approved disarmament. In the Middle East and Africa, however, there was some excuse for local weakness, in relation to the tasks that later fell upon the British Empire, since Britain counted on the aid of France in a major war. In the Far East, there was far less excuse.

The Thin Red Line, which had for so long gained and held the Empire, had been reduced by modern conditions to a bluff. The Thin Red Line Empire was finished, and can never be revived. If the British Empire is to go on making its peculiar contribution to world peace, by keeping the infection of war from Africa and the Indian Ocean basin, it must be on a new and stronger foundation of defensive power. That power cannot be provided by the United Kingdom alone, not merely because her resources are

<sup>1</sup> The latter figure does not include the Indian Army Reserve (35,400) nor the Indian State Forces (40,000), nor the small Auxiliary and Territorial Forces.

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inadequate, but also because the essence of it is its geographical sub-structure. It is not a case of just so many ships or aircraft, but of so many ships or aircraft based on Singapore or the Middle East, Halifax or Darwin, and backed by all the geo-strategic as well as the material and man-power resources of the British Commonwealth. Here is a manifest example of the power of the whole being vastly greater than the sum of its parts. But, as earlier paragraphs were intended to show, even the whole is unequal to the same task in the twentieth century as it discharged successfully in the nineteenth.

## V

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MR. MOTHER COUNTRY

Imperialism is more closely identified with bureaucracy than with militarism; while not all the British Empire has been taken by the sword, it has all been held by the pen. The symbolic figure of nineteenth-century imperialism is not General Blood-and-Thunder but Mr. Mother Country, a bespectacled figure in the dim livery of a Colonial Office clerk. For the mass of His Majesty's lieges in the Empire overseas the British *raj* is represented, not by captain or colonel or knight-at-arms, but by a Deputy Collector or District Magistrate or a member of the Secretariat in a capital city. It is inevitably so. An army can conquer, but it cannot govern; government is a specialized business which in democracies is divided between bureaucrats and popular representatives, in monarchies among these two and the throne. In imperially-governed countries, the representative and monarchical elements are far away, and must delegate their powers to the local bureaucracy, which thus tends to monopolise all the functions of the State.

Mr. Mother Country was not a sinister but a benign figure. He was a butt of attack because he fussed too much, not too little, about the spiritual and physical welfare of his Royal Mistress's imperial subjects, and interfered too nervously with the ambitions of merchant or militarist or megalomaniac who would have multiplied them still further in the interests of profit or power or pride. Many millions of people—black, brown, and yellow skinned—have been far better governed by British bureaucrats than by the local tyrants whom these superseded. It is not merely as a bureaucracy, nor merely as an imperialism, that any part

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of the British bureaucratic empire is to be criticised; for enlightened imperialism may be a boon in a world physically unified yet morally divided, a world of war and oppression. When, however, bureaucracy has outstayed its welcome, then there is something to condemn.

Imperialist bureaucracy passes through four historical phases. In the first, it establishes order and justice, and collects the taxes; in the second, it exercises paternalism on a local scale; in the third phase, when the subject country has advanced economically and politically beyond the span of these methods, bureaucracy runs the growingly complicated machine and elaborates its own functions and structure; in the fourth, it falls behind the march of social and political progress, and requires, if it is to justify itself, the divorce of administration from policy, which must needs pass to different and more experimental hands.

Various parts of the British dependent Empire may be classified as one or other of these four phases, or in periods of transition from one to the next. Before the decision was taken to end British rule in India, that country had certainly reached the fourth phase of bureaucratic imperialism; and the divorce of policy and administration had suffered a long, precarious, and unhappy interlude between decree nisi and decree absolute.

The first function, historically, of the British *raj* had been to collect the revenue—not, of course, to put it into British pockets, but to maintain the Governments of India which provided justice and order and external security. Over a large part of India the district officer on whom the whole administrative system revolved was still called the Collector.<sup>1</sup>

The second function of British authority, observed from outside, overshadowed the first, though observed from inside it remained for most people less tangible and immediate than the tax-gathering. It was the maintenance of order and the administration of

<sup>1</sup> Two young and forward-looking members of the I.C.S. once discussed with me the question whether the system of administration through district officers, who are men-of-all-work for almost every branch of government, would or could endure in the new conditions. They pointed out how various duties were already being performed by elected local bodies, which with growing experience might be given greater autonomy, while others were assigned to specialized branches of the administration. Both emphatically agreed, however, that the last duty which the district officer could shed was collecting the revenue.

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justice. The grant of a national system of peace and order, and of impartial courts for the application of laws before which all were equal, was high among Britain's claims to the gratitude and respect of India. Its achievement would have been impossible but for the successful discharge of the third function of the *raj*, the external security of the State.

These, then, were the three primary functions of the British *raj*, whose administrative system was designed to discharge them. It discharged them continuously with on-the-whole remarkable success and advantage to the people of India. They were, however, manifestly limited in their scope: they did not go beyond erecting and sustaining a structure of minimum social conditions within which the life of the citizen as producer or consumer, man of culture or of religion, could proceed without interference or aid. They were, by our present-day lights, elementary and unconstructive.

## LIMITATIONS OF OMNIPOTENCE

The British *raj*, of course, did not confine itself to these elementary functions. In some respects, the Government of India (including therein both provincial and central government) has been more socialistic than the Government of the United Kingdom. There is nothing in the latter country to parallel the great hydro-electric and irrigation works which the Government erected in India, while India was many years beforehand in the State ownership of the railways. The socialism of India under the British *raj*, however, consisted mainly of the government ownership of major public works. It stopped short of a general system of social welfare. It did not extend over the fields of mass education, housing, unemployment and sickness insurance, agrarian reform, and so forth, which represent the constructive development of the citizen's economic and social life, as contrasted with the provision of minimum conditions and major facilities within whose ambit he conducts it. To say this is not to belittle the fine achievements of British rule in the direction of agricultural aid, co-operative credit, university education, minimum conditions of labour, and so on. But they still only scratched the surface of life for the peasant millions and the growing urban proletariat.

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In proceeding from the earlier to the more advanced functions of government, as they are understood in the western democracies, the British *raj* in India was hampered by three great handicaps. The first was its religious aloofness. The tradition of British administration had been to leave religious matters (with the principal exception of its own belated and tepid interest in Christian institutions) to the people of India themselves and to the leaders and organizations of their several religions and sects. This was no doubt wise at the time when British rule settled into its grooves in the nineteenth century, and may have remained inevitable, but it was nevertheless a serious handicap to modern government.

For in India religion is much more than doctrine and ritual, creeds and observances, temples and priesthoods. It is identified with the whole life and outlook of the individual. A Muslim, a Sikh, a Brahmin or a Chamar is a Muslim, a Sikh, a Brahmin or a Depressed Class man every minute of his day. His language, written or spoken, may differ from that of his neighbours of a different religion. His family relations are exclusively with his own religion or caste,<sup>1</sup> his social relations mainly so (in the case of Hindu castes, the bar to social relations between upper and lower castes is absolute, save among a tiny educated minority).. His food and drink and personal habits are prescribed or restricted by his religion or caste, which his name almost certainly indicates. He is born to his religion or caste, lives all his life in it as in the very atmosphere that he breathes. In India, religion is of the very fabric of society, more essential to it than local patriotism or economic station is to the society of western nations.

This fact, so familiar to those who know India, so unassimilable by those who do not, is at the heart of the communal problem as a political phenomenon; it is the root explanation of the forces which have divided India and drenched her soil with the blood of communal murder. It has also had a critical bearing on all social policy and administration. It frightened the British *raj*, which could risk seriously burning its fingers in the religious fires of

<sup>1</sup> There are, of course, exceptions, some of which, like the marriage between Mr. Gandhi's son and Mr. G. Rajagopalachari's daughter, have achieved world wide note; but they affect only the emancipated upper classes, and prove nothing but the rule itself.

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India, from many kinds of governmental activity on which it might otherwise have embarked.

The second handicap was fiscal. A nation can tax itself far higher than an alien government can tax it. Even in war-time, the Finance Member in India was faced with far narrower limits upon possible rates of taxation than was the British Chancellor of the Exchequer. Social services and other forms of state intervention in economic life usually cost a great deal of money, whereas the maintenance of the defensive state (including the external defence forces) used up most of the money that was available through the existing system of taxation. So to amend that system as to accomplish any radical change in the social and economic structure of the country would in itself have involved such a change. It would have meant a general redistribution of purchasing power, and this was beyond the capacity of an alien bureaucratic government.

In India, indeed, the popular parties themselves were to some extent held back from radical economic policies by their essentially communal or nationalistic character; for each was compounded of widely different social classes, economic interests and political ideologies. Although, for example, several of the Congress Governments in the provinces initiated far-going reforms of the system of agricultural tenure—where reform was badly needed—one Government after another in Bengal proved incapable of grasping the nettle of the Permanent Settlement by purchasing the land for the State, as recommended by the Floud Commission. No impartial judge of the record of the provincial Ministries after 1937, however, could deny their achievement in reaching out into new fields of social and economic policy (including the negative policy of Prohibition) and in finding new sources of revenue to finance these ventures.

A bureaucratic regime, particularly if its leading members and the inspiration of its policy are alien, is indeed under a third handicap, inherent in its alien and official nature, and much more far-reaching than the merely fiscal limits on radical economic measures. Such measures inevitably re-distribute economic advantage within the state. One class gains, another loses, if only through higher taxation. In the long run all may gain, but in the

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short run the successful launching and conduct of such policies require the active support of the beneficiary class to counter the opposition of the losing class. An alien bureaucracy has great difficulty in evoking this active support; and even if it can do so it pays the penalty of incurring \*the permanent hostility of one class in return for the evanescent gratitude of another.

A bureaucracy thus tends always towards a policy of preserving or patching the *status quo* in economic and social affairs. A negative policy, however, itself benefits a certain class or certain classes, the Haves, by comparison with the Have-nots. Thus alien bureaucracy, by fulfilling its nature in seeking to avoid sectionalism, comes to rest predominantly upon the support of the Have section of society. This was true of British bureaucracy in India. Its 'friends' were the rulers and landowners, and (in the peculiar conditions of India) the 'martial classes' whose economic interest was bound up with the British military system.

## GOVERNORS AND GOVERNED

Unfortunately, bureaucracies suffer from a propensity to emasculate the very classes which they benefit and protect. Deprived of power and responsibility by the bureaucracy, these classes cease to exert their natural leadership of the people. So it was in India. When the bureaucracy began to be enveloped in a semi-political regime, it found to its dismay that there was among the elements which it had regarded as its friends and supporters no strong governing class capable of continuous political leadership; success went at once to new social and economic elements whose interests were not bound up with the existing order.

Some acute minds think that a great mistake of the British *raj* in our generation was its failure to hitch to its own car the motive force of the Indian National Congress, which represented the new governing classes; but this policy, even if possible in theory, was in practice quite beyond the power and imagination of the bureaucracy. So, too, was the attractive and more feasible policy, which if pursued would have changed the face of political India, of allying the regime with the Have-not elements like the trade unions, to whom growing political power may pass in the future.

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One of the worst mistakes of British rule in India was an inevitable result of its deliberate military policy—the failure to build up, not only a civil governing class, but also a military officer class. Indianization of the officer ranks of the Indian Army would have been of great advantage to the British *raj* in fostering a governing class bound in interest to itself and imbued with its own loyalties and traditions. The lack of such an Indian military governing class was one of the proximate causes of the mutiny of the Bengal Army in 1857. Had the mutiny not happened, the defect might well have been remedied; for the era of conquest was already almost at an end, and the transfer of military and governmental responsibility from the East India Company to the Crown, which was inevitable, would have given opportunities for a new policy under liberal and far-seeing statesmen like Lord Canning. As it was, the mutiny had the reverse effect. It made the civil and military authorities bitterly distrustful of the Indian, especially of the former military officer castes and families. Recruitment of Indians to commissioned rank on a footing with Europeans had to wait until it was forced on the authorities by political pressure and later by the dire coercion of wartime need.

With India in deadly peril in World War II, there was no big reserve of Indian officers to call upon when the army had to be greatly expanded, nor even a class with the tradition of military command from which to create new officers by rapid training. Even Dominion citizens had to be brought into India to officer its armies, to the great resentment of Indian opinion; and of the young, raw officers who came from Great Britain a large number proved unsuitable. The verdict of the Indian Army on the system of drawing all officers from the ranks was that whereas it was excellent for the natural leader, from whatever class he came, it often sapped the induced leadership of the average public-school type, which had hitherto provided India with her military officers.

This may be a reflection on the public-school system; it certainly carries a warning for the future of British rule in those parts of the dependent Empire which are approaching the same stage of the imperial life-cycle as India. A milito-bureaucratic imperialism is necessarily a regime of a governing class, sustained by the devotion, the self-assurance and the solidarity of that class. But

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that is not to say that the governing class need be recruited entirely from the well-born and well-to-do. It is the tradition which it inherits that count, not the money or the blood.

In the public service generally, at home and abroad, there is much to be said for the recruitment of the higher official grades, or the commissioned officers of the armed Services, from a wider social range, and for making indeed a special effort to recruit those who by virtue of their own experience and upbringing have a sympathetic understanding of the lives and outlook of the common people in the cottage homes, whether of their own country or of others. But the same argument does not necessarily hold good in regard to official or military posts in parts of the dependent Empire where the common people have utterly different economic standards and social lives from those of Europe. Experience in India and elsewhere suggests that it is the educated classes of Britain who have the most sympathetic understanding of the common people around them.

Even so, the best among them cannot enable an alien officialdom to identify itself with the life of the people. The district officer lives close to the people in the rural areas, talks with people of all classes, settles their disputes and has part in their local affairs; but always as a superior, aloof, 'different' being. When he becomes a Secretariat-wallah' he grows even more superior and abstracted from the common way of life. The British subaltern in the Indian Army lived close to his men, talked their language, tried to understand their cares; but he could not share their domestic lives or identify himself with them. When he rose to staff rank he was too apt to lose such human contact with the humble illiterate Indian as he once had.

As the functions of government grow ever more elaborate, and warfare ever more complicated and mechanized, that kind of separation is still further enforced and extended. The young British I.C.S. officer of our day, working in an Indian district, was probably as devoted to the people in his charge, and as anxious to learn and Understand, not only their languages and customs, but also their ways of thought and feeling, as were his forebears whose names are still upon the lips of grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the Indians whom they loved. But throughout

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the service rang the complaint, 'Too much office work, too many files.' There were all the paraphernalia of local government, which in British India were a mixture of limited democracy and official dictatorship. There was the growing tale of economic legislation to be administered. The tide was swept back a few paces by injunctions that district officers must spend a certain period on tour in every year, but the net effect was to widen the gulf between bureaucracy and citizenry, and to thin still further the already tenuous ties that bound the officials of the provincial and central secretariats to the people and the soil. This is a problem which must increasingly weigh upon governments in other parts of the dependent Empire.

### THE INDIAN BUREAUCRACY

It is at the centre that the bureaucracy of India bloomed in finest flower; and although no other part of the Empire has quite the same problem of central administration of a vast, continental-sized, quasi-federal system of government, yet there is something to be learnt from study of what may well be regarded as the extreme case. Up to the time when Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru and his colleagues took office in 1946, the Governor-General's Executive Council remained in effect the head-piece of a bureaucracy—a bureaucracy which, notwithstanding the progressive Indianization of the Council, exercised the real power of government, just as it did when all but one or two Council members (an Indian lawyer, and sometimes an experienced administrator from England) were Indian Civil Service officials. There was no tradition of distinguishing policy from administration: the Members of Council were super-administrators. For those who graduated thither from the civil service, to administer upon a higher plane was easy business, but the system did not stimulate originality in policy; while those who came in fresh from outside life and politics were apt to be overwhelmed by the copious files that came up to them, with their mass of administrative detail. This was equally conspicuously the case with Indianized Councils in the provinces.

Under the British-Indian system, the departments of the

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Government of India were not autonomous, under their own Ministers, like departments in Whitehall. Acts authenticated in a department were not acts of the Minister (or, to be exact, Member of Council) as they would be in the British system, but acts of the Government of India. Such a system has its advantages; decisions once taken by the Members or Secretaries concerned do not have to be reconsidered and ratified by the separate departments which they may concern, and this sometimes accelerates business for those who know how to work the machine. The old vice of departmental jealousy and jurisdictional imperialism was not nearly so acute in Delhi officialdom as it often is in Whitehall. At the same time the system of a single Government-of-India secretariat had two great demerits.

In the first place, it concentrated the power of the bureaucracy, which stood as a single solid power over against the quasi-Ministerial heads whose business ought to have been to frame policy for the officials to administer. In the second place, it entailed an enormous and therefore slow-moving secretarial machine. The Whitehall departmental system implies that if any matter coming up in one department involves issues concerning another department, those issues have to be isolated and separately framed for consideration by inter-departmental correspondence or conference. In a similar case in the Government of India, the whole departmental file or often series of files is passed from department to department, and an immense amount of time and energy is wasted in the renewed study of all the details, relevant and irrelevant, by an ascending hierarchy of officials in each department.

This system magnifies the inherent defects of officialdom. There used to be—and may still be—in force an inter-departmental circular in the Government of India instructing every superintendent (the grade of higher clerical officer who normally deals first with a file on its entering a department) that it was his duty to note on the file *all* the reasons, from his department's point of view, for opposing what was advanced by another department. This kind of procedure may be good administration—it saves those who have to take the final decisions at the top from saying that they were not warned of the consequences—but it is typical

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of a self-centred bureaucracy and it leads to a fatal inertia when those at the top are themselves bureaucrats.

Once upon a time—and not so very long ago—there was civil commotion in the city of Delhi. The Chief Commissioner appealed to the Imperial Secretariat for help in the temporary seconding of officers holding the grade of magistrates to go out with the military arm when violence might have to be used. The need was grave and urgent. A file commending this appeal was thereupon circulated to the chief officials of nineteen departments in succession, including the departments of the Governor-General's Secretariat. Still bearing the label 'Immediate'<sup>5</sup>, it completed this tour after nine days—by which time, of course, the crisis was over and the whole purpose of the request had disappeared. This incident was, of course, an exceptional case of folly, but it was the kind of folly that could flourish only in an over-expanded and over-involved bureaucracy.

A failing of the British-Indian bureaucracy which it shared with other imperial officialdoms—the same failing was vigorously alleged, for instance, against the pre-war administration in Burma<sup>1</sup>—is its excessive belief in the ability of a professional civil servant to perform any administrative job, whatever its subject matter. Some become specialized in a certain department or branch of government, but others chop and change. There are, of course, advantages in this constant refreshment of the various departments' from the personnel of others, and in the avoidance of too narrow a specialization in the civil servants; but there are grave disadvantages in carrying it to excess. A departmental post is apt to become just a job to be done as efficiently as possible without special interest in the subject matter or effort to promote long-term policies: a stepping stone to something else, a chapter in a career, a prescribed essay in administrative technique.

Characteristic of the belief that only professional administrators are fit to administer was the failure to recruit to the service of the Government of India during the late war those from other walks

<sup>1</sup> In fifteen years the secretaryship of the Education Department of the Government of Burma was held by twenty different members of the I.C.S. or B.C.S. No such extreme example could probably be cited from India, but the general practice is the same in the two civil services, which indeed were formerly identical.

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of life—business men, lawyers, journalists, university teachers, and so on—who in Great Britain pigged such an invaluable part in war-time administration. No John Maud or Oliver Franks could have risen to the permanent headship of a government department in New Delhi. Yet the Government of India often pleaded acute shortage of administrative staff in explanation of its difficulties, for instance in economic controls.

However, these are minor aspects of rule by bureaucracy unchecked by political control, largely unventilated by public opinion, aloof and separate from the life of the ordinary citizen, yet in these latter days handling a vast machine of government which penetrated deep into the economic and political affairs of the country. The fault was in the whole system, not in the individual exponent or his works. Indeed there were many who rose above it, and to them all the more honour is due. We must beware of denigrating good men and good works by merely giving them the bad name of 'bureaucrat' and 'officialdom'.

## THE HAND OF WHITEHALL

In another respect also, not only the British-Indian bureaucracy, but the bureaucracies of the dependent empire generally, tend to be more bureaucratic than those of Britain herself. They are double-banked, they exert defence in depth. Behind the bureaucracy of some colonial capital, as formerly behind that of New Delhi, lies the bureaucracy of Whitehall. Matters can be referred back and forth again, if inaction is desired. A leading British-Indian civil servant, not remarkable for progressive zeal, once remarked that 'we always have to fight a rearguard action against the conservatism of the India Office'. Experience of the Colonial Office suggests that nowadays the boot is often on the other foot. Whitehall, especially in alliance with the outside experts whose advice is increasingly engaged, may frequently be more liberal and adventurous than the Colonial officials; or it might sometimes be fair to say that Whitehall comprehended less well the difficulties and dangers than the man on the spot.

The India Office (and again this does not apply to all individuals, nor certainly to all recent Secretaries of State, who little

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knew what their subordinate officials did on matters not involving high policy) had a natural conservatism of its own in addition to the universal conservatism of bureaucracy as such. For it represented a losing cause. It was for many years a vested interest, doomed to disappearance with the fulfilment of British promises of self-government to India. Deep in its subconscious was the motive of fighting in every ditch, since any ditch might be the last. The very atmosphere of its halls and chambers, with their dingy busts of great proconsuls, their pictorial and other relics of the East India Company and the great days of Queen Victoria's Indian Empire, breathed a spirit of living on the memories of the past rather than the ambitions of the future, like an ancient family dwindling to nothing amid its portraits and its pride. It would be perverse to expect of any institution an adventurous enthusiasm in the writing of its own death warrant—although this perverse enthusiasm did indeed appear to characterize the Burma Office in 1947. The Colonial Office, with sixty or so dependencies, can afford, like a mother of a large family, to see a few depart from its wing without too sharp a grief, and therefore does not suffer from the same disability.

The combination of local and central bureaucracy magnifies one particular danger to which all bureaucracies are exposed. Their standards are those of order, their judgments based on administrative arguments. Whether or not a thing should be done tends to be decided, not on whether the people concerned want it to be done, but on whether they ought to want it done because of its utility for orderly administration. The civil servant on the spot is constantly checked, in this natural bias towards the rational and orderly, by his personal contacts with the people. He realizes that traditions, sentiment, and mere prejudice play a large part in their lives, and that if government fails to deal with the whole man, but respects only that part of him which conforms to the guidance of reason, order and economic improvement, there grows a gap between the government and the governed which may in the end be bridged only by revolution. The further the administrator is from the lives of the people whose government he administers, the weaker this check becomes. The warning he needs whispered daily in his ear is not

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'Remember, thou art human', but 'Remember, they are human'.

The administrative bias is to be seen as much in the Colonial Office as anywhere in Whitehall. It is undoubtedly responsible for the errors of early post-war policy in Malaya and Sarawak. From the administrative point of view there was nothing wrong with the so-called MacMichael treaties, which reduced the Malay Sultans to decorative relics, or with the annexation of Sarawak, which abruptly ended one of the most romantic stories in the history of the British Empire. They tidied up a very untidy tangle of governments, the result of which had been to confuse responsibilities and impose all kinds of obstacles to economic modernization and orderly progress on European lines. What was wrong with them was that they were contrary to the spirit of the people whom they were honestly intended to benefit; all the more so in the conditions, of which the Colonial Office was unaware when the policies were framed, that had developed in those countries under Japanese rule. If they were necessary, they required the most painstaking and patient diplomacy over a period of years to persuade their intended beneficiaries of their worth. In fact they were driven through with unconscionable abruptness, to the regret of those who believe that the best traditions of British imperialism are not administrative competence or economic uplift, which the Germans can equally boast in their colonial annals, but understanding and sympathy.

## TRUE AND FALSE TRADITION

The history of British rule in India shows many examples both of the true and the false tradition. Never, perhaps, were they better exemplified than in the brothers Lawrence, whose names were writ so large in the Indian story about the time of the Mutiny.

'Henry Lawrence was wholly without guile. He had great shrewdness and sagacity, but he was singularly open and unreserved in all his dealings, and would rather have given his antagonist an advantage than have condescended to any small arts and petty trickeries to secure success. . . . The one desire of his heart was to benefit the people of the country in which it had pleased God to cast his lot. But he never suffered this plea of beneficence

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to prevail against his sense of justice. He was eminently, indeed, a just man, and altogether incapable of that casuistry which gives a gloss of humanity to self-seeking, and robs people for their own good. He did not look upon the mis-government of a native State as a valid reason for the absorption of its revenues, but thought that British power might be exercised for the protection of the oppressed, and British wisdom for the instruction and reformation of their oppressors, without adding a few more thousand square miles to the area of our British possessions, and a few more millions of people to the great muster-roll of British subjects in the East.<sup>1</sup>

Henry Lawrence was the ideal British ruler in India. Would that all the Colonial Office officials of our generation had shared his qualities!

Henry Lawrence, though entrusted with the highest civil administration beneath the Governor-Generalship, was a soldier. His brother John was, perhaps significantly, an officer of the East India Company's civil service.

'He had achieved a high reputation as an administrator; as one of those hard-working, energetic, conscientious servants of the State, who live ever with the harness on their back, to whom labour is at once a duty and a delight, who do everything in a large unstinted way, the Ironsides of the Public Service. . . . Right or wrong he did all in accordance with the faith that was in him. . . . Men said that he had no sentiment, no romance.'<sup>2</sup>

John Lawrence was a great Englishman, but Henry was incomparably greater, and it is his name that will live immemorally in India. There have been Henry and John Lawrences, on a lesser scale, in every generation in India and in every great sphere of British imperial rule; but it is safe to say that the increasing centralization and urbanization of the *raj* in India made the standards of John Lawrence paramount.

## A NEW CASTE SYSTEM

This criticism of imperialist bureaucracy is certainly not a criticism of men who run it because they are British. In fact, the

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, edited by Colonel Malleon, G.S.I. Vol. I by Sir John Kaye, K.C.S.I., F.R.S. (1898), p. 6.

\* *Op. cit.*, pp. 37 and 45.

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progressive Indianization of the bureaucracy of India did not deflect the criticism, but on the whole heightened its force. Having regard to the hours of work and the number of holidays, as well as the pressure of work on the average man, the bureaucracy of India was in normal times over-staffed, and it is all too likely that this defect, so far from being mitigated by the departure of the British, will be thereby exaggerated; for the Indian educated class as a whole, with its system of family solidarity and its chronic problem of unemployment, has an interest in multiplying clerical jobs by dividing the work that there is to do. The Indian social system, as a wise Indian observer of public affairs observed to me, has from time immemorial been stratified: Muslim rule superimposed upon the old Hindu caste strata a layer of landed aristocracy, and the British followed with a professional bureaucracy, not unjustly dubbed 'White Brahmins'. Now, he added, Indian nationalism, with innumerable 'white-collared' adherents to reward or mollify, would transform that top load into a still heavier all-Indian bureaucracy, closely allied to a class of professional politician.

