Sri Aurobindo and the Cripps Mission to India

(March- April 1942)
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Draft of Cripps Declaration for Discussion with Indian Leaders
(as published)

30 March 1942
The conclusions of the British War Cabinet as set out below are those which Sir Stafford Cripps has taken with him for discussion with the Indian Leaders and the question as to whether they will be implemented will depend upon the outcome of these discussions which are now taking place.

His Majesty's Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfillment of the promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.

His Majesty's Government therefore make the following declaration:

(a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.
(b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body.
(c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the Constitution so framed subject only to:
   (i) the right of any Province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

With such non-acceding Provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new Constitution, giving them
the same full status as Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

(ii) the signing of a Treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This Treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities; but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in the future its relationship to the other Member State of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its Treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation.

(d) the constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities:

Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college. Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of the representatives of British India as a whole, and with the same powers as the British Indian members.

(e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new Constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the
defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.
On the Cripps Proposal

1- Message to Cripps

To Sir Stafford Cripps,
New Delhi

I have heard your broadcast. As one who has been a nationalist leader and worker for India’s independence though now my activity is no longer in the political but in the spiritual field, I wish to express my appreciation of all you

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1 After his retirement from active politics in 1910, Sri Aurobindo turned down all offers to rejoin the national movement or to play any other role in politics. The seriousness of the situation during World War II caused him to speak out in favour of the Cripps Proposal of 1942. Later, on request, he issued messages on two other British initiatives: the Wavell Plan and the Cabinet Mission Proposals.

2 In March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps (1889–1952), a Labour member of the War Cabinet, came to India with a proposal from the British government. Indian leaders were invited to take part in the councils of war, and were promised a constitution-making assembly after the cessation of hostilities. Cripps announced the details of the proposal in a radio talk of 30 March 1942.

Sri Aurobindo responded in several ways. [1] On 31 March, he sent a telegram to Cripps endorsing the proposal and offering his “public adhesion”. Cripps replied to Sri Aurobindo in a telegram of 1 April 1942.

Sri Aurobindo’s telegram was published in many newspapers and reproduced in the pamphlet *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949) and subsequently. [2] On 1 April, Sri Aurobindo sent his disciple S. Duraiswami, a prominent advocate of Madras, to Delhi to speak to members of the Congress Working Committee: Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, C. Rajagopalachari and others. He gave Duraiswami this letter authorising him to speak on his behalf. [3 and 4] On 2 April, Sri Aurobindo telegraphed Dr. B. S. Moonje, a former nationalist colleague, now head of the Hindu Mahasabha, and C. Rajagopalachari, the Congress leader of Madras. [5 and 6] On 9 April and again on a later date, Sri Aurobindo telegraphed his old revolutionary associate Amarendra Chatterjee, now a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, who had written, asking him to play a more active role.
have done to bring about this offer. I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine for herself and organise in all liberty of choice her freedom and unity and take an effective place among the world’s free nations. I hope that it will be accepted and the right use made of it putting aside all discords and divisions.

I hope too that a friendly relation between Britain and India replacing past struggles will be a step towards a greater world union in which as a free nation her spiritual force will contribute to build for mankind a better and happier life. In this light I offer my public adhesion in case it can be of any help in your work.

Sri Aurobindo
The Asram
Pondicherry
31 March 1942

2- Sir Stafford Cripps’s telegram in reply, dated 1 April 1942:

I AMMOST TOUCHED AND GRATIFIED BY YOUR KIND MESSAGE ALLOWING ME TO INFORM INDIA THAT YOU WHO OCCUPY UNIQUE POSITION IN IMAGINATION OF INDIAN YOUTH ARE CONVINCED THAT DECLARATION OF HIS MAJESTY’S GOVERNMENT SUBSTANTIALLY CONFERS THAT FREEDOM FOR WHICH INDIAN NATIONALISM HAS SO LONG STRUGGLED.