As between the British and the Indian member of the I.C.S., the latter had the less conception of the difference between policy and administration and less willingness to accept the supremacy of the politician in policy. The I.C.S. itself, it must be remembered, unlike the home civil service, had no such tradition; but the British member brought with him the broad ideas of the subordination of the civil service to Ministers, in turn responsible to the Legislature, which were common currency in his own land. The future of India and Pakistan in Indian and Pakistani hands is not, however, primarily the concern of the British public, but of their own peoples, who must lie on the beds that they make for themselves.

India has known indigenous bureaucracies of her own: the ancient Hindu social system provided a caste or castes of civil government servants, whom the Mogul conquerors did not hesitate to employ, and the Indian States have their own systems of bureaucracy, mitigated by personal rule and by the ancient tradition of access by the subject to the throne. Maybe, with an all-Indian bureaucracy, a system of checks and balances, of malleabilities and pliancies, will grow up which has been im-

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possible in the rigid steel frame of an alien-controlled civil service.

An alien bureaucracy has special defects because it is alien—its aloofness from the ordinary life and social system of the country, and all that flows therefrom; its inability to spend in the country which it administers the accumulated capital of experience which it takes away upon retirement; its reduced ability to spread in that country, through family and social contacts, the example of its own service to the public cause.

There is another aspect of the history of Indian administration from which lessons may be learnt for other countries approaching nationhood under the British Crown. For many years Indians and British were recruited on level terms and in roughly equal numbers for the Indian Civil Service, while other branches of the bureaucracy were almost entirely Indian-manned under British rule; nevertheless, twenty-five years after Dominion self-government became the proclaimed goal of British policy in India, of the sixteen secretaryships to government (i.e. permanent headships of departments) at New Delhi only three were held by Indians. Britain has on her conscience that she handed over the responsibility for government in India without having adequately prepared Indians to run it from the inside.

Nowhere was the error more obvious than in external affairs. When the first 'political'<sup>5</sup> Government of India was formed, with the immediate opportunity of controlling external policy and of vastly enlarged representation abroad, the Indian officials who had held responsible positions in the conduct of foreign affairs could be counted on the fingers of one hand. An 'amateur' Ambassador may be an advantage—some of the greatest British envoys have not been career diplomatists—but an amateur or improvised Chancery and Foreign Office staff is a serious weakness and source of danger. Canada, the first of the Dominions, has taken more than a generation to build up, by ever-widening experience and training, an expert diplomatic corps and Department of External Affairs adequate to her responsibilities; India was first promised Dominion status in 1929, but the promise would have meant more if it had been followed by measures to make India ready, in experienced and trained personnel, for exercising Dominion status when the time came.

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The failure to do so had its excuses—the peculiar confidential nature of foreign relations, the special interest of the Secretary of State in matters with which His Majesty's Government as the Paramount Power were intimately concerned, the fact that Indian States as well as British India were involved in Indian external affairs. But behind these curtains of plausibility lay the silent struggle of the alien administrator to retain a privileged and exclusive sphere of influence as against both the Indian official and the Indian politician. If caste ever breaks down in India, the last privilege of the Brahmin to be dispersed will assuredly be the priesthood; and diplomacy in all countries—Great Britain not excepted—has ever been the priestly mystery of the bureaucratic order.

### THE WEAKNESS OF CENTRALIZATION

From this examination it appears that the cardinal weakness of imperial bureaucracy is detachment from the people. To some extent, the defect is inherent in its nature, but whether we look upon the duty of the imperial Powers primarily in terms of good government in the present interests of the dependent peoples, or in terms of fitting them for self-government, the urgent, everyday duty to combat and mitigate that besetting weakness is clearly implied.

Some of the lessons have been drawn already in these pages, but there is one of great importance which might escape the casual eye. The unit of government must be kept small, and over-centralization strenuously avoided. There is much to be gained, indeed, by regional co-operation among colonies having common problems and racial affinities; the pace of economic and political advance can certainly be accelerated by such means. Often certain forms of economic reform, affecting labour, trade, irrigation, pest control and so on, are possible only on a regional scale. But in adopting them it must never be forgotten that in the pyramiding of bureaucracy and the further detachment of the governors from the governed a real price has to be paid. It may well prove too high a price for the advantages bought if the ultimate outcome is to create a system of administration beyond the understanding and

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beyond the trained capacity of the peoples whose apparent ripeness for self-government may be advanced—and deliberately advanced—by the regional grouping. This is a point to be carefully watched in relation to the growth of a West Indian Union and the future development of the East African and West African Governors' Conferences.

# VI

## DELHI IS FAR AWAY

### GOVERNMENT IN ISOLATION

**T**he flower of imperialist bureaucracy, which blossomed in the central government of the Indian Empire, was not an abstract organization, nor a mere concourse of officials, but a veritable system of life. As such, it was a remarkably isolated phenomenon, partly because of the limited social circles which it represented, partly because it dwelt in two towns, New Delhi and Simla, dedicated almost exclusively to itself. If the Whitehall departments, including the Admiralty, War Office, and Air Ministry, were all concentrated in Welwyn Garden City and Weston-super-Mare, and if few people lived in those towns save Ministers, officials, sedentary Service men and occasional legislators, together with those shopkeepers and servants needed to cater for their domestic needs, then the British home bureaucracy would be equally isolated in its private as well as its official life, and might take on some of the traits of the Indian central bureaucracy as it flourished in the latter years of British rule.<sup>1</sup> But not all, for some were peculiar to an imperial regime and some were peculiar to India.

One of the blemishes which the British-Indian bureaucracy, with its many merits, did not share with its counterpart in England was its failure to attain the same standard of secrecy over official affairs. This failing was a by-product of the uniformity of the society in which the bureaucrats lived; for in their houses and clubs they met exactly the same kind of people—and their wives—with whom they had to do in their offices. They mingled, as a rule, little with the commercial people, but almost exclusively with the

<sup>1</sup> The description will be as familiar to those who know Canberra as those whose lot has been cast in Simla and New Delhi.

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official and military classes. Indeed for the British civil servants there were in Delhi or Simla\* (or indeed in provincial capitals except Calcutta and Bombay) very few British business men with whom to consort. Quite naturally, in these circumstances, they tended to talk 'shop' at the dinner table and the club bar; there was not that automatic shutter, closing down on official matters, which intervenes between an office and a home or social rendezvous in which people of all walks of life are to be met. Simla and New Delhi were always a sounding-box of official affairs. An army officer in Simla, in July 1941, told a woman friend (who told another woman, who told a third, who told her husband, a civil official) that an expedition was about to enter Iran. It was true, and the officer had the information from his official work. Such a scandalous leakage had to be reported, and was, lest it occur again; for which breach of preparatory-school good form the civilian who 'split' was regarded with open disgust by others of the regiment—a famous one—to which the officer belonged.

It would be unjust to the British civil or military officials not to recall the traditional and hardly exaggerated speed with which in India, among Indians, the State secret becomes a bazaar rumour; and it would be unjust to the thousands of devoted Indian officials, some of them on low scales of pay, who jealously guard their official knowledge despite the temptations that must assail them, not to point out that, as in Great Britain, so in India, the most likely source of official leakage was the top, not the bottom, of the official and Ministerial scale. In my own experience in the Government of India, as head of an office handling most highly confidential political matters, I never had the slightest hesitation in entrusting secrets to all or any of the staff from copy-typists upwards, nor was this confidence ever misplaced. It is not the deliberate and sinister leakage that characterized New Delhi and Simla officialdom, but the accidental and social. This was far more likely to occur in the higher strata than in the lower, and was probably more likely among Englishmen than among Indians.

On the latter point it is impossible for an Englishman to be sure; for although the British and Indian societies mingled at their edges in entirely friendly and equal intercourse they were separate

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and distinct—nor could the one penetrate to the heart of the other. It is better for an Englishman, writing of the home life of the bureaucracy, to write primarily about his own countrymen, and all that follows in this chapter refers to them, unless the context makes plain that their IndiaA colleagues are included.

## MIDDLE-CLASS PARADISE

Among the British in India, especially among the bureaucracy, professional uniformity was matched by social uniformity. Apart from the 'other ranks' of the army in India (who were largely confined to their own barracks, cantonments, camps, and military zones) the British in India were almost wholly drawn from the middle classes. In Calcutta, indeed, and to a smaller extent elsewhere, there was a European 'lower order' of clerks and foremen and the like; their social outlook, however, was not proletarian but middle class—conscious, that is to say, of a position above the masses, anxious to assert it, imitating and as far as possible associating with the better educated and better-off Europeans who were the characteristic type of the British in India. India, from a British point of view, has been described as the paradise of the middle classes, and so it was, in the sense that many of them enjoyed there a higher standard of spending power, social life, and domestic service, than they ever would in their own country. All of which tended to strengthen their middle-class outlook and heighten their separateness from the proletariat about them.

Not only because of the colour difference, but also because the British in India were concentrated so much in one social stratum, they had little or no direct social contact with the mass of Indian society. At home, they would have relations of various kinds with other social levels; for there is a constant flux and interchange between the various economic and social classes in our democratic and urban state. In India, they had none. They mixed, to some extent, with Indians of their own class (who, thanks to the caste system, have little social interconnection with other strata of their own society), but between themselves and the other Indians with whom they had to do—shopkeepers, servants, and the like—there was a social gulf fixed, as broad as the contrast between the

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sahib's bungalow and the servants<sup>5</sup> quarters in any Indian compound. Whatever their anthropological, administrative, or commercial contact with Indian life in the village or the factory, members of the British community might spend a generation in India and yet know nothing 'by direct experience and social intimacy of the lives of the Indian people, save for a limited Indian class who had imitated their own European clothes, customs, outlook, and mode of life.

One day Clifford Huntsman, the pianist, was travelling from Karachi to Quetta. It was a time of holiday, and clusters of Indians, unable to find room in the crowded third-class carriages, rode on the running-board and wherever they could cling. At dinner, Huntsman found himself sharing the restaurant car with one other passenger, a British colonel. True to the national character, they did not speak, but at breakfast next day the colonel, sitting across the table, thawed and opened the conversation with the words, 'We seem to be the only people on the train.'<sup>5</sup>

This colonel might well have been the very same officer as said to me, in 1941, four years after the Congress Party had secured overwhelming victories at the polls in half the provinces of British India, upon the suffrage of thirty millions: 'The Congress is detested by the Indian people.'<sup>5</sup>

These are caricatures of the aloofness of the milito-bureaucracy and its neglect and misunderstanding of politics. But the separation of the Central Secretariat (including G.H.Q.) from the life of the people was a tangible and inescapable fact. Probably the building of a special capital city at New Delhi was a mistake. Some think the same of Canberra, but every argument against a special capital for Australia was magnified in bureaucratic India. The very town-planning of New Delhi, with its tiresome flat vistas and the inhuman geometry of its straight streets and circular road-junctions, the far distances of its uncomfortable upper-class houses from the shops and work-places and the dwellings of the poor, is a symbol of bureaucracy which regards government as a form of administrative book-keeping. The Imperial Secretariat itself is a successful piece of architecture, but the man who declared that it looked as if a German boy had been let loose with the biggest box of toy bricks ever made was only saying that it was

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functionally suited to a mighty and inflexible officialdom—which may indeed be part of the secret of its architectural success.

Delhi, with New Delhi, is indeed one of the great cities of the world, with a million inhabitants. Between the centre of New Delhi and the old Civil Lines Which were the main European quarter before the new city was built, it is about five miles, by a route, past Shah Jehan's great fort, which skirts the crowded districts of the ancient walled city. Few of those who lived and worked in the avenues of New Delhi ever penetrated into the narrow crooked streets that branch off from that route. It is an old Indian saying that '*Delhi dur ast*', Delhi is far away; but New Delhi is far away even from Delhi itself—a fact which has its advantageous side at times of civil trouble as in September 1947, or the insurrection of August 1942, when Delhi city was for four days the scene of riots and shooting, pillage and arson, while New Delhi went its way unruffled, save by a few police patrols, occasional picketing of the houses of members of the Government by female students, and a feeble demonstration by a handful of excited adolescents outside the Secretariat.

## THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

If Delhi was far away, Simla was almost celestial in its separation from the pulsing blood of the country. A season in Simla was like a long voyage on an ocean liner: day after day one saw the same faces; lived with the same people whose interests and occupations were perforce the same as one's own; trod the same long deck-like, ribless spines of roads, surrounded by vast open space without the chance of escape, a scenic panorama without warmth or intimacy, congenial company without the stimulus of variety. The news, whether of battle or civil life, had that dilute and historical interest which is characteristic of ship's wireless bulletins. Land—the life of India—seemed unreal, a memory, a hypothesis.

On this Magic Mountain the bureaucrats, in khaki or sub-fuse, dwelt in a middle-class slum. The miserable living conditions of Simla constantly astonished the newcomers from England who knew only New Delhi and who imagined, as a stately pleasure dome upon a mountain top, the summer palaces of the rulers of

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a vast empire. Such newcomers were startled to be offered for their accommodation, among the more expensive and desirable items on the house agents' lists, ramshackle wooden erections without any running water. For such a dwelling the Government-controlled rent, a few years ago, was about Rs 3000 for a year's tenancy, of which an officer at that time was unlikely to make actual use of more than six or seven months. A thirty-weeks' occupancy would mean a weekly rent of £7 10s.

Among the highest class of government bungalows in Simla, several are—or at least were until very recently—without water sanitation. In one provincial capital city, the house formerly appropriated to the chief civil servant of the province was converted a few years ago into a Government House for the Governor; conversion, let us hope, was radical, for when I was hospitably entertained there in 1941, not only was there no running water, but every evening the house was invaded by hordes of mosquitoes and small frogs. In Simla and New Delhi, the private lives of too many government servants were harassed, squalid and congested, with inevitable reactions upon official morale and energy.

The tin bath tub, which we in England laugh at as an absurd relic of Victorian times, might be taken as the emblem of British Indian society—flanked, as supporters, by a *bhisti* (water-carrier) bowed under a humid goatskin, and a 'sweeper' emptying a crude commode of the type which throughout India goes by the descriptive name of 'thunder-box'. India is a land of contrasts, none less acute than that between two portraits of the white *sahib* in the hey-day of the British *raj*: one, immaculate in grey top-hat and morning coat at the races or a vice-regal garden party; the other, squatting miserably in a rather greasy zinc wash-tub, containing water either too hot or too cold, while his soap and nailbrush drown in a puddle on the concrete floor.

The second painful feature of Simla life which impinged upon the British visitor was the reliance upon coolie labour for transport both of persons and of goods. Food, fuel, furniture, all must come to his house upon men's backs. When he went a distance—and Simla distances are immense for a small town, since it is strung out in ribbons along the steep mountain ridges—to his office or the shops or a social occasion, he must ride in a rickshaw, pulled

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and pushed up and down precipitous paths by four wretched humans. There was no alternative but walking: no vehicular movement was allowed, save for the highest in the land. No private cars, no buses, no horse-drawn vehicles, not even bicycles: walk—often in torrential rain—or be pulled by your fellow-men who would be wet and weary for a price.

Rickshaw transport is a slow, uncomfortable, and expensive business: expensive to the hirer yet pitifully unremunerative to the hired. To take a party to the cinema, say, a mile away and back again, would cost by rickshaw in Simla two and a half times as much as by taxi in London. But it works out at a little over 3d. per hour per man, which with a ten-hour day, seven days a week, gives a weekly income of 16s. 9d. In fact, allowing for idle time, and the exactions of the owners from whom the rickshaws are rented, the rickshaw coolie is lucky if he makes more than Rs 12 to Rs 14 (18s. to 21s.) a month, and many must make less, even at the seasonal peak. There are, indeed, many Indians who get less for more work. The rickshaw coolie is a scandal, not merely because he earns so little, but because he earns it by degrading work upon which human beings ought not to be engaged.

The load coolie of Simla is much worse off than the rickshaw coolie in social status, and probably in earnings. Who could see four men lashed together beneath a heavy crate, staggering up the steep roads, or the perpetual ant-like stream of human figures bowed under sacks of coal or baulks of timber, without blenching at the thought of man's inhumanity to man—and nature's niggardliness; too, that men should find this servitude better than the bounty of the soil? The problem of the coolie, however, is not primarily moral but economic, a problem in supply and demand. Over-populated India provides the supply of men. The steep hills provide the demand for an essentially extravagant as well as heartless traffic. Imperialism is not responsible for either side of this equation.

In 1942 the authorities set about building a motor road encircling Simla. Everyone knew and admitted that such a road ought to have been built years before, as a necessary amenity and a source of public economy, besides the secondary reason that it would have made a start with abolishing the worst of the coolie

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traffic around the town. It had not been built because no one was ready to take the responsibility of saying, for sure, that the Government of India would be coming up to Simla as its summer capital for the next ten or even five years. That was a sample of the defects of an interim form of government which knew that in the last resort it was only caretaking. Without long-term policy there is little short-term progress, and therefore little long-term progress either.

## SQUALOR AND LEISURE

The expensive squalor in which lived the well-paid bureaucrats of India—a country which introduced the daily bath to Western society two centuries ago, and has since contributed little or nothing of record to what we of the West regard as civilized living—needs a special explanation. It was in fact a bud from the main stem of bureaucratic character. When Lady Reid, the energetic wife of the then Governor of Assam, planned to introduce water sanitation in the servants' quarters of Government House, Shillong, she met with opposition from certain of the local officials. They argued that the facilities were not wanted, would not be used, would be abused; and when these contentions were refuted they passed to the argument which clearly weighed most with them—that the servants should not be given what so many Europeans did not possess. 'That', replied Lady Reid, 'is the Europeans' business'; and the water sanitation was duly installed, to the great advantage of the Government House servants in health as well as happiness. In one province the younger police officers clubbed together and put up a scheme for installing water-closets in all the police bungalows of the province, or at any rate most of them. The scheme was turned down by the senior members of the Police Association on the ground that what had been good enough for them was good enough for their juniors.

These trivial tales of domestic life in India have their strict relevance to the main theme of the future of the British Empire; for they illustrate the inherent incapacity of a purely bureaucratic regime to keep up with the latest progress of ideas and standards in the world, let alone launch a constructive advance.

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It is significant that British business people in India set and sustained a far more up-to-date standard in their domestic regimes.

Allowing for pensions and perquisites on the one hand, and on the other for the extra costs of overseas service and of maintaining, as a family man often must, households both in India and at home, there seems to have been a fair equality between the rewards of government service in the two countries. In fact, however, the opportunity for the average man was more attractive in India during the past generation than at home; for the competition was much less severe, and it is doubtful whether more than four or five of the Secretaries to Government at Delhi at any recent period would, with an equal start, have ever reached the highest posts in Whitehall. The Indian official on the I.C.S. scale, without the dual household expenses and able, even if he adopted a completely European mode of life, to live much more cheaply in his own country, was far better off than a civil servant of parallel rank in Great Britain.

The economic standards to which the well-educated Indian in other walks of life aspires are much lower. University professors have been recruited (under official auspices) at Rs 190 per month, equal to £171 per annum. When Delhi University established a minimum salary of Rs 150 per month (£135 P<sup>er</sup> annum) for its teachers, one college alone was found to have no less than twelve members of its teaching staff below the minimum.

The standard of leisure of the central bureaucracy, on the other hand, was in the Indian tradition. Indeed it was sometimes excused as being forced upon the upper civil servants by the social and domestic habits of the lower. Leisure is a good thing, and overwork is bad. The higher official, in India as in England, is usually a devoted worker who ignores the standard office hours when he has much on his hands and who regards public holidays as an opportunity for making up arrears of work that can be done quietly at home. Yet the standard hours and the list of public holidays throw some light on his idea of what is proper, even if not always feasible. Until late in 1941, over two years after the outbreak of war, standard office hours in the civil departments of the central secretariat at New Delhi and Simla were 10.30 to 4.30; they were then extended by half an hour in the morning. Govern-

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ment of India closed holidays (equivalent to bank holidays, when all civil offices are closed) totalled fourteen in 1942. These were not the only 'casual' holidays allowed (that is to say, in addition to Sundays and ordinary leave). At Christmas, 1941, December 25th, 26th, and 31st and January 1st were closed holidays; December 28th was a Sunday; besides, officers in civil departments of the Government of India were authorized, if the state of work allowed, to take 'sectional holidays' (the 'sections' being religious, since the different religions in India have their own holy days) within the recognized maximum of six per annum. This was at a moment when Japan was hastening through Malaya and rapidly destroying India's eastern defensive screen.

Of course, since there is no lack of man-power in India, so there may be some excuse for neglecting to economize it. The surplus of university-educated men in India is notorious. It creates an army of black-coated unemployed or half-employed who are seed-beds of hate and disruption, in the past directed against the British *raj* and now taking the shape of political and ideological extremism which will be a thorn in the flesh of every independent Indian and Pakistani Government. Everyone has his own story to illustrate the strange consequences of this surplus of the book-learned: here is one. The following advertisement appeared in a leading Indian newspaper, the *Statesman*: 'Wanted, a fruit specialist for a potato chips plant immediately. Applicant must be experienced, *having academic qualifications*'

If bureaucracy has lent to India, and re-borrowed from India, characteristics which betray its imperfection as a substitute for popular government, it has also spread abroad its nobler traits. British India has been the home—permanent or transitory—of many thousands of devoted servants of the public weal. The Englishman who rendered there his service to the Empire and to his fellow-men yielded nothing to the civil servant, soldier, or police officer at home in devotion to duty or in standards of public honour. He paid the price, which imperialism must ask of its children, of exile from his home and separation from his friends and family. He gave unstinted service in return for little sympathy or thanks from the vocal among those whom he served, and without the reward of knowing that his children and his children's

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children and the coming generations of his own people would reap where he had sown. He built for others to enjoy. If, in the affairs of India and of her relations with Great Britain, he was often conservative (though not so conservative as the stay-at-home who put prejudice in the place of knowledge) it was because he honestly believed that if control passed to hands less able and less selfless than his own the people of India themselves would suffer. He may well have been right: but the sufferings of the people have often been the price of political progress and of ultimate material advance.

# VII

## BROAD RED CARPET

**K**ings and Queens of England—royal ambitions, royal failings, royal quarrels, even royal dowries—have played a very important part in the making of the British Empire. Even more decisive, however, in its evolution through three centuries into the present British Commonwealth has been the role of the Crown, as distinct from the Monarchs who have worn it. Constitutionally, it is harder for republics than for monarchies to blossom into modern empires. The choice between representation and non-representation is too abrupt; nor are the metropolitan institutions of republicanism well adapted to the flexible and infinitely various requirements of oversea expansion and contraction. Witness the repeated dilemma of French imperialism: a colony has had to be, in effect, *dipartement* or *dependance*—father's trousers or infants' first sizes; nor does either garment fit for long, however becoming it may seem at the moment. Witness too the fertility of invention in seeking formulae for the constitutional rebirth of the Netherlands East Indies, within the ambit of the Netherlands Crown, while France struggled with the cumbrous concept of a republican Union of the French Empire.

### CROWN AND COMMONWEALTH

According to British constitutional principles, the Crown is the fount of law and justice, as well as the titular head of the legislative and executive branches of Government. The authority of Parliament, indeed, overrides all but a few remaining prerogative powers of the Crown; but in their judicial, legislative and

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executive range the Crown's powers are all-comprehending and unlimited. This fact—or fiction, if you will; for there is little distinction between the two in British Constitutional affairs—has been of inestimable value in the construction and ordering of an empire so varied in the character<sup>1</sup> of its peoples and constituent countries. It has enabled government in all its branches to be adapted with infinite flexibility to local conditions, including the residual authority of princes and chieftains who have come under the suzerainty of the Crown. Without that flexibility, and that capacity for smoothly absorbing and improving what is good among the native institutions of subject peoples, the British Empire would have snapped and splintered long since.

Too frequently is it forgotten that something like one-third of the dependent Empire by area has been governed indirectly through the indigenous monarchical or tribal systems of the people; the one-third includes the Indian States, the Malay States, the Nigerian emirates and many other dependencies in Africa, the Persian Gulf, Melanesia and the Pacific. It was the sudden and crude violation of this tradition in the so-called MacMichael treaties for the Malayan Union, and in the acceptance of the cession of Sarawak at the hands of an elderly, childless ruler over the protests of the dynasty and of the votes of the majority of the people's representatives, that aroused so much indignation and so injured the repute of Britain for wise understanding of the sentiments as well as the material needs of the peoples of Asia.

That, however, is not the only virtue of the Crown in the governance of the Empire. As an institution, it is a bridge between countries otherwise independent of each other, or becoming so, in law and administration. This characteristic was exceedingly important in the transition from the old centralized *imperium* to the community of equal nations comprising the United Kingdoms and the Dominions; it is likely to be even more important in the process, now afoot, of transition to independence and equality on the part of the more advanced of the still dependent peoples. Parliaments can separate and become sovereign, laws be different and administration separate; but the Crown remains common, and from the Crown can derive, by natural constitutional process, all that is needed in the way of common institutions, from federations

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downwards, to care for common needs and common problems. Once cut that last connection, and the process of constitutional rebuilding becomes far more difficult. Even Eire, by a formula bordering on sophistry, has proved her reluctant recognition of that truth.

The value of monarchy as a form of constitution is underappreciated in many parts of the world, partly because republicans assume a proprietary interest in their own methods, partly because historical memories overcame actual knowledge. The Americans, whose last king was George III, have never grown out of thinking that all kings are like that obstinate Hanoverian. They forget that George III was as bad—and as good—a king for England as he was for the American Colonies. When we recall the economic and other inward causes of the American Revolution, we cannot but conclude that the rebellious colonials would have revolted as certainly against a better king, or against a middling president. They were in truth casting off, not monarchy, but the eighteenth century. They threw the baby out with the bath-water, and have never since been able to look a monarchical infant in the eye.

The British Crown, however, is more than a legal convenience and a constitutional symbol. It is a symbol which is worn by a person. It gives life and colour where the neatest constitutional construction would be, for want of human appeal, as dead as any machine. To newspapers, 'human-interest' stories are meat-and-drink, and the Empire is made up of such men and women as read newspapers; the Throne is a perpetual human-interest story. There has never been a time in the history of the British Empire when a Royal Family was more universally loved and admired, not even in the plush and pompous days of Queen Victoria's Jubilees.