STAFFORD CRIPPS

3- Note Duraiswami Iyer
In view of the urgency of the situation I am sending Mr. Duraiswami Iyer to
convey my views on the present negotiations and my reasons for pressing on
Indian leaders the need of a settlement. He is accredited to speak for me.3

Sri Aurobindo
April 1. 1942

4- Telegram to Dr. B. S. Moonje4

DR MOONJE HINDU MAHASABHA NEW DELHI
SETTLEMENT INDIA BRITAIN URGENT, FACE APPROACH GRAVE PERIL
MENACING FUTURE INDIA. IS THERE NO WAY WHILE RESERVING RIGHT
REPUDIATE RESIST PARTITION MOTHERLAND TO ACCEPT COOPERATION
PURPOSEWAR INDIA UNION. CANNOT COMBINATION MAHASABHA
CONGRESS NATIONALIST AND ANTI-JINNAH MUSLIMS DEFEAT LEAGUE IN
ELECTIONS BENGAL PUNJAB SIND.
HAVE SENT ADVOCATE DURAISWAMI IYER TO MEET YOU.

SRI AUROBINDO
2 April 1942

5- Telegram to C. Rajagopalachari

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3 Sri Aurobindo gave this note to his disciple Duraiswami Iyer, an advocate of Madras, whom
he sent to Delhi to speak with members of the Congress Working Committee about the
Cripps Proposal.—Ed.

4 B. S. Moonje (1872 – 1948) was a medical practitioner and political activist of Nagpur.
When Sri Aurobindo knew him in 1907–8, Moonje was one of the leaders of the Nationalist
or Extremist Party. (Later he helped to found the Hindu Mahasabha)
Sri Aurobindo stayed with Moonje when he visited Nagpur in January 1908. Twelve years
later, Moonje and others invited Sri Aurobindo to preside over the forthcoming Nagpur
session of the Indian National Congress. In letter [1], dated 30 August 1920, Sri Aurobindo
set forth his reasons for declining this honour. [2] In this telegram, date-stamped on arrival
19 September 1920, he reiterated his decision.
RAJAGOPALACHARI BIRLA HOUSE NEW DELHI
IS NOT COMPROMISE DEFENCE QUESTION BETTER THAN RUPTURE. SOME
IMMEDIATE SETTLEMENT URGENT FACE GRAVE PERIL. HAVE SENT
DURAISWAMI INSIST URGENCY. APPEAL TO YOU TO SAVE INDIA
FORMIDABLE DANGER NEW FOREIGN DOMINATION WHEN OLD ON WAY TO
SELF-ELIMINATION.

SRI AUROBINDO
2 April 1942

6- Telegram to Amarendra Chatterjee
AMARENDRA CHATTERJEE M.L.A., DELHI
UNABLE LEAVE PONDICHERRY. AWAITING CONGRESS DECISION
NECESSARY FOR TOTAL NATIONAL ACTION. HAVE APPEALED PRIVATELY
CONGRESS LEADERS FOR UNDERSTANDING WITH BRITAIN AND FIGHT
DEFENCE INDIA.

Sri Aurobindo
April 9. 1942

7- Second telegram to Amarendra Chatterjee
MY BLESSINGS ON YOUR EFFORTS TO SERVE AND DEFEND MOTHERLAND
NOW IN DANGER.

Sri Aurobindo
Along with the European war, India's political problem naturally played a prominent part in our discussion. Mahatma Gandhi's attitude, the Congress policy, the Hindu-Muslim problem, Jinnah's intransigence and the Viceroy's role as the peace-maker, all this complicated politics and our Himalayan blunders leading to the rejection of the famous Cripps' Proposals, were within our constant purview.... The upshot of the whole discussion till the arrival of the Cripps' Mission can be put in a few words: the Congress made a big mistake by resigning from the Ministry. The Government was ready to offer us Dominion Status which we should have accepted, for it was virtually a step towards independence. We should have joined the war-effort. That would have created an opportunity to enter into all military departments and operations in air, on sea and land; hold positions, become efficient and thus enforce our natural right for freedom.

When Gandhi complained that the Viceroy did not say anything in reply to all his questions, Sri Aurobindo said to us in one of our talks on October 7th, 1940: "What will he say? It is very plain why he did not. First of all, the Government doesn't want to concede the demand for independence. What it is willing to give is Dominion Status after the War, expecting that India will settle down into a common relationship with the Empire. But just now a national government will virtually mean Dominion Status with the Viceroy only as a constitutional head. Nobody knows what the Congress will do after it gets power. It may be occupied only with India's defence and give such help as it can spare to England. And if things go wrong with the British, it may even make a separate peace leaving them in the lurch. There are Left
Wingers, Socialists, Communists whom the Congress won't be able to bring to its side, neither will it dare to offend them and if their influence is sufficiently strong, the Congress may stand against the British. Thus it is quite natural for them not to part with power just now as it is also natural for us to make our claims. But since we haven't got enough strength to back us, we have to see if we have any common meeting ground with the Government. If there is, a compromise is the only practical step. There was such an opportunity, but the Congress spoiled it. Now you have to accept what you get or I don't know what is going to happen. Of course, if we had the strength and power to make a revolution and get what we want, it would be a different matter. Amery and others did offer Dominion Status at one time. Now they have changed their position because they have come to know the spirit of our people. Our politicians have some fixed ideas and they always go by them. Politicians and statesmen have to take account of situations and act as demanded by them. They must have insight."