## THE HUMAN TOUGH

Those who represent the King among His Majesty's subjects overseas must never forget that they represent a man and a human institution as well as a fount of legal power. They represent the King; they cannot be the King, though they (or more often their wives) sometimes seem to aspire that way. But to represent means

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what it does mean; a Governor or Governor-General is not a mere executive instrument or bureaucratic panjandrum. Too often, representing the King is the last business of an overpressed administrator. In the twentieth century, moreover, the pattern which the Crown's representative must follow is that of a twentieth-century King. If he is a century or two behind the times he risks involving his office—and with it, to some extent, the Crown itself—in the odium that would attach to the Throne even in Britain, where monarchy is deep in the roots of the nation and the hearts of the people, if the King behaved to-day like George III or, indeed, Queen Victoria. The Royal Family are distinct from the people yet they are in touch with the people. They visit the factories, the hospitals, the schools, the sporting events that the people know. Pomp and pageantry they use upon the proper occasion, but never when simplicity is to be preferred. The King smiles, cracks a joke; the Queen waves a hand. They are human beings, and because they are human they are loved.<sup>1</sup>

So, too, the best beloved of our twentieth-century representatives of His Majesty in the overseas Empire have been essentially human: Lord and Lady Gowrie, for instance, or Sir Leslie and Lady Wilson, whose terms in Australia were prolonged and prolonged because the Australians wanted them to stay. Governors and Governors-General in Australia, like Governors-General of other Dominions, can concentrate on their representative function; for they have scarcely any other. Governors of Colonies, or of Indian Provinces, and above all the Governor-General of India, have had important administrative duties which are apt to take priority because from day to day they seem the more pressing.

The Viceroy of India was an integral part of the bureaucratic system. He was therefore dangerously handicapped in performing not only his viceregal function proper but also his functions as political head of the Government. Up to the time of Pandit

<sup>1</sup> A writer in the *Round Table* (September 1947) has thus described a 'substantially new' addition to the British idea of the monarchy in the past hundred years: 'The conception\* of a social and representative monarchy, in which the King or Queen is recognized by the people as the embodiment of their own collective character, having equal affinity with every class from the highest to the humblest, a conception that goes far to reconcile all that was most inspiring in the idealism of divine right with all that was most rational in the Whig scheme of constitutional Kingship.'

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Nehru's Interim Government, he retained certain departments, including external affairs, under his own hand—as indeed a Prime Minister may, though at peril to his capacity as chairman detached from detailed business. Unlike either Monarch or Prime Minister, the Governor-General was frequently a party to departmental business outside his own portfolios. In British India alone he had to discharge three separate and distinct functions, each of which could well occupy the whole time of an able and experienced man: to be king in a constitutional monarchy, Prime Minister in a Cabinet wherein he held a power above that of his colleagues, and supreme official, the all-powerful Head of the Civil Service—monarch, politician and bureaucrat. Besides, he was ruler among rulers in his capacity as Crown Representative in the Indian States.

Inevitably one of these jobs tended to be less thoroughly done than the others. The pressure of office work usually obliged a conscientious Viceroy in recent years to give less than enough time to his monarchical functions. Yet those functions have been of vital importance, as indeed they would have been even in a country less imbued with the monarchical idea and less habituated to loyalty and respect for the British Crown.

## POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

In the Government Houses of India, the difficulties in the way of adequately discharging the representational function encouraged a reliance on pomp and circumstance in place of warmth and personality. Viceroys and Presidency Governors carried on a tradition of grandeur which started with some reason two centuries or more ago, and continued despite the changed conditions of the present day. To impress Nawabs and Rajahs with a display of luxury more imposing than their own was no doubt sound policy in simpler times; it over-passed its usefulness when the Indian Empire from the Khyber to Cape Comorin had been under the British Crown for generations, when a new political and democratic outlook pervaded the state, when education and knowledge of the world were spreading even among India's poverty-stricken millions, and when a totally different spirit animated the life of

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Royalty in England itself. No one could travel in the Indian provinces without hearing caustic stories—not least from modest-minded Governors who had to participate in and help pay for these unwanted splendours—of the personal staff of a dozen or more and the trainload of military and domestic staff with which even recent Viceroys habitually toured.

In official circles in India, sartorial prescription far outlasted similar practices in England. Until shortly before the outbreak of World War II tail coats had to be worn, not only by those attending meetings of the Governor-General's Executive Council, but also by Members and Secretaries having their regular official interviews with His Excellency. There was great scandal among the traditionalists in India when Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru declared in a public speech in 1942 that the war would not be won by those who changed into dinner jackets for dinner every evening, but there was a nasty bite of truth in his aphorism.

All this is water over the dam, which we may rue but cannot recall. It has, however, its lessons for other parts of the Empire. The Empire of Queen Victoria may have flourished on the Broad Red Carpet and all that it stands for; but the British Commonwealth of Nations of King George VI cannot substitute prestige for popularity, nor braid and bunting for insight into the hearts and minds of the people.

## VIII

### A NEGLECTED EMPIRE

**T**he old Empire, then, which we knew and were brought up to admire, is past and finished. It was moribund before the second world war; the war only dealt the death blow. It perished, not through conquest, nor through the revolt of its subject peoples; for the overrunning of the Far Eastern Empire and the apparent haste of the Indians and Burmese to quit the imperial orbit were only symptoms, not causes. The old Empire was becoming senile in its animating ideas before 1947, before 1942, before 1939.

The Thin Red Line Empire, with its inadequate power policy, did not fit the strenuous conditions of the twentieth century. Nor did the Thick Red Tape Empire, with its bureaucratic outlook and its consequent emphasis on administration rather than policy; nor the Broad Red Carpet Empire with its undue pomp and display. How did the traditional British Empire manage to grow so out-of-date, with such apparent though deceptive suddenness?

It is for much the same reason as that for which we British found ourselves, twice in a lifetime, fighting with our backs to the wall in a gigantic world struggle which in either case might have been averted if action had been taken in time. The British race are not indeed short-sighted, but they are incurably optimistic. They lift up their eyes to the hills, trusting to Providence that they will not fall into the bogs at their feet. They are lazy and gentlemanly; they confidently believe that their own goodwill will be appreciated although it is not always well expressed in deeds, and will be reciprocated although others may look upon the same events with a far less cheerful eye. They are apt to neglect the problem which is distant either in space or in time.

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For a generation before the second world war, the British public and their political leaders were too much preoccupied with nearer matters—with inflammatory Europe, with ideals of disarmament, and perpetual peace, with social welfare at home; with problems of economic depression and international trade—to pay much attention to the Empire as such. It seemed to be getting along very well, so who should worry? The only Empire question (apart from the Indian constitution) which intently occupied public opinion in Britain between the two wars, was Empire preference, and even this was first and foremost a domestic controversy about tariffs and free trade. Joseph Chamberlain, the last great imperialist in British politics, made the error of over-emphasizing the fiscal aspect of Empire; imperialism for Empire's sake, so far from recovering from this wound, had salt rubbed into it by later champions of imperial preference.

The tendency to drift was encouraged, or at least not discouraged, by the developments in the self-governing portion of the Empire. Dominion status and the British Commonwealth of Nations are justly ranked among the great achievements of statesmanship of our time; but let us confess that the part played in that achievement by the people and Parliament of the United Kingdom has been acquiescent rather than deliberate. They discovered rather than designed the British Commonwealth of Nations.

One great act of constructive statesmanship there was in our generation—perhaps the decisive stroke of twentieth-century policy towards the Dominions—the grant of responsible self-government to the Transvaal and Orange Free State in 1906, which led by natural process to the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910. But this was the decision of a statesman not commonly ranked among the great imperialists, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

For the rest, the admission of full Dominion autonomy in every field—defensive, diplomatic, fiscal, and financial—though ungrudging, followed rather than established the facts. The Statute of Westminster was an act of ratification rather than creation. It was ably sponsored, but it needed no crusade by its champions to implant a new idea in a reluctant public mind. Its principal opponent in the United Kingdom was Mr. Winston Churchill,

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who challenged it, not because he had a more constructive British Commonwealth plan to offer—for as a matter of fact Mr. Churchill has shone throughout his career rather as a statesman of England and of Europe than of the British Commonwealth, which he does not always seem to understand—but principally because he foresaw certain disagreeable consequences, above all in Ireland, of the constitutional independence that the Statute confirmed and strengthened.

The formation of the Irish Free State and its admission to the company of equal nations in the Commonwealth was itself as much the culmination of a domestic policy as the flowering of an imperial one. In any case, it was in the nature of a treaty of peace—a compromise—after a bitter war. It had not the grace of forestalling forcible demand.

### DELAY IN INDIA

Much the same may be said of India policy. The Montagu Declaration of 1917 was the answer to a dangerous situation in India. Great credit goes to Montagu for designing and putting through the Government of India Act of 1919 in face of all the difficulties; the deliberate policy was reform as well as repression. But from the Indian point of view the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution was at best a tactical advance in a political war that was only just beginning. In view of all that was happening in the world, in the British Commonwealth, in India itself, the pace of progress thereafter was unconscionably slow. By the 1917 declaration and the 1919 constitution, Britain had acknowledged, in effect, that her rule in India was transitional, not permanent. The long-term future after an interim period (which might of course have several stages) lay with an autonomous Indian regime. Such transitional periods are bound to be difficult and increasingly dangerous. Once admitted to exist, they ought to be made as brief as possible, in the interest as much of the bequeathers of power as of its inheritors.

Of course many British people thought that the transitional period in India would last a very long time, and that the partial self-government of the 1919 constitution was indeed but an experi-

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ment which might have to be abandoned; but these conservatives were not, on the whole, the elements likely to launch in India a large constructive policy, whether economic or political, such as the third decade of the twentieth century demanded. It was a British interest, on the long-term View—which we can now take in retrospect—to shorten the transitional period and therefore to strengthen progressively the machinery whereby India could either govern herself directly or choose her own form of self-government.

The defective and experimental Montagu-Chelmsford constitution lasted without significant amendment for sixteen years, until the passage of the Government of India Act, 1935. Even then, the federal part of the new constitution could not be put into force because the long negotiations to secure adherence of the Indian States dragged on and had reached the point of failure when the war broke out.

Those sixteen years were a period of rapid advance in the rest of the British Commonwealth. They saw the Irish treaty, the Balfour report of 1926, the Statute of Westminster, the Status of the Union Act of South Africa, the new constitution of Eire with its doctrine of 'external association', the development of the Dominions into full international entities having their own diplomatic relations and international engagements. They were the honeymoon of the third British Empire of equal autonomous nations. But India was left behind. In 1917 the Government of India had been summoned like the Governments of the Dominions to the Imperial War Cabinet; in 1941 she was omitted from the initial call to be represented at the War Cabinet in London, and the Secretary of State and the Viceroy had to press for an invitation. In 1919 she had her own representative at the Paris Peace Conference, and she was a foundation member of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office in her own right; when the United Nations came to be founded at San Francisco, she was found possessing still precisely the same equivocal international status as she had possessed a generation before. Yet India was bursting with every whit as zealous a nationalism as the Dominions. The delay in her advance was due, of course, as much to her internal dissensions as to British procrastination, but it is

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Britain as well as India which is suffering from the effects of it to-day. It cannot be said that British policy in India made up in dynamic zeal for the dead-weight of Indian economic backwardness and social division, nor in constructive energy for the unconstructive leadership of Mr. Gaftdhi.

Federation was the main constructive idea of the 1935 Act, the great contribution of that generation of British—and Indian—statesmanship to the Indian aspect of the imperial problem. It therefore should have been the business of British policy to pursue federation ardently to final success; for British statesmen knew that there was no other practicable road to self-government for a united India. The full implementation of the 1935 Act might well have spared India the bloodbath of 1947, and saved her for the British Commonwealth. The diehards in Britain and their allies in India have a lot to answer for.

The failure to achieve federation in time was a major failure of British statesmanship, as well as a terrible mistake on the part of the Indian Princes, who have never found themselves so favourably situated again, and of the British-Indian politicians, who have paid in terms of the division of their country and the murder of thousands of their compatriots for their failure to grasp a practical form of unity while they could, even on half-a-loaf terms. For that failure of British statesmanship many are to blame, but if it is true that there were servants of the Crown who surreptitiously worked against federation by whispering in the ears of the Indian Princes tempting and plausible arguments for non-accession, which their Highnesses were all too ready to accept, then they are among the most culpable of all. In the result, inertia, which had long been the bane of imperial policy in India as elsewhere, again controlled the situation.

During the phase that followed, the torch of constructive political thought about India was carried forward, not so much by her own nationalist politicians, or by successive Secretaries of State and Viceroys in their official capacities, as by a few British statesmen—including Mr. L. S. Amery in his *obiter dicta*—who gave their minds to the problem of finding forms of government and constitutional procedure adapted to India's special and complex needs, and by those British and Indian students of politics,

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mostly quite unknown to the general public, who explored such constructive ideas as confederation of the countries of the Indian Ocean.

### THE INDIRECTION OF INDIRECT RULE

In the Colonial Empire there was more constructive if less spectacular progress during the inter-war period. Indirect rule (though an old idea in its Indian, Malayan, and Northern Nigerian forms) was given fresh and vigorous life in West and Central Africa. A novel form of constitution, with universal franchise, was tried in Ceylon, and ideas of confederation, with an eye not only to larger economic opportunities in the immediate future but also to long-term possibilities of Dominion status, were mooted about East Africa, the West Indies, and even West Africa. It was in the economic and social field that, until the end of the period, the lack of consistent and constructive policy was most noticeable. The corner was turned with the appointment of an itinerant labour adviser to the Colonial Office, and above all by the new colonial development policy of 1940. But these were in effect reversals, not products, of the earlier policies, and the new development policy was precipitated (not in the Colonial Office itself, which had been working for it for some time, but in the Government as a whole) by the exposure of the derelict condition of parts of the West Indies, which Mr. Lloyd George had not unfairly characterised as a slum empire.

The Colonial Empire, like the Indian Empire, had in fact been managed according to Victorian standards in its economic and financial relations with Whitehall, though not always in the internal finances of individual colonies. The doctrine that the home country should not draw revenue from colonial taxes had as its corollary that the colonies should not draw subventions from home taxes. If the Colonial Empire was not to be a paying concern (an idea wrapped up with the horrid heresies of protectionism and colonial exploitation) then at least it should not be a drain. The White Man's Burden was on his shoulders, not on his pocket. This was a coherent scheme of individualism and stern piety, and, like the free trade with which it was linked both ideo-

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logically and practically, it worked well in its own time and generation.

Colonial territories ran their own finances. They had the social services and economic developments that they could afford to pay for, or that private capitalism provided in its own interest. They borrowed on their own credit,\* and if, as a result, even the most substantial colonies had sometimes to pay 1½ per cent more on their money than did the British Government (which was ultimately responsible for them), it could not be helped; for the alternative was a British Government guarantee, or loan on easy terms, and who knew where this might not lead in the way of subsidy and involvement in the finances of the colonies? Where there were local self-governing institutions to take their part in raising and spending public money, these were often under the strong influence, if not the control, of the white population—planters, miners, farmers, merchants. Equally naturally, these people did not relish having taxes imposed on them to pay for benefits to their black and brown neighbours. Thus the native inhabitants came to get, as a rule, the social and economic benefits which they themselves could afford, and occasionally they even came out on the wrong side of the book of public finance. This general policy of fiscal self-sufficiency was mitigated by a few measures, notably the Colonial Development Act of 1929, but these were wholly inadequate in scale to the size of the problem, which they left much as before.

The general, though again not universal, characteristic of industrial policy in the dependencies was *laissez-faire*. The tradition of the Colonial Office was against exploitation of the native populations in factories; but positive social and economic policies, to guide industrial development and to ensure that terms and conditions of employment and the planning of urban growth were satisfactory, lagged many years behind the need for them. For this, an inner dilemma of thought on colonial affairs was in part responsible.

## PRESERVATION OR PROGRESS

There are two aspects of colonial policy, which one may term the anthropological and the progressive without implying—what

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would be quite untrue—either that anthropologists are unprogressive or that progress can ignore anthropological facts. Perhaps 'traditionalist' conveys the contrast better than 'anthropological'. To the traditionalist, the native colonial subject may be ignorant, but he is innocent; he may be poor but he is happy; his death-rate may be high but his life-cycle revolves in the ancient pattern of community custom. To the progressive, on the other hand, custom is too often wasteful and unhygienic; ignorance is a stigma and poverty a disgrace.

On the whole, British colonial policy has leant towards the traditionalist view, modified by the moral reformism of missionary endeavour. It has defended the native against the exploitation of the trader, the miner and the industrialist, who are the virus-carriers of material progress. It has put philanthropy before five per cent.

Not that either line of policy ever goes to its extreme. Nowhere is the issue straightly joined between the Garden of Eden and the sidewalks of New York. It is always a case of a little more or a little less of this or that bias in different colonial territories or systems. An attempt was made to synthesize the two views in the idea of the Dual Mandate, whereby a Colonial Power is regarded as in a relation of trusteeship, not only to the colonial peoples themselves for their own welfare, but also to the world at large, for their advancement and the development of their natural resources. This idea was embodied in the League of Nations mandate system, and has in effect been taken over by the United Nations. Internationalism—which has certainly affected British colonial policy in the past generation and will probably affect it still more in the next—has on the whole been an influence on the 'progressive' as contrasted with the 'traditionalist' side. The non-colonial world is naturally more interested in the second than in the first branch of the Dual Mandate.

The Mandate remains dual, the mixture oil and water, at best an unstable emulsion. On critical issues of policy the wards and the world may be on opposite sides of the fence. The colonial peoples may not always want those higher material standards of life which appeal to the outside world because they mean greater production and expanded markets; they may want merely to be

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let alone. But that is not the only dilemma of the trusteeship idea. Even if the requirements of the outside world may be neglected, there is a constant danger of conflict between the political and the social elements of colonial policy. The ultimate objective throughout the British colonial empire is officially stated to be the fitting of now dependent peoples to govern themselves. Systems of indirect rule are represented as a means to this end, a means which has the special merit of preserving indigenous institutions and patterns of life; thus it obviates, runs the claim, those social and psychological strains which are the inevitable accompaniment of uprooting from old cultural soils. But there is no guarantee, or even inherent likelihood, that when the time comes for a new stage of political advance the tribal, monarchical or local institutions which are adapted to indirect rule will be at all appropriate elements in a regional or national system of self-government.

Indeed they may serve to enhance the dangerous contrast between urban or otherwise Europeanized and rural or segregated native populations. There are several colonial territories to-day in which the demand of the white-collared element in the towns for a large measure of political power is reaching the point of clamour, while the mass of the people are not only unfit for it but are being more or less insulated from the contagion of desire for it. Paternal economic policies may lead in different directions from political or social policies; an apparatus of administration in agriculture, trade and industry may be created out of all relation to the growth of autonomous political and social institutions capable of sustaining it when the time comes for paternal, alien government to withdraw.

The fundamental problem is education. Present-day social structures, however conformable to the current desires and inherited customs of the peoples, will not and should not last for ever, any more than the peoples' economic development will or should stand still. Therefore the population must be prepared by appropriate education (including of course education in 'citizenship', hygiene and practical arts as well as book learning) for their inevitable and desirable advances on both fronts. But the problem has not been thought out. Much of the basic data are not available

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or have not been seriously studied. Political research in colonial territories is behind the need for it.

This fact is to some extent a by-product of the negative and *laissez-faire* attitude towards the colonial empire which was the ruling attitude up to the last dozen years. The colonial estate was treated as pasture rather than arable; nor was it realized until recently in political husbandry that grass as well as plough land needs its soil analysis, its fertilizers, its scientific cultivation. The Empire has been neglected in academic study as well as public policy. Research should be—and under the guidance of the Colonial Research Committee and the expenditure of a generous portion of Colonial Development and Welfare moneys, now is—the advance party of reconstruction.

## COLONIAL PREFERENCE

Across the pale fabric of *laissez-faire* shot the scarlet thread of imperial preference. Joseph Chamberlain had a great vision of an Empire developed on the principle of mutual benefit. It was rejected by the British people because they wanted the big loaf; because their export industries were getting along very well provided their costs were kept down by free imports. Free trade was a policy which in that era suited the Empire as a whole and earned the friendship of the world. Later, after the first world war, the outlook of the British public changed; it was more jobs rather than cheaper food on which they fixed their aspiring eyes; the export industries were getting along very badly, even with cheap imports, and they wanted assured markets. What had once been an ideal of mutual benefit became a calculation of national advantage. At Ottawa, 'in the negotiations between the Dominions and the United Kingdom, the pace was forced by the Dominions, who wanted to buy assured markets, at the price, not so much of taking more British goods, as of keeping out more foreign goods. In the negotiations between the colonial empire and the U.K.—both parties being represented by members of the same Government—the pace was forced by the United Kingdom, who wanted to obtain assured markets at the price rather of keeping out more foreign goods than of taking more colonial goods.

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In the net result, Ottawa did little to 'clear out the channels of trade among ourselves', as Mr. Baldwin stated the objective, but a good deal to block some of the international channels of trade. When, shortly afterwards, world trade began to revive, there was a notable expansion of trade within the Empire (with the balance going much in favour of the Dominions) while trade between the Empire and the rest of the world lagged far behind (with the balance, however, going much against the rest of the world). The colonial Empire got from Ottawa a certain stimulus to its exports, but it had to pay the price of having to buy in the dearer market some of its luxuries and some of its necessities (such as rubber-soled shoes which protect the natives' health).

The colonial Empire was also intimately concerned with the policies of supply-regulation designed to keep up the prices of tea, rubber, sugar, copper, tin. These regulation schemes undoubtedly raised the gross income from exports of the colonies, but whether it raised their net income, after deducting the increased profits paid out to shareholders in Britain and elsewhere, is open to doubt. If, after taking into account the smaller opportunities of employment which followed from restriction of output, they resulted in a final balance of economic advantage to the colonial inhabitants, it was more by accident than by design. It must, however, be observed that a growing fraction of rubber output, in Malaya as in the Netherlands East Indies, was produced by native growers, who benefited financially from the restriction schemes which held up prices; and that conditions of employment in colonial industries, for instance in the Rhodesian copper mines or Ceylon tea estates, might well have been worse, had not the companies been able to make the enhanced profits.

### LOST OPPORTUNITIES

Looking at the Empire as a whole, we see in the policies of the '20s and '30s a lack of plan and purpose; a weakness of inspiration, a hesitancy in performance.

The Empire offered, for example, the most glorious opportunities for the development of air transport, which should have been the foundation and training ground of military air power. There

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were great distances to cover, but there were also British territories in every continent to serve as halts and bases; and, where these were not enough, the right to serve parts of the British Empire by air was readily barterable for the use of foreign airports.

Something was made of these opportunities, but how little! What a small thing was Imperial Airways beside the great countries and great distances that it had to serve! The all-up Empire air-mail scheme was the product of great vision and initiative, but there was not enough of these qualities, and the British taxpayer obtained less than value for his money. By 1939, for the price of all the subsidies that the British Government supplied, we should have had, not only a six-day service from London to Sydney, but main routes and feeders, served by fast up-to-date planes, covering East, West, and South Africa, the main cities of India, Ceylon, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and through by an Anglo-American route to Vancouver; we should have had North Atlantic and mid-Atlantic lines, and experimental routes across the Indian Ocean and among the islands of the South Pacific. Instead, we had only the shadow of these things. Moreover, co-operation among the various countries of the Empire in civil and military air progress was under-developed.

In so many respects achievement fell short of opportunity in the use and development of the Empire as an instrument of good for the world and its own peoples. Men seemed to have lost the vision needed to turn to account the legacy of their ancestors in the new conditions of the twentieth century. Those new conditions included an economic revolution which enormously increased productive power in the primary industries; a social revolution which reduced the strength of the old governing classes; new inventions like broadcasting, the cinema, the aeroplane which revolutionized the means of contact between men across great distances, and radically changed the methods of conducting great wars; a great new stirring of national self-consciousness among dependent peoples; and a major realignment in the power politics of the world.

## NEW OUTLOOK

Now there is a fresh stirring of thought and activity. In the

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colonial Empire, schemes of regional grouping are pressed forward; the Secretary of State himself, at a conference of the West Indian colonies,<sup>1</sup> seeks to force the pace of their federal inter-connection, with the aim, not only of immediate economic and social advantage, but ultimately of political independence within the Commonwealth. A colonial development corporation is to be formed with a capital of £100 million, apart from an Overseas Food Corporation which will absorb the already inaugurated plan, costing over £25 million in capital investment, for the mechanized production of groundnuts in East and Central Africa.

The Labour Government rightly takes credit for these projects on the grand scale. Socialism has indeed as great a scope in the dependent Empire of the twentieth century as competitive capitalism had in that of the nineteenth century—and as many dangers. Perhaps its greatest danger for the colonial territories is the widening of the gulf between complex and cumbrous mechanisms of government and the fitness of the ordinary people of the territories to understand them and assume responsibility for running them. But the new approach, the new energy, go back further than the change of Government in 1945. They date at least from the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, sponsored by Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, with its promise of £5 million a year for ten years, plus £500,000 for research. This provision was raised to £120 million for ten years, including an allocation for research, by Colonel Stanley's Development and Welfare Act of 1945. The reasons for the change of spirit and direction lie deeper than party politics. New impulses have animated British ideas and endeavours in imperial affairs.

They derive from two sources. The first is a wider-ranging civic conscience, the product not only of education but perhaps even more of the satisfaction of minimal social standards at home. The spirit of reform spreads from the demolished slums and the disappearing poor at home to backwardness and poverty in the Empire overseas. The report of the West Indies Royal Commissions was characteristic evidence of this trait.

The second source is, paradoxically, a recognition of domestic weakness, economic and—less imperiously at this juncture—de-

<sup>1</sup> At Montego Bay, Jamaica, September 1947.

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fensive. The British people realize that they must make the best of the Empire not merely for the Empire's sake but decisively for their own. Conscious of their new poverty, they re-discover their ancient wealth. The energizing of the neglected Empire is thus a characteristically British operation, emotional in impulse, practical in conduct, optimistic, haphazard, surprised at itself.