"But it is because of the British divide-and-rule policy that we can't unite," we parried.

"Nonsense! "6 Sri Aurobindo rebuffed. "Was there unity in India before the British rule?... Does Jinnah want unity? His very character shows what he wants independence for the Muslims and rule over India if possible. The old spirit."

In the impasse created partially by the bankruptcy of the Congress policy, Providence came to the rescue in the form of the Cripps' Proposals which, if accepted, would have changed the fate of India. But the forces of distrust, discontent and wanting everything at once, led to a failure to see the substance of Swaraj, as Sri Aurobindo has said, in the offer. There was a

6 Sri Aurobindo meant not that the British never followed the policy of divide-and-rule, but that divisions were already there for them to take advantage of and increase.
pother about small points and overlooking of the central important objective
to be attained. Sri Aurobindo found in the proposal a fine opportunity for the
solution of India's intricate problems and her ultimate liberation. We may
note that the proposals envisaged a single, free, undivided India setting up a
united front against the enemy. He promptly sent a message to Sir Stafford
Cripps welcoming the Proposals and recommended their acceptance to the
Indian leaders. The message was as follows: "I have heard your broadcast.
As one who has been a nationalist leader and worker for India's
Independence, though now my activity is no longer in the political but in the
spiritual field, I wish to express my appreciation of all you have done to bring
about this offer. I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine
for herself, and organise in all liberty of choice, her freedom and unity and
take an effective place among the world's free nations. I hope that it will be
accepted, and right use made of it, putting aside all discords and divisions. I
hope too that friendly relations between Britain and India replacing the past
struggles, will be a step towards a greater world union in which, as a free
nation, her spiritual force will contribute to build for mankind a better and
happier life. In this light, I offer public adhesion, in case it can be of any help
to your work."
Sir Stafford Cripps replied, "I am most touched and gratified by your kind
message allowing me to inform India that you, who occupy a unique position
in the imagination of Indian youth, were convinced that the declaration of His
Majesty's Government substantially confers that freedom for which Indian
Nationalism has so long struggled."
Sri Aurobindo also sent messages through Mr. Shiva Rao to Mahatma Gandhi
and Pandit Nehru that Cripps' offer should be accepted unconditionally.
Lastly, he sent his envoy to Delhi to appeal to the Congress leaders for its
acceptance, for sanity and wisdom to prevail. At this crucial moment Sri
Aurobindo could not remain a passive witness to the folly that was about to
be committed. His seer-vision saw that the Proposals had come on a wave of
divine inspiration. The scene is still fresh in our memory. It was the evening hour. Sri Aurobindo was sitting on the edge of his bed just before his daily walking exercise. All of us were present; Duraiswamy, the distinguished Madras lawyer and disciple, was selected as the envoy, perhaps because he was a friend of Rajagopalachari, one of the prominent Congress leaders. He was to start for Delhi that very night. He came for Sri Aurobindo's blessings, lay prostrate before him, got up and stood looking at the Master with folded hands and then departed.

He was carrying with him an urgent appeal by Sri Aurobindo to the Congress Working Committee. Sisir Kumar Mitra reports in The Liberator, "the viewpoints which Sri Aurobindo instructed his envoy to place before the Congress leaders... (1) Japan's imperialism being young and based on industrial and military power and moving westward, was a greater menace to India than the British imperialism which was old, which the country had learnt to deal with and which was on the way to elimination. (2) It would be better to get into the saddle and not be particular about the legal basis of the power. Once the power came into our hands and we occupied seats of power, we could establish our positions and assert ourselves. (3) The proposed Cabinet would provide opportunities for the Congress and the Muslims to understand each other and pull together for the country's good, especially at that time of the crisis. (4) The Hindu Mahasabha also being represented, the Hindus, as such would have a chance of proving their capacity to govern India not only for the benefit of the Hindus but for the whole country. (5) The main problem was to organise the strength of India in order to repel the threatened aggression."

We may remind ourselves of Talthysbius's mission to Troy in Sri Aurobindo's epic poem Ilion: Achilles made an offer by which Troy would be saved and the honour of the Greeks would be preserved, a harmonising offer, but it was rejected. Similarly, Duraiswamy went with India's soul in his "frail" hands and brought it back, downhearted, rewarded with ungracious remarks for the
gratuitous advice. Sri Aurobindo even sent a telegram to Rajagopalachari and Dr. Munje urging them to accept the Proposals. Dr. Indra Sen writes, "We met the members individually and the sense of the reactions were more or less to this effect: Sri Aurobindo has created difficulties for us by his message to Cripps. He doesn't know the actual situation, we are in it, we know better... and so on." Cripps flew back a disappointed man but with the consolation and gratified recognition that at least one great man had welcomed the idea. When the rejection was announced, Sri Aurobindo said in a quiet tone, "I knew it would fail." We at once pounced on it and asked him, "Why did you then send Duraiswamy at all?" "For a bit of niskama karma," was his calm reply, without any bitterness or resentment. The full spirit of the kind of "disinterested work" he meant comes out in an early letter of his - (December 1933), which refers to his spiritual work: "I am sure of the results of my work. But even if I still saw the chance that it might come to nothing (which is impossible), I would go on unperturbed, because I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do, and what is so done always counts in the economy of the universe." After the War, the Labour Government of U.K. sent a Cabinet Mission to India in 1946 for fresh

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7 Disinterested work the essence of which is that the work is inwardly dedicated to the Divine with no attachment to the result.

"In the field of action desire takes many forms, but the most powerful of all is the vital self's craving or seeking after the fruit of our works. The fruit we covet may be a reward of internal pleasure; it may be the accomplishment of some preferred idea or some cherished will or the satisfaction of the egoistic emotions, or else the pride of success of our highest hopes and ambitions. Or it may be an external reward, a recompense entirely material,—wealth, position, honour, victory, good fortune or any other fulfilment of vital or physical desire. But all alike are lures by which egoism holds us. Always these satisfactions delude us with the sense of mastery and the idea of freedom, while really we are harnessed and guided or ridden and whipped by some gross or subtle, some noble or ignoble, figure of the blind Desire that drives the world. Therefore the first rule of action laid down by the Gita is to do the work that should be done without any desire for the fruit, niskama karma." (Sri Aurobindo Centenary Collection, Volume 23-24, The Synthesis of Yoga, Page: 102).
talks. Asked to give his views on the mission by *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a leading daily in the country, Sri Aurobindo said: "Sri Aurobindo thinks it unnecessary to volunteer a personal pronouncement... His position is known. He has always stood for India's complete independence which he was the first to advocate publicly and without compromise as the only ideal worthy of a self-respecting nation. In 1910 he authorised the publication of his prediction that after a long period of wars, world-wide upheavals and revolutions beginning after four years, India would achieve her freedom. Lately he has said that freedom was coming soon and nothing could prevent it. He has always foreseen that eventually Britain would approach India for an amicable agreement, conceding her freedom. What he had foreseen is now coming to pass and the British Cabinet Mission is the sign. It remains for the nation's leaders to make a right and full use of the opportunity. In any case, whatever the immediate outcome, the Power that has been working out this event will not be denied, the final result, India's liberation, is sure." We know the aftermath of the rejection of the Cripps' Proposals as well as the failure of the Cabinet Mission: confusion, calamity, partition, blood-bath, etc., and the belated recognition of the colossal blunder. Then when the partition had been accepted as a settled fact, Sri Aurobindo's "bardic" voice was heard once again, "But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future." Past events have justified Sri Aurobindo's solemn warning and recent events point to the way to liquidation of that division.\(^8\)

Let me again draw upon the fellow-sadhak from whom I have already quoted. He brings out the Mother's stand on the Cripps-question: "Then came the famous Cripps' Proposals. In the evening Sir Stafford Cripps

\(^8\) We are happy to see that Sri Aurobindo's prediction has been half-fulfilled, for Bangla Desh (East Pakistan) is now entirely independent.
broadcast his Proposals to the Indian people, from Delhi; they were
discussed everywhere. In P's room the radio was installed and a connection
made to Sri Aurobindo's room so that he might listen to the war-news and
reports from all quarters of the globe, except from the Axis zones.