The optimism occasionally runs ahead of the facts. Enthusiasts for the development of Africa forget sometimes the great capital investment in railways, harbours, and handling equipment, as well as works and housing on the site, needed for the exploitation of Africa's interior resources. More often still, they succumb to the plausible notion of 'an inexhaustible supply of labour'. Those already engaged on capitalistic enterprise in Africa know that this is an illusion. Africa is not heavily populated; the employment of its people in industry or even large-scale agriculture gives rise to acute social problems which are far from overcome; and their elevation to a fruitful level of skill is a slow process, itself dependent on a raising of the average standard of output, living and education of the African in the village, a process liable to react in turn adversely on the supply of wage-labour. Nevertheless these problems must be overcome, and can be overcome by energy, leadership, and imagination, guided by expert study and research and by the rich experience of present administrators.

# IX

## INDIA'S IMPENDING REVOLUTION

**T**he Indian Empire of the British Crown lasted less than ninety years, from 1858-1947. It had indeed been an unconscionable time a-dying. It was a Victorian concept and its life force perished with the Victorian Age. Victorian in pomp and grandeur, Victorian in the public-school code of its Government, its Philistinism, its middle-class standards of virtue, its creaming of the large Victorian families for its administrators and soldiers, Victorian in the commercialism that mingled with highmindedness in Anglo-Indian relations, Victorian in its Gladstonesque view of the functions of Government, it was above all Victorian in its faith in the rule of law and political liberalism as the solvent of all public ills. Since the British never doubted the efficacy of these doctrines, it did not occur to Indians to do so.

It passes away amid pessimism, doubt, and self-distrust which are more evident on the Indian side than on the British. Beneath the jubilation with which the dawn of Indian independence and the birth of two new nation States have been celebrated lies a deep psychological malaise. It is not on the British side. Those, indeed, suffer many pangs who grieve for the Indian millions, condemned, they believe, by British defection to civil war and the breakdown of government, and for the simple Indian peasantry condemned to mastery by an urban political class. But the commoner feeling among the British public is relief at the laying down of a burden, mingled with thankfulness that Britain does not have to take responsibility for the ghastly troubles that have overtaken parts of the Indian sub-continent since authority was handed over. And if there are regrets at the loss of the military and economic advan-

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tages of the suzerainty of India, they are merged in the general apprehension at the weakness of Britain's new position in the world.

Nor is it fundamentally because of the obvious, tangible economic and social difficulties that Indian thought quails before the unfolding future. Taught for so long by nationalist propaganda that communal conflict was a creature of the 'third party', and famine a by-product of imperialist exploitation, it has scarcely yet grasped the terrible dimensions either of the communal problem or of the still graver problem of physical subsistence. That problem, of the two is the graver because even in terms of civil conflict it is capable, if left unsolved, of turning mere communal rivalry into war for survival, with casualties on a scale which would make the Punjab butchery of 1947 or 'the great Calcutta killing' of 1946 look like a bout of healthy blood-letting.

### THE QUESTIONING OF LIBERALISM

Indian political thought is not much daunted by difficulties with which it has not yet seriously grappled. But it\* is growingly afflicted by a deeper fear, the fear that all its assumptions about democracy, culled from Western experience and philosophy, are invalid in the Indian context. It is a terrible thing to lose faith when faith is most needed. British rule broke down the old governmental order in India, but there is no yearning to go back to it now that British rule has disappeared; to go forward means an elective, parliamentary system, wherein liberty is identified with equality, and democracy with the vote—one vote to each man and eventually to each woman. And to go forward on those lines in India means—what? Permanent rule of the majority community? Corruption and nepotism in administration? Fragmentation of the political order, as section after section, distinguished by area or language or community, demands self-government on the same terms and for the same reasons as it was demanded of the British for India as a whole? Or does it mean the rapid growth of parties based on economic interest which will at length, by the mounting intensity of their struggle, cause a revolutionary collapse of the old social order based on caste and village solidarity—a collapse in

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which what devils could not seize their chance of entering into the house swept and garnished? These are some of the questions that haunt the thoughtful Indian mind, awakening now from the drugged illusions of nationalist fervour.

They are questions which no one now can answer. The future solves its own conundrums. But the past may yield some clues. British rule gave India unity such as it had never previously known. Monarchs like Asoka or the Moguls claimed the suzerainty of all India, but they lacked the mechanical means—rapid transport and communications—of perpetuating unity over so vast an area. And for the very reason that they were of India the unity they gave was unstable. Rivalry and revolt were inevitable. Asoka's empire was broken up—by Indians—and Buddhism in India succumbed utterly to caste Hinduism: one or other had to triumph. The Moguls may have been masters of India, but they were Mussulmans, and Hindus were not to be subdued for ever. Mogul India was in a constant state of revolt in one quarter or another, and the Mahrattas certainly do not forget that their ancestors twice made themselves masters of its very capital.

The British, for the very reason that they were alien, afforded a different kind of unity—not unity in resistance, as nationalist legend would persuade us, for resistance to British rule since 1857 has been trifling compared with the size of the country, but unity in subjection. Muslim and Hindu did not dispute between themselves a power which neither possessed. They quarrelled, yes, often murderously, and there were rivalries and dissension between other groups—Pathans and Punjabis, Bengalis and the peoples of Assam, hill men and plainmen, peasants and money-lenders, debtors and creditors, Brahmins and non-Brahmins. But there was always, in the last resort, an overlord to settle issues and punish lawlessness. It was a negative, passive unity, not a constructive unity of purpose and endeavour.

The aim and ideal of the Indian National Congress was to unite Indians of all castes, classes, and creeds for the effort of political advance; but while the Congress has retained its ideal it failed in practice, because once the advance began the conditions of the former unity disappeared. Once political power was to be had by Indians—the question 'which Indians?' inflamed ambition among

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majorities and jealousy among minorities, and awakened all the dulled historical memories of conflict. It is first the prospect and now the actuality of supreme power which has disunited India and will work to keep it disunited.

This is an old story on British lips, though often not believed by non-British hearers. But what is not so commonplace is the recognition that the disunity which spread over India as British rule withdrew was made worse by the false sense of their potency which alien rule had encouraged in all minorities. Minorities everywhere hold power on sufferance, but under alien authority they seem to hold it, or at least claim it, as of right because the sufferance is not that of majority but that of the aliens. Left to themselves, minorities who seek power—even a proportionate share in power—must choose one of three methods. They may take and hold power by force or cunning, including the opportunist use of divisions among the majorities, or alliances with other minorities. Or they may make themselves so necessary, or such a nuisance, to the majority that they can demand a share of power as the price of their help or their submission. Or they may identify themselves with the majority for the purposes of the kind of power in question. That is the choice facing the Indian minorities, including the Muslims in the Indian union and the Hindus in Pakistan, as they awaken from the unrealities of alien rule. Before a peaceful and permanent pattern of power-division can emerge, there will be much struggle and bitterness, much following after false prophets who neglect the fundamental truth that the power of a minority rests on the sufferance of the majority.

The Indian States—all but perhaps a few of the largest which are capable of standing on their own—have a similar choice to make, *mutatis mutandis*. For them, however, the alternative to success along one of the three possible roads to a share in power in India or Pakistan is not merely lack of power but actual extinction. They are, in effect, a minority interest, and if they cannot coerce, browbeat, bully, outwit, or bribe the majority interest they must make themselves indispensable to it as allies or supporters. But among hundreds of Rulers there will certainly be a number without the statesmanship to see realistically what they must do to get and keep power as the alternative to extinction.

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Therefore, in regard to both the communal minorities and the States, India and Pakistan seem doomed to pass through a phase of endemic unrest and division, threatening from month to month and year to year the successful working of their new constitutions and even their national cohesion. In such conditions other fissures are bound to open. Under the British *raj*, which mapped out India according to the accidents of its own conquest or the conveniences of its own administration, regional loyalties and hostilities, often based upon race or language, have been either neglected or sublimated into harmless cultural guises. Now they are appearing once more as strong forces to command or threaten millions. Such are the rivalries of Andhra and Tamilnad in Madras, of the Sirma and Assam valleys in the North-East; such are the Pakhtoon (Pathan) movement in the North-West, and the growing sense of unity and destiny of Maharashtra in Central India.<sup>1</sup>

### CASTE

The geographical and political divisions of India, however, are unlikely in the long run to prove the most fundamental and dangerous. That distinction is reserved not even for community but for caste. It may be hard to believe this when whole provinces have lately been devastated with inter-communal murder and pillage; but in the enforced shift of populations these exceptions cause their own painful cure, and it is possible to look forward to a time when education and economic forces will to a growing extent weaken the divisive force of religion as religion, while gradually the communal minorities will come to learn the truth that co-operation with the majority communities is their surest road to a share in power. But of the divisive force of religion as caste—that is to say, as defining immutably with whom a man may marry, what rules he must obey in his secular life, and often what occupation he must follow—it is possible to prophesy only the opposite. Communal divisions in India are themselves equivalent to caste

<sup>1</sup> This was written long before the murder of Mr. Gandhi (a Gujerati Vaisya) by a Mahratta Brahmin forced the world's attention to one of these hidden fissures. Gandhi's struggle to raise the status of the Untouchables within the fabric of Hindu society may appear to history as a last effort to deflect the anti-caste revolution into peaceful evolutionary channels.

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divisions, so regarded. It is not because the Mussulman worships one God and the Hindu a pantheon, nor even because the former ceremoniously slaughters cows which to the latter are sacred, that they regard each other as rivals and even enemies in politics or in economics, but because they are *different*, because they may mingle neither their social lives nor their family blood—because, in short, they are divided as castes are divided within Hindu society, yet are competitors in a manner and degree that the fundamental character of Hindu caste was developed to prevent.

Leaving aside this analogue of caste in Indian communal division, we are forced to conclude that caste is in the end an equal danger to Indian peace and unity if we consider two facts. First, caste is still all-powerful and all-pervasive in Hindu society, which without it is formless and empty. Secondly, caste is irreconcilable with the beliefs and practices of the twentieth century, which must with ever-rising rapidity overrun Indian life. Caste has shown no sign of dissolving gradually at the first onset of those twentieth-century forces. True, there are emancipated members of the educated classes who have ostentatiously spurned caste rules, even about marriage, but the great mass of Hindu India is as much bound to caste—either by interest or by ignorance or by inability to escape—as it ever was.

The economic revolution in India has yet hardly begun. Can it be arrested? Only at the expense of millions of lives. If India is to support her growing population, two things must happen: agriculture must become far more prolific through the application of education as well as science and machines, and a far larger proportion of the people must gain their livelihood in industry and the cities. Education, mechanization, industrialization, urbanization: what do these spell but egalitarianism or economic opportunism flatly incompatible with caste either in its social or in its occupational aspects? Yet all the omens are that caste will retain its ancient power and rigidity under the growing strain until the slow economic revolution is consummated by an overwhelming social revolution.

### FIGHT TO THE DEATH

Revolution is India's manifest destiny. There are signs already

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of rising impatience at the failure of such progress as has already been made by twentieth-century ideas and inventions to solve the problems of poverty and social conflict in India. Communism is waxing fast, and may well prove as potent a false god as ever nationalism was. But communism as an economic programme in India is baulked by caste and all that caste stands for. Communism—and Socialism and the other 'isms<sup>5</sup> that trail in its wake—are bound to bend their efforts more and more to social revolution if they are to escape frustration.

When that social revolution really begins it will inaugurate a fight to the death with caste. And caste is so deeply rooted, so powerful, so formidable in its sanctions even for those who deride or defy it,<sup>1</sup> that it is certain to put up a stern struggle. Moreover there will ensue such a breakdown of the social structure that seven devils worse than the first may enter into the house from which the first devil is cast out. Without social discipline of some kind, individual man is a wayward dangerous creature, not Adam but Cain; but mass man is far worse, not a mere rogue elephant but a panicking herd of elephants, incalculable in purpose, irresistible in destruction. Such might be whole segments of Indian society when once the banner of revolution had been raised and the outer ramparts of the caste order had been breached.

Communism is a growing force in India, one which already causes grave anxiety to the Congress Government. There are many 'fellow-travellers' of the Communists within their own party. As yet, the Communist strength is confined to patches in the cities and a few in the countryside, and the Communist leaders are almost entirely urban intellectuals, often educated in England. But exactly the same was true of the Congress movement itself, forty years ago. And Communism to-day finds ready-made material for discontent and disruption in the sectional ambitions and hates released by the end of British rule. The assassination of Mr. Gandhi may mark the end of an era of nationalist politics and the opening

<sup>1</sup>I know a highly educated Indian who was estranged for many years from his mother, whom he loved dearly, because he married out of his caste, and to the end could never bring his wife to his family home. At the other end of the scale are many recorded instances of mass murder and violence by one caste upon another to punish breaches of caste taboo—in two authentic instances, the crimes on the part of low castes being those of wearing shoes and building a second story to their houses.

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of a new era of social revolution and sectional violence. If Western liberalism is to survive in India, it will need to find leaders as hard and determined as those opposing it.

India's greatest dangers are within her. They are also the greatest dangers for her external security and the peace of the world. It is true that in another world war India might become a battleground and be reconquered. If that happened, many things now unforeseen would come to pass and deny all present prophecies. But even so the conquest could hardly be accomplished until Indian resistance had been sapped from within. Certainly the more probable chance appears to be that the Powers will bring their own struggle to India by intervening in her struggle with herself. Intervention begins with ideas, proceeds to training, followed by agents who teach and support the adherents and make mischief among the rest, then to the sending of arms and equipment for violent conflict, and is finally fulfilled in puppet rule. The sequence is familiar, and in India the opportunities are nakedly obvious.

## BRITAIN'S RESPONSIBILITY

No Englishman writing to-day could fail to ask himself whether by some other policy than 'quitting India' Britain could have spared her protégé these terrible dangers of self-laceration and eventual subjection to an ideology and a rule so alien to all that we hold dear and have taught India to seek. The answer is 'No'. Revolution of some kind in India is inevitable: the pressure of her population makes it so, let alone the other urges within her living body. And since it must come let it come without the presence of an alien authority which would become the focus of attack and the scapegoat of all evils. If the British raj had continued over the brink of Indian revolution Britain herself might have fallen with India to destruction. To-day she has a rescuing and healing power. She can also reserve her physical power to check and frustrate that intervention from outside which could turn India's inward struggle into a universal holocaust. Thankful as one may be not to be a poor Indian in this generation, the end of the British-Indian Empire seems to have been encompassed just in time.

# X

## EMPIRE MIGRATION

**M**igration has always been affected by public policy towards it, both at the exporting and at the importing end. It will, no doubt, be so affected still more in the future. But while one man can lead a horse to water, or a gate prevent him from reaching it, neither men nor mechanisms can make him drink unless he is thirsty and finds the water sweet. Official migration policy—other than forced deportations—can only be superimposed on the non-official forces—mainly economic—that induce potential migrants to move or stay at home. Before framing future policy, therefore, Governments must consider the likely future behaviour of those motive forces.

### THE PUSH AND THE PULL

The great oversea migrations of the past two centuries have been inspired by a combination of expulsory and attractive forces. Broadly speaking, it was the difficulties of life at home that provided the body of ready emigrants, while it was the attractions (real or imagined) of life and opportunity in oversea countries that determined where and how they went. For example, although there was a large stream of emigrants from the British Isles all through the nineteenth century, it was the gold discoveries in the 'fifties and the 'nineties that caused the great spurts of migration to Australia. Those who came to find fortunes remained to till farms and found families; between 1851 and 1858, the area under cultivation in New South Wales was doubled.

It was the United States rather than what are now the Domin-

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ions that attracted the British emigrants most steadily. In the period of heaviest migratory flow in our history, three-quarters of them left the British Empire for a foreign flag. And among the earlier migrants to Canada and the native-born Canadians there was a fairly steady southward drain. In the hundred years after 1836, as the late Dr. Kuczynski showed, the Empire suffered a net outward balance of migration of about six million persons. This loss of population, which would by now have multiplied itself manifold through natural increase, has never been made good, and will never be made good in our time, however welcoming may be the future policy of the United Kingdom and the Dominions towards foreign immigrants. That was one outstanding example of the relative attractiveness of different oversea countries as a motive for migration.

As for the relative unattractiveness of life at home, it has always been a matter of degree. Political or religious discontents have never played a large part in determining the larger movements of migration from the British Isles. Economic conditions which seemed less pleasant than those overseas have been the major expulsory motive. It was the comparison that counted, not merely bad economic conditions in themselves; for the classes in the worst economic plight were sometimes the least ready to emigrate, nor have bad times at home always stimulated emigration, if there were bad times overseas as well. That throws the emphasis on opportunity. It has been the hope that a man would do better for himself overseas, rather than the belief that his immediate lot would be easier, that has prompted millions to emigrate. The Dominions and the United States were lands of opportunity, in which a man, however poor or humble at the start, would have a chance to make a fortune and a name for himself, and in which his sons at least would be any man's equal.

The stabilization and socialization of economic life in the Dominions have, of course, diminished this motive. The stabilization and socialization of economic life at home have enhanced it. This is shown by the present clamour for chances to emigrate from thousands of young British men and women, to whom Socialism seems to be pressing a ceiling upon ambition and a muffler upon enterprise. But the same development has also diminished the

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volume of potential migrants. A man with a job, and with an unemployment insurance card, a national health insurance card, and all the other paraphernalia that entitle him to share in State bounty drawn from other men's labours, is not easily uprooted, grumble as he may. It is the young and restless, the still unstabilized and unsocialized citizens, who are the potential material for migration.

That fact has to be borne in mind in considering the bearing of a high birth-rate on migration from industrial countries (in agricultural countries the conditions are manifestly different). A high birth-rate does not necessarily create an overflow of population for whom employment cannot be found; full employment is just as compatible with a rising population as with a stationary or falling one. But it does create continuously a body of young men and women who are without ready-made economic opportunity through stepping into dead men's shoes—or, rather, stepping upon the last rung of the ladder as others move up to fill the vacated upper places. They are unattached to particular industries or trades or localities; for those to which they have been brought up may not be those which expand in proportion to the rising population. They must therefore create for themselves, or have created for them, the jobs and the homes and all the capital equipment that goes with jobs and homes. Their personal inclination to emigrate is a reflection of the truth that jobs and homes and capital equipment may be provided much more readily, and to the greater general advantage, in a new land than in the old.

## MEN REQUIRE CAPITAL

That aspect of the economics of migration is of critical importance to-day, though it is sometimes overlooked altogether. For in past times the emigrants have not, as a rule, wanted a large capital equipment ready-made in their new homeland. They were content to create much of it themselves, and to wait for a long while until most of the rest could be provided. They built their own homes, cleared and improved their own land—meaning by 'their own' not necessarily that of which they were freeholders, but that which gave them their livelihood. Their needs in manufactured

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goods were small; hence they did not require much capital equipment in the towns to make and distribute such goods. They did not ask for expensive educational and medical services, all of which entail a heavy capital outlay per head of the population served. They were prepared to live in the back-blocks with poor means of communication and transport, although this handicap diminished the value of their products and their labour.

Some new capital always had to go along with new men: the penniless, landless immigrants were of no use unless and until the capital plant in houses, shops, roads, and railways, working equipment, farm stock, manufacturing industry and so on was present to convert them from mere mouths and hands to productive economic units. But, in the days when the frontier of land-exploitation was being pushed back in the Dominions, the initial capital needed was but a fraction of what it now must be to match a given number of fresh immigrants.

The migrant now expects, from the start, a standard of life comparable with that which he leaves behind. This implies, roughly speaking, an equal total of capital equipment—possibly more, if he transports his undiminished material standards of life from a compact country to a sparsely inhabited one, which requires heavier capital plant per head in the way of transport and communications. It may also be greater if he goes from a capital-saving to a labour-saving economy, as may well be the case with a migrant from Europe to the New World.

In an advanced industrial country like the United Kingdom, fixed capital equipment is of the order of at least £1,000 per head of men, women, and children in the population. It consists of houses, roads, railways, factories, shops, schools, cinemas, and so forth. The emigrants cannot take this with them, whatever their own financial capital may be. It has to be created for them in their new countries, and since it is unlikely to be created much in advance of their arrival—except for major development projects like railways—it must for the most part be created as and when they arrive.

Let us translate the problem into bulk terms. Immigration of 50,000 souls a year into Australia, for example, requires new fixed-capital accretion of the order of £50,000,000 a year. This require-

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ment is not always obvious, but it is plain enough when we find, as at present, that perhaps the narrowest bottleneck restricting migration to the three Southern Dominions is the shortage of houses for the immigrants to occupy; and over a period of years it is real and inescapable.

Someone has to find that capital by saving. Formerly the United Kingdom found it, in the main, for its own emigrants. Export of capital went with the export of people. But this is impossible in the new circumstances. The immigrant countries themselves have to save enough to finance their newcomers. Whether they can and will do so, in addition to creating the additional capital they already need for a rising standard of life and the natural increase of their population, seems highly doubtful. This is a problem they must face if they really want to increase their numbers by large-scale immigration without halting the advance of their own material standards.

## AVOIDING THE SLUMPS

It is a problem which has a close bearing on their proper intention to maintain full employment and avoid successions of booms and slumps. The usual process is that immigrants, representing demand in advance of supply, and spending the money capital that they bring with them, create conditions of inflation in which governmental and private investment—that is, expenditure on capital instruments of various kinds—exceeds the new savings available to finance it. Thus the boom phase of the cycle is pushed still further, until it ends either through the classic internal corrective of dear money or, more likely, through the impact of some extraneous development like a world depression or the drying-up of the flow of migrants themselves. Planning for full production in the countries of potential immigration, therefore, implies planning to adjust the rate of new internal savings, combined with net 'real' borrowing abroad, to the capital requirements of the immigrant flow. As the immigrants come in, the existing inhabitants should spend less and save more. Some conscious measures may well be necessary to achieve this; for in the natural course it is commonly when local spending is high and net saving low that conditions

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are created which tempt the emigrant from afar—as indeed at the present time and after the first world war.

Likewise, planning for full production in potential emigrant countries requires a converse adjustment of saving to the loss of migrants. This, however, is a smaller matter; whereas all the fixed-capital needed for the immigrant has to be newly provided in his new country, his departure from the old country does not automatically diminish *pro-tanto* the need for new 'community capital\* there. True, he leaves behind his share of the nation's capital equipment; but much of it cannot serve to replace the new and improved equipment which in any case has to be provided out of current savings for the remaining population.

It is otherwise, of course, where the emigrant, as an average citizen of the country of departure, is already short of the specific elements of capital equipment that are required per head or per family or per thousand of the community. If the country of emigration, for example, lacks half a million houses, and is making them at the rate of 100,000 a year, and if 100,000 families are emigrating every year, then after two and a half years its new housing needs will be satisfied, and it will have to switch both its savings and its house-building capacity to other purposes.

## NEW TOWNS OVERSEAS

All this is of particular interest in relation to the present situation of Great Britain herself. War damage, seven years' deferment of capital maintenance and improvement, and a new standard for schools and public services generally, have left her with a stupendous job of fixed-capital construction. Some of it does not run at so much per head, or per 1000, of the population, but much of it does: houses, schools, churches, shops, electrical power plant, etc. All this might just as well be created in a new land: more cheaply perhaps, especially where high urban site values are involved, and—who can doubt?—to the greater moral and social advantage of the people whom it serves. As it is open to question, moreover, whether the rate of savings will be high enough in Britain to sustain all this new-capital requirement, in addition to the normal maintenance and improvement of industrial and commercial

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plant, that would seem to be another reason for shifting the job—a temporary burden, earning big rewards hereafter—to an overseas community, not so heavily laden with Britain's problem of war damage and war deterioration.

The idea is illustrated most plainly by the proposed 'New Towns'<sup>5</sup> in Britain to accommodate people and industry from the over-congested cities. At Three Bridges and other rural places near the 'great wens' of Britain, it is proposed to build complete new urban communities, each of some 50,000 inhabitants, with industries as well as houses, shops, and public services of all kinds, so that they will not be mere dormitories for the neighbouring cities, but, as far as possible, self-supporting economic units. Is it not common sense to ask why these units should be set down in Hertfordshire or Surrey, when they might as well be set down in Cape Province or Queensland? The cost would be no more—probably less; for any extra cost of providing long-distance transport or the like in virgin territory would be more than balanced by the losses wastefully incurred in Britain through the destruction or conversion to other uses of existing buildings or developed land. A New Towns plan ought surely to be an Empire-wide plan.

There are fiscal as well as physical and social reasons for locating 'new towns' in the Dominions rather than in these crowded islands. A large part of the capital cost—that part which is not financed by private enterprise—must be found from the public exchequer. The result is an increase of the national debt—covered by productive assets, no doubt, but still having to be served out of the general tax revenue. The national debt is already grievously large in Britain; the national debts of the Dominions are much lower per head. There is nothing lost to them, but something gained for the Mother Country, if they, rather than she, accept this productive debt, together with the citizens whom it serves, and whose efforts will discharge it.

## NATIONAL DEBTS AND CREDITS

That leads to another consideration, not at first sight favourable to emigration from the United Kingdom to the Dominions. One of the responsibilities of the citizen in any country is his share of

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the national debt. He has to find his portion of the tax-revenue out of which the debt-service is paid; and to contribute his portion of the exports, not balanced by imports, which pay the service of such part of the debt as is owed abroad. The national debt of the United Kingdom, both internal and external, is staggeringly heavy. Is it fair, then, that the emigrant should be able to shed his share of the load simply by getting on a ship and shifting his domicile to a country whose national debt per head is far lower, and to which, in fact, his former country may be debtor? Fairness apart, can it be to the general advantage that relatively young and productive elements of the population, as emigrant families are wont to be, should quit their posts under a heavy load of national debt in order to put their shoulders where they are not so badly needed, leaving that heavy load to be borne by a shrinking number of workers?

A general pooling of national debts, among countries at both ends of the emigrants' passages, would be an obvious theoretical solution, but it is clearly out of the question politically, and economically it would serve only to distort those motives for migration, based on greater productivity of labour in the new than in the old lands, which ought to be allowed to operate as freely as possible.

In fact, to approach the question through the idea of shares in the national debt is to get the proportions quite wrong. Emigration from Great Britain at a rate of 200,000 men, women, and children a year would represent an annual loss of roughly one-half of one per cent of the present population. The national debt would have to be borne by the remaining 99½ per cent. The consequent increase in the 'real load of the *internal* national debt per head of the population would, however, be wiped out by an annual rise of one-half of one per cent in the general level of prices. Mild inflation is manifestly the cure—nature's remedy—for that particular disadvantage of emigration.