"The next day at about 2 p.m., after the All India Radio news at 1.30, there
was a hot discussion among three sadhaks, including P, in his room. P took
the standpoint of the purely spiritual man, who judges by looking at what is
behind appearances. It seemed that he had already spoken with the Mother
and thus was arguing forcefully for the acceptance of the Proposals. The
second person was an experienced politician of the Gandhian Congress days
and took the negative position. He argued the pros and cons of the Proposals
and was of the opinion that the Indian leaders would reject them. The third,
a novice, with no political experience, was more for its acceptance. The
discussion became hotter and hotter, so much so that the Mother, while
going from Her bath-room to Her dressing room, was attracted by the
unusual volume of sound. She did not enter Her dressing room, but turned
Her steps towards P's room. Before entering there, She heard part of the
argument. Then She stepped in and asked, `What is it all about?' P said that
one person argued that Cripps' offer would not be accepted by the Indian
leaders. The Mother felt amused and inquired, `Why?' By then She had sat
on the chair that was in front of Her. It was a very unusual and interesting
scene; the Mother, still in Her beautiful Japanese kimono just out of the
bath, didn't seem to care to change Her dress, and was more interested in
the arguments against the acceptance. Then She began to talk with a very
calm and distinct voice. One could see that She who had entered a few
minutes ago had been transported somewhere else and the voice was
coming from that plane....

"She said something to this effect: `One should leave the matter of the
Cripps' offer entirely in the hands of the Divine, with full confidence that the
Divine will work everything out. Certainly there were flaws in the offer.
Nothing on earth created by man is flawless, because the human mind has a limited capacity. Yet behind this offer there is the Divine Grace directly present. The Grace is now at the door of India, ready to give its help. In the history of a nation such opportunities do not come often. The Grace presents itself at rare moments, after centuries of preparation of that nation, If it is accepted, the nation will survive and get a new birth in the Divine's consciousness. But if it is rejected the Grace will withdraw and then the nation will suffer terribly, calamity will overtake it.

"Only some months ago, the same Grace presented itself at the door of France, immediately after the fall of Dunkirk, in the form of Churchill's offer to her to have joint nationality with England and fight the enemy. Sri Aurobindo said that it was the right idea, and it would also have helped His work immensely. But France could not raise herself above the ordinary mind, and rejected it. So the Grace withdrew and the Soul of France has gone down. One doesn't know when the real France will be up again.

"But India with her background of intense spiritual development through the ages, must realise the Grace that is behind this offer. It is not simply a human offering. Of course its form has been given by the human mind, and it has elements of imperfection in it. But that does not matter at all. Have faith in the Grace and leave everything to the Divine who will surely work it out.

"My ardent request to India is that she should not reject it. She must not make the same mistake that France has done recently and that has plunged her into the abyss.

"As soon as She had finished speaking She hurried back to Her dressing room, without a word or a look at anybody. Later, on the same day, the first of April, 1942, when She returned from the Prosperity after the distribution, She disclosed that Sri Aurobindo had already sent a telegram to Sir Stafford, and the latter had reciprocated very heartily, and both the telegrams were being put on the notice board by Nolini. We then read the messages and
were very much encouraged.
"But the next day or the day after it, the Congress announced that it had rejected the offer. The Mother was quite unperturbed; She only said, `Now calamity will befall India."
"The events that followed in India right up to now need no mention. We have been paying all along for our mistake."
The next issue, if not so great in magnitude, was the Japanese aggression. Japan, like a minor Hitler, had established its supremacy in the East. But Sri Aurobindo had never taken Japan's aggression very seriously. On the contrary, he once remarked that should Hitler become supreme in the West and turn his forces towards the East, Japan's power might be useful in confronting Hitler and checking his advance. This remark supporting as it were Japan's blaze of imperial conquest baffled me at the time. Did he want Japan's rise to serve as a counterblast to Hitler's problematic thrust towards the East? Or could it be read as a move to force America into the War? At any rate it was quite evident from our talks that Japan's dramatic conquests did not disturb him, as did Hitler's. But it was only when Japan's design on India, aided by some of our misguided patriots, was palpably clear, that Sri Aurobindo, as he himself avowed, used his spiritual Force against Japan and "had the satisfaction of seeing the tide of Japanese victory which had till then swept everything before it, change immediately into a tide of rapid, crushing and finally immense and overwhelming defeat". We heard of the Japanese bombing of Calcutta and Vishakhapatnam, we also heard that Japanese warships had come to the Indian Ocean at Trincomali and the next information that reached us almost immediately was that they had exploded and sunk before they had time to invade India! In the North-East the I.N.A.\(^9\) with the Japanese army at its back was triumphantly marching into Assam. The Indian army seemed to be in a panicky retreat, and the British

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\(^9\) The Indian National Army of Subhash Bose.
Government, counting its imperial glory to be almost at an end, was preparing to leave India. The then Governor of Bengal seemed to have said at a cabinet meeting, "This time the game is up." When the words were reported to Sri Aurobindo he remarked, "Now the wheel will turn." For the Allies the situation at that moment was desperate everywhere, in Africa, in India, in Europe.

At this jubilant moment of the enemy, India's destiny intervened. A heavy downpour from heaven inundated the dense Assam jungles for days together, so that, bogged in the flood and mud, the invading army with its liberation force had to liberate itself from the wrath of Nature and beat an ignominious retreat. Yet rain during that season had never been heard of before.

In this context let us quote what the Mother said to a sadhak in 1927, when he asked how India was likely to get freedom. The Mother's prophetic reply was, "When a Japanese warship will come to the Indian Ocean." In fact, the Mother had visioned India's Independence in 1920. It was when she and Sri Aurobindo were in meditation, and she reached a state of consciousness from which she told Sri Aurobindo: "India is free." Sri Aurobindo: How? The Mother: Without any fight, without a battle, without a revolution. The English themselves will leave, for the condition of the world will be such that they won't be able to do anything else except go away.

It took twenty-seven years for that vision of the truth-plane to actualise itself on the material plane. In those early days the Mother used to pay special visits to the rooms of the sadhaks. One day A asked her, "How is India likely to get freedom?" She replied, "Listen! The British did not conquer India. You yourselves handed over the country to the British. In the same manner the British will themselves hand over the country to you. And they will do it in a hurry as if a ship were waiting to take them away."10 How true was the

prophecy!

Today the achievement of India's freedom is attributed to various factors: the August movement, Non-cooperation, the Terrorist movement, the I.N.A. and others; the factor that played the decisive part is either not admitted or ignored altogether. From Sri Aurobindo's pronouncements we can assert that his Force was principally responsible for the success of the Allies and the defeat of the Japanese, thereby helping India to gain her freedom. In fact, India's freedom had been his constant dream from his very boyhood. Even during his intense sadhana in Pondicherry, it was always in his mind and he indefatigably worked for it in the yogic way till he became convinced that freedom was inevitable. As far back as 1935, when I asked him if he was working for India's freedom, he replied, "That is all settled, it is a question of working out only.... It is what she will do with her independence that is not arranged for - and so it is that about which I have to bother."
With the westward advance of Japan into Asia, the atmosphere in India deteriorated in a disturbing manner. Exaggerated fears had driven thousands of people from Calcutta and other cities and fantastic rumours were in the air. The weakness of the Far Eastern defences, especially in Malaya, had shaken public confidence and the arrival of refugees from Burma and other places, with their tales of woe and suffering, had shocked the complacency built by generations of security.

Singapore fell on 15 February 1942; Rangoon was taken on 8 March, and in the words of Churchill, `the shadow of a heavy and far reaching military defeat' lay over India.

The seriousness of the war situation was brought closer home by the visit of Marshal Chiang Kai-shek and his wife, to India in February 1942. The Marshal had come to confer with the Government of India and in particular the Commander in-Chief, on matters of common concern to China and India. He was able to meet several prominent leaders, including Gandhiji and Jinnah, and to renew his acquaint once with Nehru, who had visited China in autumn of 1939. At the end of his visit, Marshal Chiang Kai-shek made an appeal to the people of India for help in the war, adding hope that Britain would as speedily as possible give `real political power' to the Indian people.

The exigencies of the war created a demand in Britain and the United States of America for a new declaration of policy towards India. Churchill himself formulated a scheme, which it was his intention to broadcast in the form of
an appeal to the Indian people. The broad outlines of his draft appeal were as follows:

In India's grave danger all must unite to save her and must lay aside controversies.