*External* debt which is expressed in the currency of the emigrant country (e.g. the sterling balances held in the United Kingdom by the Dominions and others) can likewise be diminished in its 'real' weight by a rise in prices—in other words, a fall in the value of that currency. External debt expressed in some other currency

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(e.g. the dollar loans) cannot **be thus** autonomously reduced. But it is a relatively small matter when set against the background of the whole national economic balance sheet, and international price movements in any case affect its real burden per head of the debtor population far more violently than could any likely flow of emigration.

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The fact remains that, when an emigrant in the prime of life leaves his country of birth, that country loses a productive element, capable not only of helping to support the national debt, but also of contributing towards all those other transfers of wealth which, in effect, enable the unproductive to consume the output of the productive: pensions, social services, housing subsidies and the like. It is not the pensioners, nor the heavy beneficiaries from social services, who are likely to seek to emigrate to or be acceptable as immigrants to the overseas countries. In the hands and brains of the men and women who migrate, and in the potentialities of their children, lies the real loss to the land of their birth.

To put a value on that loss is a very difficult process. There are three possible lines of approach. The first is to assess the cost of raising, educating, and bringing the young citizen to manhood or to the age that he has reached when he migrates. The second is to put an actuarial value on the life of the bread-winner, or potential bread-winner, as a judge might have to do in assessing damages in an accident case. The third is to capitalize the potential value of the man, woman, or child as a future tax-payer—*net* of potential drawings from national revenue. These are all statistical sightings, none of them being squarely on the target. The first is perhaps the nearest. We may certainly assume that the value to the State of an adult citizen is not less than the total money spent by the State on rearing and educating him, for if it were otherwise then the nation would be heading for certain bankruptcy at the rate of so many millions per generation. Eleven years of public-financed schooling alone, including family allowances, free milk, medical and dental services and other benefits, must be worth at least £500; there are the State contributions to the costs of infancy at one end of the school phase, and to the costs of further education or industrial training at the other. Exactness requires other discounts and premiums; and some day the matter may be live

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enough to justify serious statistical study. But for present purposes a round figure of £1000 for an adult man or woman and an average of £500 for a child will serve at least to illustrate the argument.

It is not suggested that the overseas country should buy its immigrants like slaves. But it is suggested that in the context of national debts a book-keeping transaction would not only be reasonable business in itself but would also serve to impress on the minds of the public in the two countries the value of a productive citizen lost or gained. When we read of, say, 250 skilled workers sailing to Australia on a particular ship, we should at once recognize this as a gift of a quarter of a million pounds sterling of state investment in human capital from the Mother Country to the Dominion.

The Dominions hold considerable sterling balances in the United Kingdom. These can be liquidated only over a long period; meanwhile they must remain, in a large measure, frozen. To write them down by so much per able-bodied or juvenile citizen migrating from the debtor to the creditor country would scarcely smack of slavery or extortion. The Dominions may want goods from Britain, to extinguish British debts; but they want British men and women even more, and should be as prepared to credit the value of the latter as of the former.

### IS EMIGRATION DESIRABLE?

The broad picture is of men and women wanting to emigrate from Britain, through the lack of attraction of conditions at home, and being attracted specifically to the Dominions; and the Dominions wanting them, while being short of the capital equipment necessary to set them up. One may be certain that this potential migratory body will prove in practice smaller than it appears now, when deceptively deep water forms behind the dam created by shortages of shipping. If the dam is lowered, the permanent flow behind may not prove so overwhelming as it appears when would-be migrants may have their names down at four Dominion High Commissioners' offices. But it may nevertheless be substantial. As earlier paragraphs have shown, a condition of affairs

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which gives rise to a shortage of capital equipment will also give rise to an urge to migrate on the part of those—especially young people—who cannot in consequence find at once the economic and social lodgment that they regard as their due. Even the slight recent rise in the human productivity rate will lend an increased marginal importance to that factor. And, so long as conscription remains, 'demobilization' will continue to affect a quarter of a million young men yearly in Great Britain, plus those discharged each year from the Regular Forces. These young men are likely to be much readier to think of migration than were their fellows of the same age before the war, who would already have been in jobs or on the road to them through higher education.

If, then, the potential migrants are there—at say an average of 100,000 a year—and the Dominions want them, as they now say they do, what should be the policy of the United Kingdom Government: to permit, to encourage, or to restrain the potential migration? Britain cannot afford to be bountiful with her human assets, which represent her future earning power. If there is to be any Governmental subsidy to migration in the Empire, it should not be she who pays for any of it. A man who is giving away stocks and shares—which he can ill spare—to his sons and daughters can legitimately expect them to pay the brokerage and transfer fees. Indeed, as has been suggested, if it can be done without offensive political implications, it would be equitable and in accordance with realities if credit were given, against British war debts, for human assets transferred towards their redemption.

But there are wider considerations. The economic and social debilitation caused by migration in excess of a due fraction of a country's national increase is bad enough; is it not an even more serious matter that the country's military strength should thus seep away—especially when it discharges far greater military responsibilities in the world at large, in ratio to population, than do the countries acquiring the new citizens? Is there not thus a net loss of strength to the British Commonwealth, in a highly dangerous world? The argument is that men and women who might serve in the Forces, or manufacture the things that the Forces need in peace and war, are desperately needed in Britain to help fulfil her role as a Great Power in the world and as the principal de-

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fender of the whole British Commonwealth, whereas the Dominions contribute proportionately far less to British Commonwealth defence and world security, and would therefore make far less use of those men and women in the common interest of defending peace.

### THE SECURITY ARGUMENT

The conclusion is obvious: so long as the hypothesis remains true, that the Dominions take much less than their share, and Britain much more than hers, of the common burden of British Commonwealth defence and the military support of the United Nations. The more the inequality in population is redressed by migration, the more vital it is that the military burden should be more equitably shared. Alternatively, the less the Dominions are ready to contribute towards that joint defence, especially defence of communications, which has hitherto been almost entirely at the charge of the United Kingdom, the less claim have they to take in more British people, and the stronger the reasons why those people should stay at home. A militarily weakened Britain without militarily strengthened Dominions would mean a weaker Commonwealth at a moment when no weakening can be afforded without the utmost peril.

The right answer, however, is to overturn the hypothesis, not to acquiesce in it. The issue that matters is whether—assuming that all the member-nations of the Commonwealth pull their weight—a Commonwealth with its population more evenly distributed between Britain and the Dominions would be weaker or stronger, better or worse, than the present Commonwealth, in which two-thirds of the white population is in the British Isles.

The answer cannot be an unqualified 'yes'. The status of the British Commonwealth as a great Power among the greatest depends on three elements: first, the material and human resources of the Commonwealth as a whole, and its geographical location in and around the world's oceans; secondly, the historic position of the United Kingdom as leader of the Commonwealth; and finally the possession of an engineering and chemical industry—the mainstay of modern military might—of the highest order. If either of

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the last two elements were lost, the first would not suffice to retain the status and power of the British Commonwealth in world politics. A migratory redistribution within the Commonwealth, therefore, which so equalized the populations of the Dominions and the United Kingdom that none of them had the man-power and an adequate home market for an engineering industry of the highest order would leave the Commonwealth weaker rather than stronger. The same is true of a redistribution which deprived the United Kingdom of her leadership without substituting that of some other member-nation or of some common government. The population of each of the 'white' countries of the Commonwealth—apart from the national growth meanwhile—would be little more than the present population of Canada. A Commonwealth of five Canadas would be an important group of middle Powers, but not a great Power among the greatest, unless it had the apparatus for joint and concentrated leadership, and a manufacturing industry comparable in completeness with that of Britain to-day.

Such an equalization, however, is a very distant hypothesis, and has little practical bearing on the immediate problem of migration in the Commonwealth. A transfer of, say, five million people from the United Kingdom to the Dominions over the next ten years—the utmost scale of migration that could be envisaged—would not seriously affect either Britain's Commonwealth leadership or her industrial potential, apart, of course, from the migrant workers themselves. It would, in fact, be likely to increase the defensive power of the Dominions, including their manufacturing power as an element in defence, by more than it would diminish the Mother Country's.

The wider dispersal of industry and population would also be an advantage in passive defence against attack from the air. This argument, however, has often been exaggerated in popular discussion. It is no defence of the people of the United Kingdom against air attack, and only wan comfort if they are battered or forced to surrender, that there should be more industry in Australia than there is at present; nor would the same fact be any sure defence for Australia if man-power and industry essential for her own security remained exposed to attack in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. If the possible risk is total loss of industrial assets in

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**the British Isles, then the dispersal is to be valued in the light of a supposed total loss of the undispersed remainder. A man who has his head blown off does not survive merely because his limbs are strong. Nevertheless the strengthening of the Dominions' population and industry, even at the expense of the Mother Country, would represent a certain insurance, to say the least, and if carried far enough would be a positive contribution to Commonwealth military security.**

The economic argument based on the inability of the United Kingdom to grow enough to feed herself has also been exaggerated, though it seems so pressing to-day. The food problem of the Empire is not solved simply by taking mouths from Britain to the Dominions: indeed on the present comparative scales of consumption the problem would be rendered worse. The difficulty is not that surplus food in the Dominions cannot be shipped to Britain, but that the Empire as a whole is not to-day producing enough to feed itself. It is simple panic to fly on that account in the face of an advantageous specialization of labour. The Empire could become self-sufficient in food, with the Dominions' populations as they are, if their industrial policies were amended to the benefit of the land as against the towns, and of high real incomes as against additional leisure. On the other hand, without such amendment the mere enlargement of their populations will not necessarily produce enough food for the whole Empire. Moreover, the ideal of those who propound this argument—the ideal of a Britain reduced in numbers to the point of self-sufficiency in food—is utterly unattainable in our life-time by any practicable scale of migration. Nevertheless, if the economic policy of the Dominions is reasonably well adjusted, there may be some marginal increase in total food production as a result of migration, and also some marginal increase of security from interruption of vital supplies in war.

Intra-Commonwealth migration would, furthermore, render far easier the immigration of non-British people, which is the only way of improving on the slow natural rate of increase of the Commonwealth's total population; for the Dominions would be far readier to accept such immigrants in large numbers if they were at the same time absorbing British people on a proportionate scale.

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At the same time, it would increase the absorptive rate of Britain herself for foreign immigrants, that rate being limited by physical shortages of accommodation, and by trade-union prejudice which is overcome only when the national need for more workers is imperious. A Commonwealth which had both a more even distribution of population between Britain and the Dominions, and a larger total population through *net* foreign immigration, would undoubtedly be militarily stronger as well as socially better.

### IT IS THE BIRTHS THAT COUNT

Internal migration, however, is not the crux of the Commonwealth's population problem, whether from the military or from any other point of view. The crux is the natural increase of the existing populations. This is the vital factor, because, first, it is statistically critical. The natural increase of the population of Canada in the ten years from 1921 to 1931 was 1,325,256, while the net immigration over the same period was 263,581.<sup>x</sup> The smaller the existing population, the more important is potential migration relative to natural increase. But even in a small country a substantial flow of immigrants may be neutralized if the natural increase falls behind and eventually lapses into a natural decrease.

Intra-imperial migration can by itself only redistribute the same gross total numbers of people in the Commonwealth, save in so far as the migrants themselves become more or less reproductive in their new environment than in their old. Net immigration from outside the Commonwealth can increase the total numbers, but it changes the racial and social make-up, and if unaccompanied by a substantial natural increase of the existing people it will in the end submerge the British character of the Commonwealth. The present state of affairs causes searching apprehension. The net reproduction rate (broadly speaking, the ratio of each succeeding generation to the last) must measure at least unity, or 100 per cent, if in the long run—migration apart—the population is to be stabilized, let alone increased. It has been as low as three-quarters in England and Wales and is only now creeping back towards the minimum target of unity. Even in Australia and New Zealand it fell below that tar-

<sup>r</sup> Gross immigration, 1,509,136; emigration, 1,245,555.

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get in the early 'thirties. In Canada and South Africa alone has it persistently signalled a long-run rising population, and that only by virtue of the higher breeding-rate of the French-Canadian and Afrikaner peoples.

Estimates by various authorities, based on pre-war reproduction rates, show that without allowing for any migration the total white population of the four oversea Dominions and of Great Britain would be barely 3<sup>^</sup> millions more in 1970 than in 1940, nearly one-half of the natural increase of the Dominions being offset by the natural decrease in Britain. Thereafter the total population would tend to decline; for the Dominions themselves would be reaching their peak levels. Moreover, throughout the Commonwealth the population would be older than it is now, with a smaller proportion in the young, vigorous and hopeful age-groups.

That points to the second and perhaps even more important reason why natural increase is the crux of the population problem of the Commonwealth. National psychology is a pattern of individual outlooks; national character a complex of individual thoughts, feelings and behaviour. An aging nation has the character of an aging man. It plays for safety, and if it feels itself being pushed aside, or overtaken in the race, is apt to regard this as inevitable, like a man content with the thought that he is 'pretty good for his age'. It leans on its past rather than aspires towards its future, sighs that 'things were not what they used to be', prefers the solace of security to the risks of enterprise, respects monopolies—especially State monopolies—and resents competition.

In a nation the aging process has a double depressing effect. A man ages by the simple lapse of time; he grows a year older with every twelve months that pass. Over a long period a nation ages in the measure that its citizens fail to reproduce themselves, generation after generation. For them so to reproduce themselves is for the nation the secret of perpetual youth; new life is always welling up as the old withers. The nation may be younger in the next decade than it is in this. But if it grows older, because its children are too few, it suffers not only the psychological effects of age but also those of childlessness.

Fathers and mothers have a sense of historical proportion; they recognize themselves as but the torch-bearers for a lap of man-\*

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kind's race. They imagine themselves living on in the lives of their sons and daughters. They have a feeling for posterity. Age is not extinction but only transmission of the sweets and the duties of life to the new generation. A nation will always, in normal circumstances, have many mothers and fathers among its citizens; but as the net reproduction rate falls, and the average family shrinks from four children to three, from three to two, and two to one, so the proportion of childless adults and parents with only one offspring mounts. The psychological make-up of the nation changes accordingly, becoming tinged with the character of the aging, childless man or woman.

### POPULATE OR PERISH!

That, then, is the second reason why natural increase matters more than migration to the Commonwealth. Unless the Commonwealth as a whole, and its member countries, stay young and vigorous, keep up in the race of world affairs, and are not content with safety-first and the reflection that one can't be expected to do everything all the time, then they and their Commonwealth will decline in influence and power, and their way of life be lost like autumn leaves. And this would be so whatever the actual size of the Commonwealth or any member-nation in total population, whether large or small. It would be so even if the natural increase of other groups of the human race—for example the Slavs and the Indians—were not so vastly greater than that which our own group can ever hope to attain within a calculable phase of time. Migration within the Empire will have its own bearing on the natural increase, if the migrants become—as they appear to have become in the past—more fertile or more philoprogenitive in the new country than in the old, or if their departure has such repercussions in the old country, for instance in relieving pressure on house-room or enabling the immigration of more fertile foreign stocks, as to cause a secondary rise in its own reproduction rate. But these refinements of the argument cannot be of more than marginal importance.

The main object for the whole Commonwealth, as of its member-nations severally, is more people of better quality. To present

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quantity and quality as antithetical is to succumb to prejudice. On the contrary, there is much evidence—both in theoretical argument and in the experience of our own generation—that falling numbers or even a serious decline in the rate of increase has a depressing effect on the quality, of the people, including their potential economic standards. A prosperous and healthy Commonwealth will be one of larger families and growing numbers.

# XI

## POLITICAL ARCHITECTURE

**T**he political architecture of the British Empire is passing through a transitional stage. In mediaeval times, the architecture of the English house was dominated by the needs of security. As it escaped from these confines, it became the prisoner of the limitations of local materials and local technical skill. The Elizabethan and Jacobean country house, with its mullioned or small-paned windows, its army of chimneys, its rambling wings, its multifarious adaptation of local stone and brick to suit the needs of essentially local gentry, was characteristic of the long transition from the moated castle of the Middle Ages to the Palladian emancipation and experiment of the seventeenth century. The structure of the British Empire is passing through just such a phase of transition.

No longer closely pent in the limitations of slow communications and local self-sufficiency—whether in the form of Dominion nationalism or the old colonial policy—it awaits the wakening genius of a Christopher Wren, who will create a rational political architecture based on full and active use of twentieth-century resources in swift means of intercourse, in specialized administrative technique and in ideological emancipation.

- The British true-blue who gnashes at the 'liquidation of the British Empire', the colonial nationalist who demands complete severance from the Grown, and the suspicious Dominion politician who denounces attempts to strengthen the mechanism of the British Commonwealth as attacks on hard-won autonomy, are alike out of their century, and their ideas out of joint with the times, The British Commonwealth of Nations itself, like the older

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centralized Empire out of which it grew and whose residue it still embodies, must change to meet the changing world or it will perish as surely as other Empires have perished—indeed, as the British Empire itself would have perished had not it adapted itself to the new era from the Durham Report onwards.

### JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS

If we seek the requisite kind of change we must look at the changed forces in the world. Internationalism, which seems so prevalent, is a shrinking force, if it means the idea that co-operation and goodwill among sovereign States will be enough to promote peace and advance prosperity. No better proof of its relative weakness could be found than the fact that, although there has been set up a United Nations organization, which on paper is stronger than the old League of Nations, the peace-loving nations are eager to maintain national defences substantially larger than they had at any time during the League's career. Within the British Commonwealth itself, the talk is not of abandoning Empire defence in favour of the security furnished by the United Nations, but of strengthening Empire defence pending a clearer view of what the United Nations could and would do.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is it only in respect of security that the trend of the times is toward judgment by results. The same businesslike caution is apparent in the approach to international action in matters of trade, labour, aviation, shipping, and the rest. 'Let's wait and see' is the common reaction to anyone who expounds the merits of the International Bank or Unesco or other international organizations created or envisaged. This is not a mere mood of negative scepticism, natural after a great war endured with the aid of millennial dreams—dreams which vanish almost as rudely with victory as with defeat. It has its positive and constructive side also/ If it is true that people want nothing but results, it is results they want, and mean to get, in many a field where in pre-war times they might have doubted the necessity or the value of international action. The great merit of the British Commonwealth is not its theoretical virtue but its ability to get results, pre-eminently in the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide, for example, Mr. Chiffley as reported in The Times, 5th June 1947.*

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**field** of defence. It worked; it still works. But if it does not work it will be neglected, and will eventually perish.

In defence, in order to work it must provide well-adapted machinery of collaboration in the new weapons and the new conditions of possible warfare. What those conditions are has been discussed earlier in this book. For the practical working of Commonwealth defence the important requirements are three: scientific and technical co-operation, integration of plans for defence (including supply) well in advance of the emergency, and full use of the Commonwealth assets in distance and geographical location. These three needs correspond to the technical factor, the time factor and the space factor in the new and still changing defence problems of the day.

To meet these needs, a different mechanism is required from that which was held appropriate or adequate before 1938. It is in fact being created, bit by bit. The Australian rocket range is a case in point. It helps with all three considerations. But it not only implies, it demands, a unity of action between Britain and Australia in those higher strata of policy which may determine the use of the range's products and experience. Machinery for achieving such unity is far from perfect, a fact which is much more clearly realized in Australia than in Britain. If it is not improved, in such a way as demonstrably to work, neither will the co-operation on the technical level work in the end. Regional defence machinery is needed, and will certainly be improvised in the Indian Ocean and S.W. Pacific areas. As these new growths take root in the soil of experience and public esteem, they will grow stronger in themselves and spread by example.

## NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

They are ivy on the walls of exclusive national sovereignty, crumbling the mortar and steadily weakening the whole edifice. Deliberate demolition will also be necessary. Exclusive national sovereignty is the great enemy of peace and progress in the twentieth century. In the British Commonwealth, national sovereignty is mitigated by co-operation based on a sense of mutual duty. But an enemy is not defeated until he is destroyed. National

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sovereignty suffers permanent defeat at the hands of the British Commonwealth only in so far as the institutions of the Commonwealth work in practice to override the separate national interests and claims of its member-nations.

To expect a rapid or easy victory over national sovereignty would be folly.<sup>1</sup> Nationalism, indeed, has itself been the prime motive force in the development of the British Commonwealth of equal nations, the Third British Empire; just as it has been the prime motive force in the public affairs of the world at large for at least 150 years, absorbing and overwhelming—so far—even the forces of ideology and class division.

It seems, at least on the surface, that nationalism in the Dominions has far from spent its force. They have only just begun to assert the privileges of national status which they have acquired in the past generation: the right to be represented here, there, and everywhere by their own diplomatic envoys; the prerogative of singing out of tune and insisting on being an active party to every international negotiation that concerns them; the small boy's inalienable right to cock a snook at his elders. It was surely not on the initiative of the United Kingdom Government, but on that of the Dominion Governments, or some of them, that the Imperial Conference was quietly smothered in its bed after the second world war—put down, like an old dog which has become feeble and smelly, and which must not now be mentioned before the children, lest they embarrass by asking what became of him.

It is a striking fact that Canada, the Dominion with the longest history of nationhood, and therefore the longest opportunity of working off the excesses of nationalism, is still the most jealously nationalistic of the Dominions, at least in terms of her official policy. The effect of Canada's geographical position on her international outlook has been mentioned in an earlier chapter.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Australia and New Zealand and Great Britain herself, Canada is not an island, but a part of a continental land mass. In a merely map-reading sense, of course, the Union of South Africa is also a fraction of a continent. But politically South Africa is virtually an

<sup>1</sup> The pages that follow are adopted from an address to the Royal Empire Society on 'Nationalism in the British Commonwealth' on 23rd April 1947.

<sup>1</sup> P. 36 *supra*.

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island. She has no immediate neighbours save countries much weaker than herself, political promontories of her own political island. To the South African eye, the world at large is essentially an overseas world, as it is to islanders.

This situation may gradually change as modern transport and economic development reduce the effective barrier of distance and desert separating the Union and her immediate neighbours from the non-South-African world. South African thoughts, ambitions, capital, and people are spreading northwards. This expansionism is a vital characteristic of the South African national ego, as it has been since Voortrekker days. A similar dynamic element in Dominion nationalism is the Australian—and in due ratio New Zealand—impulse towards political and economic expansion northwards into the South-West Pacific.

Nationalism, within the British Commonwealth as elsewhere, obeys a physical law of expansion akin rather to that of gases than to that of liquids or solids: it will proceed to fill neighbouring spaces until equal and opposite pressures develop at the margins, including the pressure of mere distance.

For Canada, the pressure diagram takes a lop-sided 'Shape. Between herself and her immensely larger neighbour, Canada must develop a specific equality of nationalist pressures and resistances, if she is not to succumb as a nation. So her nationalism must be far keener and more vigilant than it would need to be if she were an island. The need to assert Canadian nationalism over against the United States, and equally over against Great Britain—for the physical law, like that of gases, is one of equalization of pressure between all surfaces—impels a search for a formula capable of reconciling this ideological nationalism with the hard facts of world politics, in which even the largest of the small Powers are of relatively little account. The formula is found by Canada in an ideal internationalism. Canada must be a united Canada or nothing, and unity may coalesce around a formula of support for international organization.

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### POLICY BY FORMULA

Taking refuge in an internationalist formula is not, of course, a peculiarity of Canada alone. It characterized the foreign policy of the United Kingdom itself for a great part of the period between the two wars, a bridge of Hopes and dreams between the irreconcilables of pacifism and power-politics. The bridge was satisfactory just so long as nobody put any weight on it. The real gulf and the rainbow bridge tend always to repeat themselves as the historical cycle revolves.

Policy by formula has been, above all, typical of the Dominions in international affairs. They have relied upon it, not only because they share the incurably optimistic British ambition to reconcile the irreconcilable, but also because they add to that an intense nationalist impulse to assert themselves as independent Powers. They obey this urge in a world where, in truth, dependence and independence are a function of strength (including, of course, strength of will) and where the independence of the Dominions, as weak Powers, must always be strictly qualified. The formulae are partly mere wishful thoughts, partly a deliberate attempt to inflate the importance of international omnium-gatherums in which the voices of small Powers must be heard though they may not be heeded. They do not necessarily represent the real convictions of the Dominions concerned in face of hard facts as and when they arise in the path of decision.

Here, then, we begin to see how it may be that nationalism in the British Empire has spent some of its force, although to all appearance it seems as lively and pervasive as ever. It may have spent some of its force through dashing itself against the hard facts of power-politics, its discomfiture being cloaked by the formula of universal internationalism. Internationalism, after all, is only nationalism projected on a wider screen, and thus thrown out of focus.

The true state of mind and intention of Canada, for example, was revealed not only in her instant and unanimous entry into the war in 1939—although as a North American nation she might have been expected to move (or not move) alongside the United States—but equally forcibly in the Ogdensburg agreement for

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mutual defence, reached between President Roosevelt and Mr. Mackenzie King, and in the more recent agreements with the United States for technical military liaison and for joint development of air defence in the north. There we see a practical breaking-down of nationalism despite all political formulae. And similar instances are to be found in the actual behaviour of the other Dominions.

### THE CRUMBLING OF SOVEREIGNTY

It is worth noting that these breaches of pure nationalist doctrine occur just as much on the foreign side of the Dominions' external policy as on that of British Commonwealth relations. This need surprise nobody. The history of Dominion nationalism is largely one of reaction against dependence on the Mother Country. This reaction will not suddenly be reversed merely because the nationalist motive itself is deflected vectorially by other forces. We are, however, entitled to expect that, as the impact of events gives to Dominion policy in international affairs the character of integration rather than independence, British Commonwealth relations will likewise gradually share in the change—although here, too, formula will continue to overlay fact.

International government is likely to keep in front *as an idea*, while *practical* unity develops at least as rapidly within the Commonwealth circle: but not necessarily in terms of direct constitutional union, nor uniformly among the nation-members of the Commonwealth. The thing will happen, and will be found to be, and its form and strength will vary among the different member-nations. For the essence of nationhood is difference: Canada, for example, being just as different and separate from Australia as she is from Britain. If the Commonwealth is committed to uniformity, then its unity can only be all-Commonwealth unity, limited by a highest common factor which may prove in the end to be non-existent.

Nationalism in the Dominions will not suddenly commit suicide, immolating itself upon the altar of a super-nationalism whether imperial or wider. Indeed, it may actually put on an air of increasing intensity even while it is weakening and changing,

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like a man who begins to boast about his fitness when he is forty although he may actually walk where he used to run, and take a bus where he previously walked.

We must remember, moreover, that as a synthesis of colonial dependence and exclusive nationalism there are other possibilities besides super-nationalism. Nor indeed does super-nationalism seem the most likely synthesis to be adopted in practice among the nations of the British Commonwealth. The more probable alternative appears to be the breaking-down of the inner postulate of nationalism itself, the gradual admission in practice that the right and capacity of nations—mere political units, differentiated by race and geography—to be discreet and individual formulators of policy must be restricted in matters which affect other such units as well as themselves.

## NATIONALISM IN THE COLONIES

It seems, then, that the life cycle of nationalism, at least among the *white* nations of the British Commonwealth, will advance to its next stage by a process akin to that of physiological adhesions. If that proves true, nationalism in the new *non-white* nations of the Commonwealth may well develop differently from the classic line of complete, uncompromising national sovereignty, which must be completely independent or nothing at all. Otherwise, the outlook is grim. For that classic line of nationalist advance spells danger and difficulty on all hands.

It begins by presenting the new nations themselves with the choice between complete independence and what they think of as Dominion Status, something inferior to full national sovereignty. Complete independence under the British Crown, which is a reality for the present oversea Dominions, too often seems an illusion to them, whose historical, racial, and cultural connection with the British Crown and the British Isles is so utterly different.

Even if they swallow this difficulty, and choose to remain member-nations of the Commonwealth as we have hitherto understood our association, the problem of political structure for the Commonwealth itself becomes increasingly intractable. An occasional Imperial Conference with a dozen nation members, of different

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ances and degrees of political maturity, is a conceivable piece of political mechanism; but it is to-day no more than a museum piece. We are left with an amorphous multilateral system of consultation which even now tends to be weak in proportion to its complexity, and which would become, as the participants multiplied, a mere diplomatic cat's-cradle; and alongside it an uncontractual practice of meetings for specific purposes, a practice admirable in itself but liable again to become completely bogged down as the participants increase in number and in the variety of their national interests.

The answer is certainly not an attempt to check or frustrate the nationalism of the non-white members of the present Commonwealth. That would be to use Mrs. Partington's broom against the Atlantic. The nationalism of the people of the East is a tremendous force, which was given not only opportunities but also a great new moral impulse by the Japanese conquests. Negatively, European prestige slumped when Japan poked through the thin screen of imperial defences in the Far East; positively, there was a boom in Oriental prestige and in the self-esteem of the peoples whom Japan claimed to liberate. If they did little to resist her, many of them did something to throw her out: and it is significant that a national day of resurrection is now celebrated in Burma on the anniversary of the date at which the Burma National Army, created by the Japanese, turned against its creators. At the same time, Japan is something of a hero, even in those countries which she subjected, nor will she remain less heroic for having suffered the martyrdom of defeat.\*

This dynamic impulse of national self-esteem in the East gains by what it feeds on, and gains vicariously, too, from the achievements of other Oriental races. The dynamic urge of Oriental nationalism in the British Empire will continue to operate for many years, and it will be felt, undoubtedly, beyond Asia, in the African dependencies and the island territories of the Empire. Nationalism cannot be confined by continents.

<sup>1</sup> 'Many Indians feel that it was Japan's challenge to Great Britain and America which won Asia for the Asiatics and paved the way to India's freedom, even though Japan lost its own war. Japan may come to be regarded as a martyr for Asia's cause.' *The British in Asia*, by Guy Wint.

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Unless it is understood, it cannot be guided. And unless it is guided towards constructive ends it may spend itself painfully and bitterly in the futilities of mere self-assertion, or even in self-destruction, as Indian nationalism has so largely spent itself in the past decade. In appreciating the power of these nationalist forces, we must also appreciate their limitations. They are limited by the national or racial character of their exponents. On that account, some of the new nations will lack qualities without which they can never be strong economically, politically, or militarily in a world of hard-boiled and experienced sovereign States. Generally the history of the relations between Europeans and Asiatics suggests that the latter alone cannot forthwith supply all the ingredients of national power without which national independence is a hollow figment.

There is, of course, a further limitation on their national power, in the near future, in the shape of their inexperience in politics and defence, and their lack of the industrial resources and trained man-power (and in some cases even the basic industrial materials) required for military as well as economic strength in these days.

A third limitation is perhaps less obvious, but it is even more durable, and it must radically affect the whole internal character of their nationalism, apart from its external power and authority. That is the racial and religious diversity of these countries. The arch-type, of course, is India, where we are seeing a veritable chain action of political fission. The Hindu-Muslim conflict is only one of many inter-communal strains and stresses in India which have been brought near breaking-point by the approach of national independence.

## NATIONS WITHIN NATIONS

None of the British, or lately British, territories of the East is free from this fearful internal weakness. In Burma there is the shape cleavage between the Burmese and the other peoples—Karens, Shans, Chins, Kachins, and others. And there is an equally inflammatory problem in the status and rights of the immigrant minorities: chiefly Indians, to-day, but perhaps increasingly the Chinese now that war has opened wide Burma's northern door.

## POLITICAL ARCHITECTURE

Malaya has the eternal triangle of Malays, Chinese, and Indians, the Malays being all but outnumbered already in their own homeland.<sup>1</sup> Ceylon has its difficult minority problems of Tamils, Christians, and others, while in Borneo and Sarawak the politically conscious and economically dominant communities, the Malays and Chinese, are themselves a minority of the population. And across the waters of the Indian Ocean the same racial complexity is repeated in Kenya, for example, with the Europeans, Indians, and Africans forming a veritable caste system in politics as well as economic and social life.

Now it is certain that if nationalism in its simple, negative, self-assertive form is embraced by these British territories it will disrupt and disable them. For in the measure that they assert themselves nationally against the rest of the world their constituent elements will assert themselves communally against each other.

The same general proposition may be put in the converse way. If the problem of political independence in plural societies can be solved internally by some constitutional device for sharing power, this will automatically modify and mitigate their external nationalism. They can bridge the antitheses of their own racial or communal structure only by appealing to a higher synthesis, some wider community to which their constituent communities both severally and jointly belong.

Such a development could be of vast advantage both to the British Commonwealth, which supplies the higher synthesis, and to the new nations themselves. For naked negative nationalism is essentially unconstructive, even destructive. It leads nowhere. Its snout is always snapping at its own tail. Nationalism is a historically necessary phase in political development, and may be a highly formative one, but internally and externally its destiny is eventual destruction. To gain the advantage of nationalism—its dynamic energy, its boost to self-esteem—without its dangers should be the high ambition of the new nations.

This will not come about of its own accord. The problems of

<sup>1</sup> In an article in the April 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs* Mr. P. T. Baner wrote: \*Malaya may be caught between two nationalisms: A Malay nationalism, centring in Indonesia, and a rival Chinese nationalism turning toward China. This is, of course, a threat to which multi-community countries are often exposed. Recent developments have enhanced this danger in Malaya/

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democracy and independence in plural societies are not yet solved. For all the experimental opportunities open in the British Empire, the pundits are not much nearer than the people to solving the conundrum of dividing political power among different communities. Here is a fruitful field for research and constructive imagination.

The West Indies afford an example of a different complication. There, the communal problem of the familiar Oriental or East African kind is replaced by an acute problem of economic class, bound up with colour. Nationalism is in danger of taking on the nature of a class demand, a focus of ambition of the have-nots. But nationalism is not yet the predominant force that it is, for instance, in the Eastern territories of the Empire. This is partly for want of any historical memories of independence, partly because the island units are too small for nationhood. Ceylon can claim to be national timber whereas Jamaica, Trinidad, and the rest could at best be only splinter States.

Coherent nationalism therefore fastens upon the idea of West Indian union. It is an artificial idea at present; there is a growing but still uneven popular feeling behind it. Popular agitation has enough on its hands with local and economic grievances. But as education spreads, and economic standards rise, a compound West Indian nationalism may begin to have real motive power.

With these new dynamic forces at work, imperial statesmanship needs to reach out into new realms of imaginative construction. It must build the Fourth British Empire and cease wasting breath on the virtues of the Third. It must live in the present, for the future, not failing to instal up-to-date plumbing out of respect for the Adam decorations and the Victorian mahogany.

## XII

### A TWENTIETH-CENTURY COMMONWEALTH

**I**t is essentially a variegated, non-uniform Commonwealth that is needed to meet the needs of the second half of the twentieth century. In the broadest sense, we cannot afford to pay the price of uniformity. That price is to advance at the pace of the slowest, the most hesitant and inhibited member; to allow plans for closer co-operation among three or four countries of the Commonwealth to be frustrated because country number five or six is too little concerned about the subject matter, too jealous of its national sovereignty, too divided internally, or too fearful of the reaction of foreign countries, to participate in them. If this brake upon progress has been severe in an era of half a dozen Dominions, how much worse must it become when twice as many members have to be persuaded into a uniform system? Regional and technical machinery for common action in fields of common concern among groups—even mere pairs—of Commonwealth countries is one type of mechanism appropriate to the new age.

#### A COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL

A big industrial concern, especially in the United States where both the scale of enterprise and the art of business management have been carried to a higher pitch than elsewhere, is often organized in so-called operating companies, each of which conducts in virtual autonomy a particular side of the business. Each operating company has its own board: membership of the several boards overlap, and the whole concern is controlled as to major policy by a central board of directors. Obviously the analogy is very far

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from perfect, but it gives some hint of a possible and workable form of British Commonwealth organization: an 'operating group' for, say, defence in the Indian Ocean, another for colonial policy and economic development in Africa, a third for the conduct of a sterling currency system, and so forth, the directors of each group being the Governments or technical representatives of the countries concerned with the region or problem for which it was set up, and the whole co-ordinated by a Commonwealth Council whose main business would be discussion of major principles or policies within which the operating groups would work.

A Commonwealth Council, so conceived, would in many respects differ from the Imperial Conference of the past. The Imperial Conference, for this purpose, was too ponderous, too much concerned with constitutional documents, too infrequent in its meetings, too particular in its agenda. A Commonwealth Council should meet, in normal times, say, once a year, plus additional meetings preparatory to big international conferences. Its proceedings should be informal and confidential, its chairmanship should rotate. It should not seek to do what could better be done by a specialized operating group or committee.<sup>1</sup>

There are, of course, already in existence numerous specialized Imperial Committees.<sup>1</sup> But their limitations as a pattern for the mechanism of a working Commonwealth of the future are well illustrated by the example of the Imperial Economic Committee. Not only is the I.E.C. a purely deliberative and advisory body; when it was first set up its subject matter was confined to that which the Governments of the Commonwealth should agree to refer to it, and only after a long precautionary trial was it allowed to initiate the discussion of any topic.

It is not given a broad job to do, and told to get on with it. It produces reports, not action, not even policy. Within its limited sphere, the Imperial Economic Committee has been very useful. But its effect on the integration of broad economic policies—concerning tariffs, quotas, subsidies, currency, public and industrial

<sup>1</sup> This chapter was in print before Viscount Bruce of Melbourne put forward a similar proposal in the House of Lords on 17th February 1948.

<sup>2</sup> The list includes the Imperial Economic Committee, Imperial Shipping Committee, Executive Committee of the Imperial Agricultural Bureaux, and the Imperial War Graves Commission.

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finance, social insurance, migration and so forth—has been meagre. These are, indeed, matters of high policy: but, high or low, they are commonly framed by the different Governments of the Commonwealth without appreciation of their full bearing on policies and conditions in other member countries—an appreciation which can be afforded only by expert advice which itself takes the all-Commonwealth view and works to an all-Commonwealth remit. The Imperial War Graves Commission is an example of a Commonwealth authority having responsibility for actions as well as advice, and working with its own finances, jointly provided. Some of the scientific specialist bodies, too, which have been in existence for many years, are better models for the future, or, perhaps it would be truer to say, better tips to the form in the future development of British Commonwealth relations.

These specialized organs have one great advantage by comparison with the non-specialized machinery of liaison through High Commissioners, the Commonwealth Relations Office, and Departments of External Affairs, which has been so much advertised and indeed is indispensable, but is no more the fabric of Empire unity in action than the Diplomatic Corps is the fabric of world unity. They engage the different member nations of the Commonwealth in a joint task at the *conception-level* of policy. Representative experts or administrators of the different nations work together in the same offices, having no secrets from each other and circulating the same papers. They reach agreement or crystallize points of disagreement, before departmental inertia or prestige, or the hardening prejudices of Ministers, intervene to hinder fair compromise or detached judgment.

### MIXING THE OFFICIALS

This characteristic, so far as it held good, was an outstanding merit of the specialized mechanism of Empire co-operation for the conduct of the war on the civilian, economic side. The committees of the Commonwealth Supply Council, for raw materials, machine tools, railway equipment, and civilian goods generally, had decisive effect in fixing the pattern of economic effort and even, to some extent, civilian standards, in the Dominions and

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India. They were committees of officials, not eminent departmental heads whose names would be known to the public—some of them, indeed, being strangers to their own Ministers or High Commissioners—but good hard-working civil servants, mostly wartime 'temporaries', of rank equivalent to, say, colonel in the Army. Yet for year after year they settle'd these matters without major quarrels and without appeal to 'higher level'—so much so that the Commonwealth Supply Council itself, which was supposed to deal with major issues that got beyond the lower official range, had nothing to do, met almost never, and perished of inanition.

The unity of purpose given by the war is part of the reason for this success. The facts were hard, the common aim agreed, the room for alternative policies narrow. But part of the reason was that, while each national representative kept his own counsel on his country's policies, and made the best case that he could for its claims, factual information was bluntly demanded and freely exchanged, and policies were thrashed out before conclusions were reached by people with too little time for discussion or too much sense of prestige for change of mind. When members came with previous firm instructions from their Ministers or Home Governments, success was all the more difficult to achieve.

Yet the system was far from perfect, and one of its imperfections was in fact the characteristic defect of institutions based on co-operation among sovereign States—that consideration begins from the point of view of rivals even if it ends with that of partners. There is a constant temptation to conceal facts which may weaken the national case. United Kingdom inter-departmental papers were often bowdlerized before being circulated to the Commonwealth representatives, or kept dark from them altogether. This habit can be overcome only by very determined men or by long years of experience. Looking back, I think little was gained from it by anybody, except a certain comparative ease in the diplomacy of reaching agreement.

The public might be surprised to know how far this characteristic defect extended. They might well have assumed that, when Ministerial representatives of the Dominions and of India were invited to join the War Cabinet as full members, they and their confidential staffs would receive all Cabinet papers. Many matters

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of domestic policy would not concern them, but that would be for them to decide, since they alone could appreciate the possible impact upon their own countries. But at least they might have been expected to have all papers relating to external policy (including economic policy) and military and diplomatic conduct of the war. Even these, however, were filtered.

There was in effect no Imperial War Cabinet (no one claimed that there was, in the second world war) because there was no Imperial War Cabinet Secretariat. The importance of early and intimate official, as distinct from Ministerial, liaison has been best appreciated by Australia, who has maintained for nearly twenty years a high-ranking official liaison officer with the United Kingdom Cabinet Secretariat and the Foreign Office. This official has his desk in the Cabinet Offices, and, if he does not see all the departmental papers, at least he shares the departmental gossip and atmosphere, and has far better opportunities of inside information and—what is more—inside influence than if he sat in the Strand or Trafalgar Square.

The concept of a Commonwealth Council has as its essential sub-structure a Commonwealth Council Secretariat, drawn from the different countries of the Commonwealth, paid for by them in agreed proportions, and headed by a Secretary—or Secretary-General if the title is preferred—who would be appointed by and responsible to the Council as a whole. The technique of international civil services and of international appointments is now well developed; in this instance it is aided by the advantages of habitual co-operation and common nationality. The secretariats of specialized Commonwealth organs (other than those concerned with military co-operation) might well become part of the Commonwealth Council Secretariat. There might be likewise regional staffs; and certainly the Council should have an office in each Dominion or other participating country.

## THE GREAT GULF FIXED

The concept is, of course, an extension of the 'Curtin Plan' brought by the late Mr. John Curtin to the meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in 1945. If it differs, it does so primarily

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in its greater comprehensiveness and in its franker hope that the practice of working together through such joint institutions may carry the members of the British Commonwealth forward to the brink of the gulf between international co-operation and union Government with sufficient momentum to make the leap seem natural and easy.

A leap it must be; there is no smooth transition from co-operation to Government. A deliberate act of will is required. But it can be performed easily, or with great effort, according to the atmosphere of opinion and the combination of political, official, and sectional interests ruling at the time. It is important that informed and adventurous thought should first leap the gap, to prove to the timid that the farther bank is safe ground, and to lend a hand to public opinion and the responsible decision which must follow. That is one reason why the hope of international federal government, within the Commonwealth as in a large sphere, must be kept always alive, and its possibilities, its merits, defects, and problems frankly and publicly explored, even though the chances of bringing it about may seem slight at the moment.

That is a fitting point to turn aside and pay tribute to the prophetic labours of that figure with whom the idea of organic union of the peace-loving nations for the purpose of preventing war will always be associated, Mr. Lionel Curtis. Often scoffed at as an impractical visionary, his single-minded zeal for that which he knows must be made practical if it is not practical now has at length won him disciples, acknowledged and unacknowledged, in the ranks of responsible statesmen. When Sir Godfrey Huggins, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, said on the 5th February 1947:<sup>1</sup>

'There could be no world peace while numerous sovereign independent nations sent representatives of their Governments to world conferences, however noble their aims . . . unless several nations and the Empire were prepared to come together on foreign affairs and defence, the British would no longer be members of a Great Power, each part could be conquered separately and the whole would contribute nothing to world peace',

<sup>1</sup> At the Royal Empire Society, in the course of discussion on an address by Sir Arthur Salter on 'the Role of the Dominions in Foreign Policy'.

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he openly confessed his debt to Mr. Lionel Curtis. When Mr. Ernest Bevin said on the 3rd September 1947, after avowing his hope 'of a customs union for the British Commonwealth and Empire\*,

<sup>C</sup>I do not think we can avoid any longer common defence and acceptance of common economic principles', a statement which implied some measure of common government, he spoke as if those ideas had sprung full-fledged to his brain, but he would be the first to acknowledge the same original stimulus to his thought.

### THE VALUE OF A VOTE

One of the objections commonly raised in the Dominions to any form of closer imperial unity is that their people would be deprived of any effective voice in so large a democracy, where they would be swamped by the far more numerous voters of the United Kingdom. It is supposed, for instance, that if—to use rough figures—the population of the United Kingdom is eight times that of Australia, in a united Government of those two countries, of which only one-ninth of the electorate would be Australian, the effectiveness of an individual Australian vote would be diminished in the ratio of 9 to 1.

This, however, is a statistical illusion.<sup>1</sup> The value of an individual vote (that is to say, the chance of its being decisive) varies inversely, not to the total number of the electorate, but to the square root of that number. Hence in that hypothetical case the effectiveness of an individual Australian vote would be diminished only ill the ratio of 3 to 1.

That is not the whole story. The power of a resolute minority, regarded as a voting bloc, to control the decisions of a group whose other members are, on the whole, indifferent—that is to say, as likely in the long run to vote one way as the other—is actually much greater with a large total group than with a smaller one, if it remains the same proportion of the total. Thus three resolute

<sup>1</sup> I am much indebted, for the statistical analysis underlying this section, to an article on 'Elementary Statistics of Majority Voting\*' by Professor L. S. Penrose in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. CIX, Part I.

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**votes** can control a decision of a committee of twenty-three to the **same** extent as one resolute vote can control a committee of three.

In relation to the idea of a British Commonwealth Union, this means that if a large group of people in one Dominion were determined upon a certain course which seemed vital to them, while the rest of the electors of the Commonwealth did not much care, one way or the other, that Dominion group would—statistically speaking—be almost certain to carry the day. That statistical fact stands quite apart from the political fact that their advocacy would actually leave the rest far from indifferent; on the contrary, it would obviously rally many wavering voters to their side.

Translate the proposition into terms of indirect voting through a representative assembly: in a British Commonwealth Parliament of 400 members, a resolute bloc of 20 members would control 84 per cent of the decisions; one of 40 members, over 97 per cent—always on the assumption of there being no strong weight of resolute opinion to the contrary among the remaining members.

But the political student who has been earnest enough to follow the argument so far will probably cry impatiently that this is all abstract and unreal; that indifference is a statistical idea having no practical bearing on important political issues; and that the Dominions' anxiety is precisely about those issues on which both they and the United Kingdom or other members of the Commonwealth are likely to have strong but differing views. To this there are two answers, technical and political.

The political answer is that, if they are going to differ, their difference is a weakness to both; it will probably be worse for either to be independent and alone than to be overruled yet part of a larger unity. And the chances of getting unity on the terms preferred by any anxious member are enhanced rather than diminished by the erection of proper machinery for discussion and decision.

The technical answer is this: given the assumption—implicit in our experience-founded idea of democracy—that various opinions exist within each member country as well as between different member countries, a simple device can be applied which gives **equal** effective power to the individual voters of each **member country in an international assembly. This device is to make**

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representation in that assembly proportionate, not to the numbers of the representative electorates, but to the square roots of those numbers. Thus a country four times the size of another would have only twice the number of representatives.

Assuming roughly the same terms of franchise throughout, this would give rise to a British Commonwealth assembly in the following proportions:

	<i>No. of representatives</i>			
<b>United Kingdom</b>	..	..	..	<b>22</b>
Canada .. ..	..	..	..	n
Australia .. ..	..	..	..	8
South Africa .. ..	..	..	..	10
New Zealand .. ..	..	..	..	4
Ireland .. ..	..	..	..	6
India .. ..	..	..	..	54
Pakistan .. ..	..	..	..	30
Newfoundland .. ..	..	..	..	2
Malaya .. ..	..	..	..	2
Ceylon .. ..	..	..	..	2
				<b>141</b>

The South African figure is based on the total population of all races: if white people only are included, the Union's representation falls to four. Even so, the Dominions would be assured a clear majority over the United Kingdom—or, to put the point in a more realistic way, a majority opinion in the Dominions would outvote a majority opinion in the United Kingdom.

The figures have, however, a glaring defect from every point of view but one. More than half the voting strength would go to India and Pakistan together. The needs and aspirations of that vast fraction of the world's peoples must certainly have due recognition. But in experience of government, and in potential contribution to a pool of wealth and strength for the defence of policies agreed upon, the Indian sub-continent falls far behind the average. The preponderance of one country is indeed a theoretical as well as a practical defect. Some rough-and-ready adjustment is necessary,

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and it may be suggested that no one country should have more than one-sixth of the total representation.

This would give the following result:

					<i>No. of representatives</i>
United Kingdom	..	..	..	..	15
Canada	..	..	..	..	11
Australia	..	..	..	..	8
South Africa	..	..	..	..	10
New Zealand	..	..	..	..	4
Newfoundland	..	..	..	..	2
Ireland	..	..	..	..	6
India	..	..	..	..	15
Pakistan	..	..	..	..	15
Malaya	..	..	..	..	2
Ceylon	..	..	..	..	2
				—	
					90

There are, of course, other possible bases of national representation: taxable wealth, for instance, or relative contributions to common defence. Mathematically, the exact basis is not of great importance, provided it allows for the weighting of small populations, and does not leave too large a share of the total votes with any one unit. Politically, the important things are that the basis should be accepted as fair, and that it should not be subject to constant alteration or attack.

All this, however, is to run ahead of the argument. It is certainly well to know, when we stand on the brink of that gulf between exclusive national sovereignty and united government, that there are safe and solid footholds on the farther bank: but practical politics have a considerable way to go before the leap can be taken, and the path we are now exploring is that of a Commonwealth Council which is not conceived of as an independent executive authority in the constitutional sense. Its intended purpose is simply to provide a proper, permanent organ for debating issues of principle or major policy affecting the Commonwealth generally, especially those larger issues which arise from time to time

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out of the work of joint authorities in special fields—joint, **that** is to say, to two or more member countries of the Commonwealth.

### REORGANIZING WHITEHALL

The development of such authorities, the institution of a Commonwealth Council or some such body with a standing secretariat, and the potential multiplication of Dominions—or rather, of autonomous nations within the Commonwealth for which at present we have no better name than Dominions—impose also a problem of domestic organization in the United Kingdom. Up to 1947, when the Commonwealth Relations Department was created to give the Dominions Office a more appropriate title and to make a fit repository for the conduct of relations with the new Indian Dominions, the 'Imperial' Departments at Whitehall were the Dominions Office, Colonial Office, India Office, and Burma Office, each with its Secretary of State (though up to then the responsibility for Indian and Burmese affairs had always been doubled). The Dominions Office and Burma Office were creations of 1924 and 1935 only. We must keep our minds open to the possible need for further changes as other countries, now dependencies, pass from tutelage to self-government.

New and old self-governing members of the Commonwealth and their foreign neighbours are bound to have many problems in common, reflected in common problems of administration or negotiation in Whitehall. The creation of international commissions for the Caribbean and the South-West Pacific is a tribute to this fact in two areas where the war forced the issue to a head.\* Even more striking recognition was accorded in Lord Killearn's

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Oliver Stanley, then Secretary of State for Colonies, said in the House of Commons on 13th July 1943: 'While His Majesty's Government are convinced that the administration of the British colonies must continue to be the sole responsibility of Great Britain, the policy of His Majesty's Government to work in close co-operation with neighbouring and friendly nations. We realize that under present circumstances such co-operation is not only desirable but is indeed essential. . . . Problems of security, of transport, of economics, of health, etc., transcend the boundaries of political units. His Majesty's Government would therefore welcome the establishment of machinery which would enable such problems to be discussed and to be solved by common efforts. What they have in mind is the possibility of establishing commissions for certain areas.'

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appointment as Special Commissioner for South-East Asia, responsible to the Foreign Office, with his local headquarters in Singapore, including Burma in his province, and thus directly concerned with three 'regional' Departments in Whitehall—Colonial Office, Foreign Office, Burma Office—rand less directly with a fourth, the Commonwealth Relations Office. It was significant that upon the end of Lord Killearn's tenure, the special Commissionership was not abolished, but entrusted as a distinct function to the Governor-General of Malaya.

There is much to be said for setting up a parallel organization in London. A Minister of Cabinet rank would preside over a regional committee of Ministers, with an official committee beneath it and with its own secretariat. Members would be, in the case of South-East Asia, for instance:

Foreign Secretary,  
Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations,  
Secretary of State for Colonies,  
Minister of Defence,

and such other Ministers as might be invited to attend from time to time when matters concerning them were under discussion, e.g., Chancellor of the Exchequer, Minister of Food, Minister of Transport, President of the Board of Trade.

Plainly, too many such regional arrangements would clog the machinery of government and frustrate the very purpose aimed at. The regions must ideally be as large as the condition of common interests and common problems allows. The model, perhaps, would be an Office for Asian Affairs whose regional scope would extend from Borneo to Aden, from Afghanistan to Mauritius. The Minister in charge, who might be one of the high-ranking Ministers with few departmental duties like the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, would be responsible for

representing the special Asian aspects of policy in the Cabinet; co-ordinating different aspects of policy over the Asian field, chiefly through presiding over committees, e.g.:

Constitutional development  
Defence  
Food and Supply  
Inter-Asian relations (e.g. migration).

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As countries of the Commonwealth such as Malaya come closer to independence their affairs would tend to be handled to a progressively larger extent by the Office for Asian Affairs.

The new Office might in due course be joined by an Office for African Affairs. There it would be well for speculation to stop.

### TERMS AND TITLES

In all these developments, the question of titles and terminology is important. The title Dominion is apt enough for Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, and potentially for Newfoundland and Southern Rhodesia, perhaps for others. Despite its literal meaning and derivation, it has been applied long enough to those first four for it to have acquired an implication of national independence combined with common loyalty which suits well the peculiar status of the grown-up 'colonies of settlement'<sup>9</sup>. But the independence which it signifies is filial, and the loyalty a family loyalty. It never suited Ireland, as a Mother Country, for whom Dominion status carried a stigma of inferiority. It will not do permanently for countries of different culture and race, like India, Pakistan, or even Malaya or Ceylon. Lack of any suitable terminology to describe relationship to the British Commonwealth may even be of critical importance in deciding whether India or Pakistan, or later aspirants to independence, becomes 'foreign'.

Dominion *status* is to-day meaningless. The status of the Dominions is that of independent sovereign States; one does not need a special name for the status of France or Belgium. To give India 'Dominion status' has been to give her independence. It was strange that for a dozen years politicians who were ready to promise the first boggled at offering the second. There will be talk in the future of Dominion status for the West Indies or Malta or some other dependency. Either this means independence or it means something less than the status of the established Dominions; so the phrase is either redundant or meaningless. Let the older Dominions remain so-called as long as they wish, and in due course let others who desire it be allowed, if fitting, to use that title. But for them there is no problem of status; they are equal in status with the United Kingdom and therefore with any sovereign State.

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It must further be borne in mind, in considering titles, that the British Commonwealth is not confined to the group of self-governing, independent nations. It is the rightful name of the whole British Empire, including not only those nations but also the dependencies and protectorates, as well as the countries suspended between tutelage and autonomy; *h* is so used in the key State papers, such as the reports of Imperial Conferences, and particularly the Balfour Report of 1926; and its legitimacy has recently been again confirmed.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Churchill has given currency to the clumsy and unnecessary title 'Commonwealth and Empire' which implies that the two are contrasted, distinct and disparate, and are added together to make a whole having no briefer or better name. True enough, it can be said for distinguishing between Empire and Commonwealth that some people in the Dominions, especially in Canada, dislike the term Empire as somehow derogatory to their status and offensive to their national chastity. This sentiment is far from universal; in the wartime Commonwealth Supply Council and its committees we worked in perfect amity using the term 'Empire'<sup>5</sup> for our group of nations, save on very formal occasions when the more pompous 'Commonwealth' intruded. But sentiments must be respected, not affronted, and 'Empire' may be reserved for those countries whom it does not offend, while 'Commonwealth'<sup>5</sup> becomes the proper title for the whole group of countries associated with the British Crown.

The British Commonwealth, then, includes both independent and dependent countries. While the name 'Dominion'<sup>5</sup> does not fit all the independent countries, for the dependencies 'Nation' is an aspiration rather than a fact. The best term is surely the simple 'Member', or 'Member Country'. This allows a choice of qualifying adjectives—'independent', 'self-governing', 'African', 'tropi-

<sup>1</sup> In the course of a debate on the Medical Practitioners and Pharmacists Bill, *apropos* the need to amend the adjective 'colonial' in the old Act of 1886 as applied to overseas territories of the British Crown generally, Lord Henderson said: 'Consultations with the Department of Commonwealth Relations and the Colonial Office have taken place and have led to the joint conclusion that "Commonwealth", as a general term, is the best. It is true that the term "British Commonwealth of Nations" is recognized and accepted as connoting the present association of the Dominions and the United Kingdom as independent nations, but I am advised that the word "Commonwealth" alone can properly be given the wider meaning of all territories within the Empire, including the Dominions.' House of Lords, Official Report, 18th November 1947, col. 751.

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cal\*, 'gold-producing'<sup>5</sup>, and so on—of which only the first example, 'independent', need have official significance.

The independent members of the Commonwealth are those to which the famous Balfour formula applies:

' . . . equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their internal or external affairs.'

What, then, of the second half of the Balfour formula: 'united by a common allegiance? What is the significance of the Crown in the British Commonwealth of the future? Can anyone say that Eire is united to the rest of the Commonwealth by a common allegiance, and, if she is not, is she still a member? Is there room in the Commonwealth for other Eires, conforming to the doctrine of external association, which substitutes convenience for allegiance?

### THE NATURE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

In order to answer these questions, we must pose one more fundamental. What is the nature of the British Commonwealth today? None of the many aspects of the association appears to yield a definite and unqualified answer. Stress as we may the constitutional link of the Crown (as distinct from personal regard for the Sovereign) we can make of it no more than a formula which means what the member countries say it means, neither more nor less. From a constitutional point of view, Eire has merely put into legal form what applies in practice to all the Dominions. The Crown, constitutionally, is a means of external association only.

When the Crown is politically so far divided that in at least two Dominions, besides Eire, it is accepted doctrine that His Majesty can be at war for some parts of the British Commonwealth but at peace for the rest, a doctrine to which practice conformed in the Parliamentary votes of Canada and South Africa in 1939; <sup>anc\*</sup> when the right of each self-governing member to advise the Crown upon the choice of its Governor-General is exercised to recommend the appointment of an active local party-politician to represent a detached, non-party, royal institution shared by all the members of the Commonwealth; then clearly no further pretence is possible that the *constitutional* bond of the Monarchy is the essence of the Commonwealth, or indeed is more than a convenient device and an historical emblem.

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As the latter, its advantages vary according to the history of the part of the Commonwealth concerned. Historical memories, it is true, which cannot be dissolved by new political concessions, may quite swiftly fade in the presence of fresh human feelings; and their Majesties of to-day, who have already so endeared themselves to the most divided and republican-minded of the oversea Dominions, might personally prove able to live down George III in the United States and William of Orange in Southern Ireland. But personal feelings are not necessarily bound up with political associations; and just as the people of England may feel a genuine affection for Queen Wilhelmina without being Dutch or wanting union with Holland, so people outside the Commonwealth may share our love for our King and Queen without wanting to share the Commonwealth connection, while some even within the Commonwealth may share that love without wanting the political connection to continue.

### COMMUNITY ACTION

If we are to look for the essence of the Commonwealth connection to-day neither in the constitutional link of the Crown, nor in personal regard for its wearers, we must seek it in manifestations of community-action in the defensive, political or economic sphere. The defensive aspect is, of course, very important. One has heard many people say: <sup>c</sup>A Commonwealth which doesn't stick together in a major war is no Commonwealth to me.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, public discussion of the Indian problem in the spring and summer of 1947 proceeded on the assumption that if any new Indian nation-State remained in the Commonwealth it would thereby secure the advantage of common defence, with its implied obligations. Such a view of the Commonwealth would manifestly read Eire out of its membership.

It is a tenable and coherent view; but it is not the official view either in Whitehall or in Dublin. It is not subscribed to by the present Government or Opposition at Westminster, nor by the Government of any of the oversea Dominions, who are just as much concerned as the United Kingdom. It has been contradicted in practice by acceptance of Eire, notwithstanding her neutrality

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in the second World War, as a member of the Commonwealth in other important respects, notably preferential trade arrangements and the recruitment of personnel for civil services and the armed forces. It is also denied, though less explicitly, by those politicians in the other Dominions—and they are clearly a majority in Canada and South Africa, perhaps in Australia and New Zealand—who insist that each member nation of the Commonwealth has the unfettered right to decide whether it will take part in a war involving other members, without automatically raising the issue of secession from the Commonwealth. Many of those who hold that view contend also that the member nations have equally the right to secede, if they so choose. But the two issues are quite separate.

The practice of common political action is likewise defective as the touchstone of the British Commonwealth idea. Lord Halifax, speaking at Toronto in January 1944, urged that 'not Great Britain only but the British Commonwealth and Empire must be the fourth Power in that group upon which, under Providence, the peace of the world will depend', and that therefore 'in all fields—foreign policy, defence, economic affairs, colonial questions and communications—we should leave nothing undone to bring our people into unity of thought and action'. Hostile comment was dominant in Canada, and far from lacking in other countries of the Commonwealth. Mr. Mackenzie King, commenting on the speech in the Canadian House of Commons, maintained that 'apart from all questions as to how that common policy is to be reached, or enforced, such a conception runs counter to the establishment of effective world security, and therefore is opposed to the true interests of the Commonwealth itself, Mr. Mackenzie King can hardly be regarded as a great champion or defender of the British Commonwealth; nevertheless his inhibitions about common policy are widespread in the Dominions, particularly Canada.

Although indeed there have been, and continue to be, many occasions on which representatives of British Commonwealth countries meet together to discuss their several national policies round the table before committing themselves in international debate or negotiation, there has also been a marked tendency, since the war, to underline in public the non-committal nature of these

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Commonwealth talks and their entire compatibility with variety and even conflict of policy among the members of the Commonwealth. There is a morbid fear of being accused of 'ganging up', and any suggestion that the essential nature of the Commonwealth was that its members habitually 'ganged up' on political matters would be met with shocked horror in governing circles in its constituent countries.

In economic affairs there is less controvertible ground to work on. Every self-governing member of the Commonwealth gives and receives a measure of imperial preference, and maintains before the world its right to do so, notwithstanding most-favoured-nation agreements with non-Commonwealth countries. This is the most tangible and universal characteristic of Commonwealth co-operation in practice which this analysis has yet exposed. A moment's reflection, however, shows that it is idle to seek herein the essence of the modern Commonwealth. Imperial preference in the United Kingdom, in its now familiar form, dates only from 1932, save for a few minor preferential duties. Certain territories within the British Commonwealth are debarred by international treaty from granting preferences, but no one thinks of them as less genuinely belonging to the Commonwealth on that account. Nor would anyone seriously contend that if, as a result of some international move for freer trade, the members of the Commonwealth—or some of them—were to forgo imperial preference the Commonwealth would thereby be mortally wounded, any more than, conversely, it would be automatically enlarged if a different economic policy enabled preference to be extended to certain foreign countries.

Nevertheless, it is in imperial preference that we may find the clearest clue to the real nature of the Commonwealth to-day. We of the Commonwealth assert dogmatically our right to treat each other differently from the rest of the world. The privileges which we accord to each other in mutual trade, commerce, and finance may be large or small, and may or may not be the same for all our number—Australia and Canada, for example, have found bilateral tariff war consistent with the general principle of imperial preference—but that, we contend, is our own affair. It is in its hostility to this principle of independent action, rather than in its detailed provisions, that there lies the real objection to the Geneva Trade

## A. TWENTIETH-CENTURY COMMONWEALTH

Charter from the Commonwealth point of view. The characteristics of our relations within the Commonwealth is that they are, or at least we reserve the right to make them, *different* from those we maintain with the rest of the world.

This is as true of our political and defensive arrangements as it is of economic. We may colloquy on particular issues, or in preparation for an international conference, without 'ganging up\* and without prejudice either to our loyalty to the United Nations or to the specially friendly, but nevertheless non-Commonwealth, relations that we have with certain foreign countries. We may concert our defence forces and preparations in the most intimate fashion without detracting either from our pledges to support the United Nations with arms or from our particular foreign alliances. There is no alliance among the countries of the Commonwealth; an alliance could add nothing to their existing intimacy of relationship, but might indeed subtract from it, by pressing it into the form which is traditional between foreign States, whereas the Commonwealth relationship is essentially different, *sui generis*.

We are a club; our by-laws are our own affair; within our club we claim to be as private as in our several homes; we do not need policemen and the public courts of law to regulate our mutual relations. The analogy of the club is all the more apt in that the club, like the unwritten, conventional constitution which the Commonwealth professes, is itself a typically British institution.

Clubs exist, very often, by virtue of some common interest or common concern of their members, though it is characteristic of social clubs—and all clubs tend to become social—that the special common interest tends to recede in importance as a bond of unity and qualification for membership. The British Commonwealth club exists by virtue of history, but its members also share certain common interests and traits, all of which help to make up the character of the club. They are oceanic countries in the sense that the ocean is both vital to their security and a part of their peaceful way of life. They are "parliamentary democracies; and it is significant that Eire and India, when freely setting up their own constitutions, chose essentially the British form, embodying the supremacy of Parliament, the responsibility of the Executive, and the titular, unpolitical apex of the constitutional hierarchy. The

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Governor-General of a Dominion has been described as a nominated president; the President of Eire could equally well be described as an elected constitutional monarch. (The same is true of the President of Burma, now an independent country under a constitution framed by itself while still a member of the British Commonwealth.) This constitutional trait is important because it goes with a flexibility of political action which is necessary to the free and swift working of club co-operation, while preserving the sovereign supremacy of the several Parliaments.

# XIII

## FOUR BRITISH EMPIRES

**T**he Third British Empire<sup>1</sup> has passed into history, and the Fourth rises in its place. The First of the British Empires was ended with the American Revolution. The Second lasted until a less well-defined date when Dominion self-government replaced colonial dependence in the settlement colonies. The Third was the British Commonwealth of Nations as we have known it hitherto: the member countries co-operating through official machinery like the Imperial Conference under British leadership; India enjoying the place of a nation but not its independence; and the colonial empire governed in the spirit of trusteeship and in a measure under its legal terms.

This Third British Empire, which to its contemporaries seemed certain to last for their lifetime, though with progressive modification as member nations like India rose within it to independence, has disappeared, as it were, overnight. Independence for India and Burma was not fatal to it; it could well have survived without them. But with the virtual decease of the Imperial Conference and the idea that it stood for, and with the radical changes in the economic and military balance of forces effected by the war of 1939-45, the Third British Empire perished, and as we look about us we see a Fourth British Empire with characteristics of its own.

At present it lacks the individuality which is given to political institutions by a name, a formula, a statement of principles. This very lack of formula is typical of the Fourth Empire. The keywords of the British Commonwealth of Nations were equality and

<sup>1</sup> This term was first used, I believe, in a book with the same title by Sir Alfred Zimmern, to whom I make grateful acknowledgments.

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co-operation, and the stress was on status.<sup>1</sup> To-day the stress is on function. Co-operation among member nations derives essentially from functions shared, whereas at an earlier stage the functions of the several member-nations were themselves largely derived from the fact of co-operation radiating from a functional centre in the United Kingdom.

In terms of foreign policy, for example, global foreign policy was tacitly assumed, right up to 1939, to be mainly the function of the United Kingdom: the Dominions had indeed their own foreign policies, which they conducted, however, in co-operation with the United Kingdom and in accordance with Commonwealth principles laid down under her chairmanship—not, that is to say, as inferiors in status, but essentially as partners sitting lower down the board-table of a joint enterprise. They might differ, but they differed from a norm. To-day foreign policy is a function of each rather than all. If it is conducted in common, this is because it covers issues and areas of common interest. Action, in fact, is the *same* rather than *common* among the different member-nations; and it is constructively the same rather than derivatively the same. Solidarity is built rather than assumed.

The motives for this piecemeal building of solidarity are confused and complex, as human motives, especially motives of mass action, commonly are. They are not interest alone, nor sentiment alone; sentiment emphasizes interest, often discovers interest, may even be an interest in itself. To answer fully, for example, the question why Canada came with one mind and voice into the war in 1939 is to reveal an intricate pattern of interests and sentiments which amounts to an essay on the whole nature of the Commonwealth. The important point is that motives, popular and positive, must exist and must be felt to the point of animating democratic action. Negative motives—taking things for granted, following a lead, avoiding argument or friction—are not enough now to make the Commonwealth function. It will function, not because it always has functioned, but because its nations and citizens want it to go on functioning—and want it so in particular fields of public or corporate affairs.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Balfour formula: 'Equality of status does not necessarily imply equality of function.'

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### 'OF THE PEOPLE'

All this lays a special emphasis, in the Commonwealth of the mid-twentieth century which I have called the Fourth British Empire, upon men rather than institutions. The institutions of Commonwealth collaboration will be created, or will remain in vigour, because they are useful in the eyes of those who want to get something done or decided. Cabinet Ministers and officials of different member countries of the Commonwealth are affected much less than before by the mere existence of Commonwealth mechanisms which they use or of Commonwealth formulae which they apply because it has always been the practice to do so. They make up their own minds to use, discard or improvise mechanisms which will in practice be likely to help achieve something they want. What they want is therefore all important. And that is only to say that *they* are all important, they and the people behind them.

Thus we have to turn our accustomed ideas of the institutional structure of the Commonwealth on their head. Describing the political structure of the Third British Empire, one would undoubtedly have begun with the Imperial Conference, and then worked through the convolution of High Commissioners and official committees and the Dominions Office and so forth to a brief and dispensable appendix on unofficial co-operation through various private or semi-private institutions of a Commonwealth order. This method would have correctly reflected the belief—or, rather, assumption—that such unofficial co-operation was derivative and secondary. Now we have to think of it as primary and creative. The Imperial Conference may fall to the ground like an autumn leaf; but it is only the leaf, and the strength of the tree will be found rather in its roots, the roots of feeling and behaviour of the people, especially the opinion-making people, in the different member nations of the Commonwealth.

This is not to say that political and other official institutions are unimportant or unessential to the life of the Commonwealth. By their fruits shall ye know them; and a fruitless, leafless tree whose life had shrunk to its roots would be but one stage from death. But it is to say that in this Fourth British Empire political institutions of whatever **kind cannot** be effective, or even survive, **without**

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having roots in a public opinion nurtured by personal contacts and private co-operation.

This would apply no less to some form of organic union than to the present system of voluntary co-operation among national governments or to some half-way-house of formal compacts. International unions, like nations, exist because their peoples believe in them. No British Commonwealth union, however it were brought into being, could endure without its member-peoples' faith. And that faith itself will not survive on a diet of memories and idealism alone. It needs the more substantial nutriment of constant personal intercourse and endeavour.

The sap in this tree is the individual sense of belonging together in the Commonwealth. Blood connection is, of course, very important; family ties are still the best and closest of all. But, where they do not exist, others must be formed. Personal friendly intercourse goes far towards replacing the advantage of common ancestors or of recent inter-marriage. Unfortunately, where it is most needed it is often most difficult. One reason why the back-veld Afrikaners and the French-Canadians of the Quebec villages remain so estranged from the English-speaking Commonwealth is that they themselves remain rooted to their habitations, nor do these attract either the visitor or the new immigrant in large numbers. This fact is perhaps more important than the barriers of religion or language or even of different history. For those themselves, as many an example shows, dwindle in the presence of personal friendly intercourse.

### BRITISH BABEL

Differences of language are nevertheless a very serious obstacle to understanding. They are an obstacle to be surmounted rather than destroyed. Let those of us who are fortunate to be born with English as our mother tongue think twice before we criticize the Afrikaners or the French-Canadians who struggle defiantly on political and cultural fronts to preserve and strengthen their Afrikaans or their Canadian French. If English were a decaying or a minority language we might be as zealous and obstinate ourselves. Extermination of an adult language is cultural murder.

From this it follows that majorities **have a clear** duty towards

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minority languages; not merely to protect them, but to learn them. This is a duty, in the Dominions, of the Afrikaner and the English-speaking Canadian towards English and French respectively. It may even be the duty of the Pakeha New-Zealander to learn the Maori tongue. The corresponding duty of the minority-language-speakers is obvious—the duty of the British South African and the French Canadian to respect and learn Afrikaans and English respectively. It is better in these matters to start from duties than from rights. A bilingual State thus appears as a system of mutual respect and of endeavour toward mutual understanding. Too often it appears as a system of mutual compulsion and distrust.

The British Commonwealth is not a State, but it is very much a multilingual society. There is a duty upon its citizens to be linguists, especially in its minority languages. But clearly it should cultivate, not neglect, the estimable advantage it possesses in the common language of English, the most widely understood language in the world, and at the same time among the richest both in past literature and in present capacity. Its merits will sustain and advance it in the communities of European race within the Commonwealth, provided it has a fair field, reinforced as those merits are by the pervasive power of the radio and the cinema. Among the Commonwealth peoples of non-European race special efforts are needed in the spread of the English tongue.

Unfortunately one of the supreme qualities of English—the variety and range of its vocabulary—diminishes its practical value as a means of communication and an instrument of advance among peoples of relatively backward culture. Basic English is a means of overcoming that difficulty. It is a method, not a language. It is a way towards English, not a substitute for it. Treated as a substitute, it may often be clumsy or comical. So are the antics of a man learning to skate. The essence of learning to skate is to acquire confidence enough to propel oneself and move around, somehow. Basic English does that for the learner, be he African or Asiatic or European. It is a real Empire-building implement. It is in the realm of culture what the bicycle is in the realm of transport. Its furtherance has been placed in charge of the British Council, which is doing valuable work in furthering the advance and security of British culture in the overseas Empire.

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English will probably prove in the end Britain's greatest gift to India. It is not only a *lingua franca* for the whole sub-continent, rendered all the more necessary by the division of the Indian Empire into two nation States. It has been and is a gateway to a realm of thought and experience which is essentially progressive, forward-looking, as against the backward-looking and nostalgic Indian culture which we have known. As such, it is capable of enlarging and stimulating Indian languages themselves and the literary culture associated with them. It thus plays a role equal to that of Greek and Latin in European Renaissance culture. Indeed the role is probably larger, because the stock of thought and literature to which English is for India the key is expanding, not fixed like that of the classical languages.

The range of thought opened up by English is far larger than that of political liberalism and English jurisprudence, which are usually marched out like the prize boys of the school of British tutelage in India. Those gifts are indeed important, but perhaps progressively less so now that India is in a position to develop her own political and legal thought and institutions in accordance with her own experience and her own needs and character. If they were the only product of the Macaulayan policy of Western education they would not have justified it; for they could hardly compensate for the cutting of the roots of national culture through the decay of vernacular education, and for the creation of a restless, unhappy political and legal class. It is the whole apparatus of expansive and speculative thought, expressed in English as a European language, which has been given to India by English education.

### THE TANGLED ROOTS

Without a common medium of communication—which implies in a certain measure a common method of thought—the institutions and practices of Commonwealth co-operation at the private and unofficial level would work, if at all, with the same creaks and groans as do the United Nations and the typical international conference. To list those institutions and practices would take many pages. The inter-connection in the world of serious books and higher education is obviously of seminal importance. Exchange of

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books is the most creative trade in the Commonwealth, and nothing ought to be allowed to hamper its freedom. The existence of Dominion branches of the leading British publishing houses, and mutual-aid arrangements between university presses in the United Kingdom and the Dominions, are other important lines of connection. Professors and lecturers in all branches of studies are freely interchanged among universities of the Commonwealth. In earlier times this was mostly a one-way traffic, the Dominions borrowing (and often keeping) scholars from the United Kingdom. Lately so many Dominion scholars and scientists have been taken for United Kingdom posts<sup>1</sup> that the balance on the exchange may now be in the opposite direction.

Closely associated with this interchange of personnel in higher teaching is the acceptance of professional qualifications gained in some other part of the Commonwealth, and the existence either of all-Commonwealth professional associations or of close affiliation between the national professional associations of different members. Among the professions concerned are medicine (including dental and veterinary), the Bar, solicitors, architects, engineers, accountants, statisticians, etc. To be ranked with these are the various learned societies with their Commonwealth affiliations. A good example is Chatham House—the Royal Institute of International Affairs—which fostered Institutes of International Affairs in all the oversea Dominions and in India, and has branches in Newfoundland and among British subjects in the Middle East. Every few years these Institutes organize a conference on British Commonwealth Affairs, with unofficial representatives from their several countries. One such conference, held in Australia in 1938, took Mr. Ernest Bevin to the oversea Dominions for the first time and made a critical contribution to his education as a world statesman. A constant exchange of literature—periodicals, pamphlets, books, including documents circulated for such conferences—helps to keep these institutes and branches in close touch with expert thought on matters of common interest throughout the Empire.

Other learned societies (for example, the Royal Economic

<sup>1</sup> Sir Howard Florey, Sir Hugh Cairns, Professor Hancock, Professor Frankel, Professor Eric Walker are a few examples.

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Society or the Royal Statistical Society) may not have such a close system of partnership with like societies elsewhere in the Commonwealth, but they are in continuous liaison with them, and members of such societies in the Dominions undoubtedly look to the London society as the focus of thought in their field of knowledge. That is true, above all, of the Royal Society of London, whose Fellowship is the crown of professional recognition for scientists all over the Empire, and is bestowed upon them regardless of where within His Majesty's Dominions they may live.

A profession of peculiar importance in respect of mutual understanding and exchange of ideas is the Press. The Empire Press Union is an organization of all the leading newspapers and periodicals of the Commonwealth, including both dependent and independent countries. Significantly it has kept and even newly enrolled within its membership some of the strongest nationalist newspapers of India and South Africa, through times when these journals were bitter advocates of breaking loose politically from the British Commonwealth. From week to week the Empire Press Union, both at its London headquarters and in its branches, is concerned largely with professional bread-and-butter issues like cable communications or facilities for journalists. But its regular conferences discuss not only these sectional matters but also the great public issues of common concern to Commonwealth countries, on which the assembled editors or proprietors will be writing or directing policy in the coming months. Another valuable activity of the Union is its scheme of interchange of young journalists, who are offered through the E.P.U. the opportunity of gaining a year or two's experience on newspapers in other Commonwealth countries than their own. In addition to this, Lord Kemsley, chief proprietor of the biggest newspaper group in the Commonwealth, has given a number of scholarships for young journalists from the Dominions and colonies to work and train on newspapers in his group. And the British Council has awarded similar scholarships to colonial journalists.

Churches are, or rather ought to be, oecumenical, but history—and the nature of man, whose different races both seek God and forsake Him in their own peculiar ways—have given them a national tint. This has become to some extent a Commonwealth

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tint among the Christian Churches founded in Great Britain. The Church of England, the Episcopal Church of Scotland and the Scottish Presbyterian Church in particular have spread their wings over the churches of their own communion in British countries overseas. And even Churches like the Baptists and Wesleyan Methodists have closer relations with their associated Churches in the Dominions than with those in foreign countries. All this is additional to the missionary activities both of the Established and of the Non-Conformist Churches, activities which have naturally been carried on more in the British Empire than elsewhere. In one remarkable instance, the South Indian Church, these activities have at length given rise to a new non-Roman Christian Church.

To take a more worldly example, trade unions have naturally been organized on a local or national basis. And the oversea affiliations of British trade unions were until recently more international than imperial. Before 1939, however, successful efforts were being made to strengthen the links with other unions in the British Commonwealth. The growingly important part which the trade unions play in public affairs—outside their own special field of wages, working conditions and social benefits for groups of wage-earners—renders this co-operation important for the whole future of the Commonwealth.

Of still larger importance is the leaguings of Parliamentarians in the Empire Parliamentary Union. The Union has organized many visits by groups of Members of the Parliaments of the British Commonwealth to other Commonwealth countries, where they have made intimate as well as corporate contact with their fellow Parliamentarians. Its periodical conferences have been occasions, not for mere congratulatory speechmaking and social jollification, but for serious discussion of issues of common concern and for speeches of major importance by Commonwealth statesmen like General Smuts and Mr. Mackenzie King. The Journal of the Parliaments of the Empire, which the Association publishes and circulates to its members, is a summary record of the debates of the Commonwealth's Parliaments, with special attention to foreign policy, Commonwealth relations and other issues of joint concern. Lord Altrincham (perhaps better known to the public as Sir Edward Grigg), with a great record of imperial service to give emphasis to

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his words, has long advocated a further strengthening of this Parliamentary bond, to the extent of holding regular meetings of the combined Parliaments, or their representatives (drawn from both sides of their Houses) of all those countries of the Commonwealth interested in each of three regions within which such joint parliamentary sessions would be held, namely, the Pacific, the Atlantic and Caribbean, and Africa. The sessions would have no legislative powers nor control over any Executive, but would discuss matters of common concern along the lines of a Debate on the Address.<sup>1</sup>

This proposal may seem beside the mark to those who accept the traditional interpretation of the British Constitution as comprising a Government whose business it is to execute and a Parliament whose business is to legislate. But Mr. Amery has put forward<sup>2</sup> a new view, according to which the separation of powers is rather between the power of leadership and the power of consent, each of which operates over the whole combined administrative and legislative field; the authorities in which these powers are vested in the Government and the people, are in continuous conference in Parliament. This highly convincing theory lends additional point to Lord Altrincham's constructive proposal. Moreover, it suggests a new and compelling rationale for a Commonwealth Council system such as that outlined in Chapter XII.

So far mention has been made only of organizations whose basic element is not imperial, although they may have an all-Commonwealth scope. To these are added a number of societies for the study of British Commonwealth Affairs and the furtherance of good relations among its members. Such is the nature of the Commonwealth that these societies tend always to become partly clubs. Thus the Royal Empire Society, for example, is not only a learned society for the study of British Commonwealth affairs, by the provision of a library both of books and of newspapers and periodicals from all over the Commonwealth, and by other such means; its headquarters are also a kind of club-house and bustling rendezvous for people from scores of Commonwealth countries.

Another Imperial society, the Victoria League, has a special part in this Fourth British Empire, because its whole business is in

<sup>1</sup> *The British Commonwealth*, by Sir Edward Grigg (Hutchinsons), ch. XVI.

<sup>2</sup> *Thoughts on the Constitution*, by the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery (Oxford U.P.).

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the realm of personal relations. Typical of its many activities are the provision of a colonial students' hostel and club in London and the arranging of private hospitality for visitors to the United Kingdom from oversea parts of the Commonwealth, and vice versa. It is essentially an organization of volunteers who believe in the value of the British Commonwealth, who realize that its life and health depend on a closely woven fabric of personal relations and personal feelings, and who are prepared to give time and trouble to strengthening them. The long list of Empire societies, which includes the Over-Seas League and the Dominion Services and Students Hospitality Scheme, varies from the learned to the propagandist. Some say there are too many; but the recent institution of the joint Empire Societies' Conference goes far towards avoiding overlapping and duplication of effort.

Finally, a word needs to be said of the capacity of commerce and industry to further personal relations in the British Commonwealth. Great business firms like the passenger shipping companies, Imperial Chemical Industries, the Imperial Tobacco Company and so on, are of course accountable for the movement, back and forth in the Empire, of many hundreds of employees or trade connections in a year. But there are many other branches of trade and industry in which business associations are for various reasons stronger within the Commonwealth than with foreign countries, and which give rise to an interchange, for short or long periods, of men (and often their families) from different countries of the Commonwealth, an interchange insignificant enough on the scale of a single concern or even a single branch of industry, but in the aggregate a powerful contribution towards mutual understanding and the sense of belonging together.

The important thing about all these personal connections is not merely that they exist but that on the whole they are growing and multiplying. They are the roots of the Fourth British Empire., Broadly, the soil conditions are in their favour. Modern inventions shorten distances and break down differences, though they do not automatically build up understanding—that depends on how they are used. The cinema provides a common language, not only of speech, but also of popular culture. The British film industry is now using this instrument to advantage; it is putting Britain—

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British idiom and British background—upon the screens of the oversea countries of the Commonwealth, and through the screens into the thoughts and parlance of their peoples; and with films like *49th Parallel* or *The Overlanders* it is doing the converse too.

Aviation shortens the distances that divide the Empire. This is not merely a question of saving time\*; more important, it saves the hiatus in experience that separates one country from the other when the intervening voyage is long. As a means of personal conveyance in the Empire it is only just beginning'. Summer holidays in Newfoundland or the Laurentians are already 'on the map' for Londoners as soon as we are allowed to pay for them, and the restrictions on travel to foreign countries have caused the tourist agencies to give special and fruitful attention to the possibilities of wintering in East Africa, the West Indies, or the British islands in the Mediterranean. In another way, air mail is helping people in the different parts of the Empire to be themselves to each other; personal news from Australia is all the more real because it happened last week instead of six or eight weeks ago. Broadcasting is another richly potential means of inter-connection.

All these means, however, have to be used. They need effort and imagination. They are not the builders of the Fourth British Empire but the builders' tools. They can be used to build one kind of structure or another; they can even be used to pull down. They are available, each after its kind, to strengthen international bonds as well as those among the Commonwealth family; but they have not yet so served with conspicuous success.

### COMMON STATUS

In the British Commonwealth they are indeed reinforced by a special asset. That is the common status of all subjects of the Crown. Empire citizens include 'British protected persons'—belonging to countries not taken under the direct authority of the Crown but only under its protection—as well as British subjects; but there is only one British subjecthood, however or wherever gained. The British Nationality Bill, introduced in February 1948 when this chapter was already in print, seeks to overcome the problems created by this concept when a number of independent member States prescribe or wish to prescribe differently the man-

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ner in which the common States may be acquired or lost, or superimpose upon it distinct national citizenships. There has been a real danger that they might come to challenge and, in effect, to supersede British subjecthood, and that the common status might gradually give way to a complex of separate nationalities.

The vital principles were thus set out by the Imperial Conference of 1930:

'1. The members of the Commonwealth are united by a common allegiance to the Crown. This allegiance is the basis of the common status possessed by all subjects of His Majesty. A common status directly recognized throughout the British Commonwealth has been given a statutory basis through the operation of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914.<sup>1</sup>

'2. If any changes are desired in the existing requirements for the common status, provision should be made for the maintenance of the common status, and the changes should only be introduced (in accordance with present practice) after consultation and agreement among the several members of the Commonwealth.

'3. It is for each member of the Commonwealth to define for itself its own nationals, but, so far as possible, those nationals should be persons possessing the common status, though it is recognized that local conditions or other special circumstances may from time to time necessitate divergences from this general principle.

'4. The possession of the common status in virtue of the law for the time being in force in any part of the Commonwealth should carry with it the recognition of that status by the law of every other part of the Commonwealth.'<sup>2</sup>

Seven years later—the Statute of Westminster and certain Dominion laws that flowed from it having intervened—the emphasis was less on the common status than on the separate classification as 'members of the community'<sup>5</sup> of each member nation. The suggestion was made that certain anomalies 'could be overcome if each of the Members of the Commonwealth were to undertake to introduce legislation defining its nationals or citizens'. Some Members, however, the United Kingdom in particular, were not then'

<sup>1</sup> Paras. 75 and 76 of the report of the Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation, etc., 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Section (b) of the report of the Committee on Inter-Imperial Relations, Imperial Conference, 1930.

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disposed to do so; and the conclusions reached were obliged to allow for alternative cases:

\* i. It is for each Member of the British Commonwealth to decide which persons have with it that definite connection . . . which would enable it to recognize them as members of its community. It is desirable, however, to secure as far as possible uniformity in principle in the determination by each Member of the Commonwealth of the persons, being British subjects, to be regarded as members of its community, and to avoid, as far as possible, the inconveniences which might arise if a particular person were to belong, at the same time, to two or more Members of the British Commonwealth\_\_\_\_

'Each Member of the Commonwealth would in the normal course include as members of its community:

'(0) Persons who were born in, or became British subjects by naturalization in, or as a result of the annexation of, its territory and still reside there, and

'(#) Persons who, coming as British subjects from other parts of the Commonwealth, have identified themselves with the community to which they have come.

'2. Those members of the Commonwealth which do not desire to proceed to a definition by legislation of the requirements for membership of their communities will consider giving effect administratively, in accepting responsibility for particular persons, to the principles contained in the foregoing paragraphs. . . .<sup>51</sup>

In spite of these affirmations of principle, the members of the Commonwealth were tending to diverge in their laws as to the acquisition and loss of what should have been a uniform, common status. In 1946 Canada passed the Canadian Citizenship Act, providing that while all Canadian citizens were British subjects, and all those who were British subjects anywhere in the Commonwealth were British subjects in Canada, not all British subjects in Canada were Canadian citizens. In February 1947 the problem was again submitted to a conference of Commonwealth experts, the first fruit of whose work was the British Nationality Bill.

The key clause in this measure (which is before Parliament at Westminster as this book goes to press) is that whereby everyone who is a citizen of the U.K. and colonies under the Bill itself, or of

<sup>1</sup> Imperial Conference, 1937: Summary of Proceedings. Section XIV (i).

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the other self-governing members of the Commonwealth under their laws, is a British subject. This clause has been agreed by all the self-governing members and they will presumably all introduce legislation to give it reciprocal effect. Thus the common status is fully preserved on the lines laid down by the Imperial Conference. At the same time the United Kingdom abandons the principle that British subjecthood and United Kingdom citizenship are the same thing; for not all British subjects will be U.K. citizens. Although the immediate practical effect may be slight, the change in principle is a grave one.

All this is much more than a matter of legal refinement or constitutional formula or imperial myth. It has implications and reactions of crucial importance in respect of personal intercourse and of that integration from the bottom up which is the essence of the Fourth British Empire. It makes a vast difference that friends and relations, though separated by vast distances, are not separated by nationality: that an Englishman can marry an Australian, or a Canadian marry a New Zealander, without any change in the nationality of any of them, or any complication about the nationality of the children; that within the Commonwealth we need passports only for identification when travelling (and not always then) but no visas, and can get new passports wherever we are; that, above all, we have no legal ground for feeling ourselves foreign to each other. It makes a vast difference, too, that we may interchange our State servants, whether civil or military, without reservations as to the disclosure of confidences to aliens, and that, indeed, the Imperial civil services and armed forces have been open to British subjects from all Commonwealth countries.

Any serious injury, therefore, to the form and practice of common status throughout the Commonwealth would be an injury to the vitals of the Fourth British Empire. Conversely, common status is the critical consideration for that enlargement of the Commonwealth circle which is often mooted. Indeed, is anything more needed? May we not conceive a relationship with a formerly foreign Power whereby our citizens and theirs would share a common status, so that they could travel freely within the combined frontiers, join each other's civil or armed services, and claim citizenship rights in each other's countries subject only to such quali-

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fications regarding period of residence as might be applied to all alike; yet without any common Government or common legislature, or any hindrance to full independence in internal or external affairs? The anomalies, obvious as they are, would hardly be greater than those inherent in the British Commonwealth connection itself, of which, indeed, the above is virtually a description.

Eire, regarded as a member of the British Commonwealth, has made a serious inroad upon the principle of the common status. She denies the common status of her own nationals and those of the United Kingdom or any other part of the Commonwealth, whereas in the United Kingdom and elsewhere the common status of natural-born Irish has hitherto been upheld in theory, however differently they might be treated in practice. Under the British Nationality Bill, the United Kingdom will compromise with the Irish view, by providing that citizens of Eire who were hitherto British subjects can retain their British subjecthood by claiming it on certain grounds. This is obviously of expiring effect, so that eventually the two citizenships will be entirely distinct, with no common status. Yet there is now no solid reason of principle on either side why a common status—so entitled—should not be reaffirmed by agreement between the two countries.

### CROWN AND PEOPLE

There is, of course, a reason, but it is not a solid one. As the 1930 Imperial Conference conclusions indicate, the common status is associated with the common Crown, and this is what Eire repudiates above all else in the Commonwealth scheme of things. But although British subjecthood derives historically from the concept of common allegiance to the British Crown, the continued association of subjecthood and monarchy is a matter of form and of terminology rather than substance. When we think of ourselves as British subjects we are thinking primarily of our superiority to others, not of our subjection to anybody. We might indeed just as well call ourselves, like the babu of legend, 'British objects'. 'British citizens' is as good a term as any: the traditional boast is '*civis Britannicus sum*'.

The concept of allegiance is not so easily disposed of. It is implicit in the interchange of secret information, or in the admission

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of each other's nationals to the public services. Here the Crown plays an invaluable constitutional role. Nevertheless it is essentially a symbolic one; for the Crown has no powers of defining or enforcing allegiance (e.g. through the criminal law on treason or betrayal of official secrets, or through laws compelling military or other public service) save those exercised in its name by the sovereign Parliaments and Governments of the Commonwealth. The Crown's symbolic role in this respect is consistent with that Irish Act which enables Eire to 'avail' herself of the Crown for external purposes. To reassert the common status of Englishmen and Irishmen, therefore, while requiring great adroitness of language, need violate none of the republican inhibitions of the Irish. It would certainly be a long step towards the unity of Ireland since the common status is something which the majority of the Six Counties will never forgo.

As has been suggested in Chapter VII, the value of the Crown to the Fourth British Empire is immensely enhanced by the part which the Royal Family themselves play in the complex of personal inter-connection. That they should know and be known by the countries and peoples of the Commonwealth beyond the seas is of the highest importance for the strength and endurance of the Empire's twentieth-century links. Nevertheless, while His Majesty the King is much more important than any of his subjects in this web of personal inter-connection, in the aggregate they are more important than he. It is the essential character of the Fourth British Empire that it is raised upon the thoughts and feelings of the ordinary people—the nameless masses of Britain, the Dominions and all the other countries of the Commonwealth. It cannot be saved by the oratory of statesmen or the ingenuity of bureaucrats. It is the work of the common people; it is our own trust and our responsibility.

# XIV

## THE EMPIRE IN THE WORLD

**T**he British Commonwealth or Empire is a thing-in-itself. It has a life and character of its own; its unity is 'organic\* in the proper sense in which a living organism has a unity, not the academic and misleading sense of 'constitutional'. But it exists only in the wider world, and lives or dies by its relationship with the rest of the society of nations.

It is often claimed that the great contribution which the Commonwealth has to make to world society is the example of its own loose yet effective organization. But that example is not readily followed by countries lacking the peculiar historical association out of which the Fourth British Empire has grown, nor indeed does it always seem to them very impressive, or likely to be serviceable to the varied host of states members of the United Nations. The more valuable immediate example is simply that of the attitude of mind which makes the Commonwealth system work: the attitude of tolerance. Without tolerance there can be no lasting peace, nor any effective organization for the maintenance of peace.

Looking around at the squabbling and intolerant world to-day, we may well be tempted to conclude that war is thus inevitable, and that the wisest statesman or country is the one that prepares for war most urgently and vigorously: But that conclusion of despair is the certain road to catastrophe. Once war is thought of as inevitable it becomes inevitable, if only because tolerance must founder between the Scylla of coercion and the Charybdis of appeasement. Neither coercion nor appeasement is in the vocabulary of British Commonwealth relations: they are absent because war is **not only** formally 'unthinkable' **but** actually never thought of,

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Hence there can be compromise without weakness, and plain speaking without conflict.

The condition that war is held unthinkable may seem beyond the grasp of the nations at large. But history shows that it can emerge very quickly, granted the right leadership. Possible war between the United States and Britain was mooted up to the end of the nineteenth century. After 1914, war between France and Britain became 'unthinkable', though only a decade earlier they had seemed on the brink of war. How lately has war between the United States and Mexico or other Latin-American Powers become unthinkable? It is only when we consider the widening range of the 'unthinkability of war' that we realize that there has been anything but deterioration in international relations during the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, there remains a vast area where war is 'thinkable' and tolerance is at a discount. What are the right role and policy of the nations of the Commonwealth in this dangerous world? Manifestly their first duty is to contribute their maximum strength to the task of their own defence and to the international aggregate of power which might overawe and deter a would-be war-maker. For, so long as war is not thought of as inevitable, to prepare for its possibility is an indispensable foundation for the sense of confidence which toleration requires and the eventual 'unthinkability' of war pre-supposes. This presents the British Commonwealth countries with a double duty: to be strong individually, and to be strong together. Much has been said in this book of the needs of collective security within and beyond the Commonwealth, and it need not be repeated. There is another aspect of policy, equally important, in which the British Commonwealth may have an even larger, and certainly more difficult, role to play in the avoidance of world war.

The great danger of world war at the present time, and for some time to come, obviously arises from the conflict between Communist Russia and the Western democratic world led by the United States. It is not the only danger, by any means, but it dwarfs all others. That conflict is different from the other international differences which have caused great wars in the past, though it is often exemplified in the same way—in struggles for

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territorial advantage, diplomatic and economic pressure on third parties, rising abuse and distrust on both sides. These are symptoms rather than causes. The underlying conflict is different because it derives, at root, from a mechanical and materialist theory of history, attributed—not entirely justly—to Karl Marx and adopted by the leaders of Russian Communist thought. According to this neo-Marxist ideology, competitive capitalism is bound to destroy itself, and to give way either to Fascism (the dictatorship of the capitalist State) or to Communism (the dictatorship of the proletariat). War may well be an incident of this metamorphosis, and certainly war between Fascist and Communist States, once established, is certain. From the neo-Marxist point of view, there is no escaping this dichotomous unfolding of history. Thus the inevitability of war, with the Soviet Union and her Communist associates as one of its principals, is qualified only by the chance that Communism may forestall Fascism in the metamorphosis of the capitalist democracies. -Either way, it behoves the Soviet Union to carry on a ceaseless effort to strengthen the tactical position both of itself as a nation State and of the Communist parties everywhere. For the front-line of the ideological war may become at any moment the vital fifth column in a world-wide Armageddon, the domestic front becoming the international front and vice versa.

The clashes and frictions to which this policy gives rise, wherever the Soviet Union and non-Communist nations meet, inevitably provoke an equal and opposite reaction. Charges of 'aggression', 'war-mongering', 'fascism', 'sabotage of the United Nations', are flung to and fro until the real issue is entirely obscured and forgotten. The real issue is simply whether or not the Communist theory of the future fate of capitalist democracy is right. If it is right, that is to say, if capitalism and democracy are in a state of unstable equilibrium bound to give way eventually either to Communism or to Fascism, perhaps pulling down the world about their ears in war in the process, then Mr. Molotov is wise in his generation, and so is the most militaristic anti-Communist in the United States. But if it is wrong, and can be proved wrong, then eventually its falseness will appear even to the Kremlin, and the whole face of world affairs will slowly but surely change.

In proving that it is wrong the nations of the Commonwealth

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can be a light in a dark world. The proof involves two themes: that differences in economic and political systems between two nations or groups of nations need not imply conflict between them on the diplomatic and military plane; and secondly that capitalist democracy is not moving inexorably towards either Fascism or Communism, but is a lively, durable and excellent order of society. The first of these themes incorporates the idea that the way to fight Communism is not on the military and international front, but on the domestic and ideological front—by showing, not that the democratic nations can outdo the communistic nations in preparations for war, let alone in the conduct of war, but simply that democracy is better than Communism. This is the static form of the second theme, that democracy has a live future independent of the rival totalitarianisms. But the dynamic form has an importance of its own; for democracy might conceivably be better than totalitarianism while it lasted, yet doomed to give way before long to one extreme of totalitarianism or the other.

In demonstrating those basic themes, the British Commonwealth has a special opportunity, for several reasons. Within its own community, it certainly exemplifies the truth that internal political and social differences need not prejudice friendly and co-operative external relations. That Socialist parties are in power or out of it in Australia, New Zealand, or the United Kingdom makes no calculable difference to the character of relations among the member States of the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, such party changes and contrasts, within the democratic parliamentary system, are of a different order from those between democracy and Communism or Fascism. Our domestic Socialist parties, for one thing, have not been serious missionaries abroad; they are essentially nationalist, and their external policies, when in power, have been based no less on appreciations of national interest than have those of their Conservative or Liberal counterparts. The contrast between Social-democracy and Communism is of a different order. Communism is a religion rather than a political programme; its ideals, its tests of right and wrong, are different from those of democracy; it is intolerant, and zealous in converting the unbeliever everywhere. That Communist and Democratic States can work together permanently in amity requires a more fundamental

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proof than the object-lesson of British Commonwealth relations, though we have the highest contemporary authority for believing that it is so.<sup>1</sup>

What needs to be demonstrated—and can be demonstrated only by practical experience—is how far Communist intolerance and proselytising zeal are themselves a by-product of the neo-Marxist doctrine that Social-democracy's manifest and ineluctable destiny to give way either to Communism or to militant, totalitarian anti-Communism. It is in disproving that doctrine by their example and progress that the nations of the British Commonwealth have their greatest task and opportunity in these dark days. They share the task with many other countries, but their opportunity is unique for a number of reasons.

The first reason is the exceptional social and political advantages enjoyed, at least by the European nations of the Commonwealth. They have flexible and adaptable constitutions. They have a great inheritance of political wisdom, experience and maturity. They are committed to no economic or political shibboleths which might fatally prejudice their adjustment to changing circumstances or eventually wreck their national solidarity. Their parties of the Left are not incurably doctrinaire, being heirs of the liberal parliamentary tradition; and Communism has so far made slight headway among their people. They have escaped the terrible social disruption of enemy occupation during the late war. They possess a wide variety of voluntary professional, charitable, and other institutions to reinforce democracy and resist the supremacy of the State as such. Their people possess both common sense and a sense of history. The ideal of a Christian family life is ever present to them. Though not all these things are true, or true in the same degree or the same way, of the new Asiatic, African, and West Indian nations or nations-to-be in the British Commonwealth, they, too, have absorbed and adapted many of the most valuable advantages of the British tradition, and, as will be suggested below, they have a special part of their own to play.

All these rich bequests of history might nevertheless be thrown away if democracy in the Commonwealth drifted into wrong

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Molotov in Moscow on the 30th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, 6th December 1944.

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courses, until it found itself uncontrollably racing, as the neo-Marxists predict, towards the cataract of Right or Left totalitarianism. That danger is present, whichever side may be in power in any particular country, and to guard against it requires constant vigilance among all parties and all sections of society. At the present time, the danger is most apparent on the Socialist side, and the non-Socialist parties appear as the chief defenders of freedom against the drift to totalitarianism; but there is no gain-saying that in different circumstances the roles might be reversed.

The Socialist threat to freedom is all too apparent in Britain to-day. It is most dangerously exemplified, not in the miscellaneous controls and regulations that are so vexing to their victims, so oppressive to enterprise, so burdensome in administrative costs, but in the steady inflation of the state as employer. Where, in any industry, the state has a monopoly, the trade unions are faced with a dilemma: either their old relationship with the employers shifts into a similar antagonism towards the state—a dangerous division of loyalties, threatening disruption of national solidarity—or they must seek to identify themselves with the state, which means identifying the state with the party that they support. Add to this menacing choice the fact that inflated state employment creates a growing vested interest in state control of the individual, because it means livelihood for millions and 'plums' for the few, and it becomes clear how real is the danger of totalitarianism by degrees, and how unwinking must be the vigilance of all, on both sides of politics, in the defence of that individual freedom which is the key to life for social democracy.

There is no cause for believing that the nations of the British Commonwealth will fail to find means of saving the freedom of the individual from state supremacy, and the true function of the state from class domination, even as they have overcome other troubles in their political development in the past. But to find such means is their crucial problem in the twentieth century; for unless they can solve it—unless methods can be devised and practised for applying community control over community economic life without admitting totalitarianism and class rule—then they will have failed in their task of disproving the Communist view of democracy's fate, and will thus have opened the road to world war.

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They can learn much from each other's mistakes and successes. We make too little use of our mutual experience. Moreover the very existence of the Commonwealth is a check to state-idolatry. The citizens of the Commonwealth find it just so much more repugnant to believe that government is everything because, while government is bounded by the nation, their loyalties and their concepts of community rights and duties are not.

But there is another reason why the British Commonwealth has a unique opportunity in this world-wide struggle for the life of social democracy. It is now a community of nations of different continents, colours, and creeds. It bears the main burden of disproving that part of the neo-Marxist case which alleges that capitalist democracy, in its restless search for markets and materials, must be imperialist in the sense of coercive oppression of subject peoples, and must eventually be destroyed by their revolt or by the wars between rival imperialisms. The new nations themselves, with the world all before them, have the vital role, in what is in truth the battle for the soul of man, of demonstrating that the ideal of a free democratic society is for them as righteous and as attainable as it is for the nations of the West. They have to show that their peculiar handicaps of differing races, castes, and religions, as well as the difficulties of the forced marches in economic advance that they have planned for themselves, can be overcome without yielding to the temptations of state dictatorship.

Finally, the British Commonwealth has the unique advantage and opportunity of its own corporate existence. The wars, and the post-war economic crisis, have shown in their own ways how much stronger is the group than its members. It is so in all spheres, and not least in the sphere of ideological conflict and consequent international heat. It is much easier for the nations of the Commonwealth to keep their heads in each other's company than in isolation. Moreover the value of their example to the rest of the world is vastly greater for their being, together, a great bloc of peoples and power. To leave the hegemony of the world to the rivalry of two great unions—the American and the Soviet—is to depreciate the currency of their own influence. To stand together as a third Great Power may well be the only way for them to avert another terrible holocaust.

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