No far-reaching changes in the executive government can be contemplated at this time.

India's best and most representative men from every community, party and province, as well as the Princes, should come forward to serve India and to lay the foundations for a new future based on India's complete freedom to control her own destiny within, it is hoped and believed, the fellowship of the British Commonwealth.

To this end, the Government would set up an Indian Council of Defence, to be elected by some form of proportional representation by existing members of provincial lower houses. Representatives of the Indian States in due proportion would be added to these British-Indian representatives. This Council would during the war be charged with helping the war effort in regard to munitions production, recruitment, organising A.R.P. and steadying public morale.

It would nominate for inclusion in the Viceroy's Executive Council a representative of the people of India who would attend meetings of the British War Cabinet and the Pacific War Council. Similarly, it would nominate a representative, or representatives, to the Peace Conference.

After the war, it would work out a new constitution for India. Its main conclusions on the constitution would be (in their nature and procedure for reaching them) an expression of the desire of the people of India as a whole. His Majesty's Government would accept a constitution so arrived at and would negotiate with the Council in regard to the fulfilment of British obligations.
In commenting the scheme to the Viceroy, the Secretary of State pointed out how it left the executive and legislative position untouched. It proposed a popularly-elected Defence Council with representation on the War Cabinet in London, the Pacific Council and the Peace Conference, while it purported to fulfil His Majesty's Government's pledge of bringing Indian parties together on the constitutional issue by offering to accept this Council as the future constituent body. Such a plan provided an instrument for the eventual solution of the constitutional problem on lines which the Congress could not denounce as undemocratic and which His Majesty's Government could put before the Muslims and the Princes as being in keeping with its Declaration of August 1940. The Secretary of State hoped that the scheme would be generally acceptable at a time when danger to India herself was so obvious. The Viceroy would be able to go on with his Executive Council, possibly expanded, and with a larger and perhaps better consultative body which, while perhaps more openly critical than the existing National Defence Council, might also be more effective in promoting the war effort throughout the provinces. Even if the scheme were condemned by the main political parties, its rejection could throw no discredit on His Majesty's Government; it was more likely to show its goodwill and expose the unreasonableess of the Indian parties.

But the Viceroy felt that it was not possible for him to agree to the scheme. His chief objection to it was that his Executive Council would either be subservient to, or in dangerous conflict with, the new body it proposed to set up; also that it would precipitate the whole constitutional and communal controversy into the conduct of the war and the day-to-day government. The proposed plan would, he was convinced, infect the army with communal fever of the most catastrophic kind.

The Viceroy put forward a rough sketch of an alternative form of declaration on the following lines:
(a) That His Majesty's Government make no insistence on provisions in the post war constitution of India for safeguarding British interests as such. These would be the subject of negotiation after the war.

(b) That His Majesty's Government regard their obligations as separate from British interests, and construe those obligations as requiring them to see that full power is transferred to a government under which different races, communities and interests in India have the prospect of living without fear.

(c) The viceroy will renew his attempts to bring together the leaders of parties in order that both his Executive Council and the governments in the provinces might, within the framework of the existing constitution, enjoy the overwhelming support of the people of India. The position of official members would be one of those questions which the Viceroy would be prepared to discuss round the table as a practical problem of administration with his potential colleagues in a national government. The position of the Commander in-Chief must remain unimpaired but a nonofficial member might be associated much more closely with the problems of coordination of Defence.

(d) The control of the India Office will be exercised with a progressively lighter hand.

(e) India's representatives in the War Cabinet and the Pacific War Council shall be instructed from India; British Indian representatives at the Peace Conference shall be nominated and be directly responsible to a government in India.

(f) That His Majesty's Government stand by their pledges to afford to a body representative of the interests and communities of India the fullest opportunity to devise the framework of a constitution after the war. That His Majesty's Government undertake to accept in advance any constitution so framed representing the will and desire of India as a whole.
Lord Linlithgow's personal view was that the practical help in winning the war likely to be gained by a successful declaration was limited. He was not sanguine that his sketch declaration would either win over or split the Congress, while it would run the risk of upsetting the Muslims, the Europeans and the Services. He would have preferred to postpone a declaration until the military situation had become clearer. He had considered the possibility of making a firm declaration about post war constitutional progress without, for the moment, going beyond that expansion of his Executive Council which had already been under discussion with the Secretary of State. But if the new offer proved acceptable and leading politicians were prepared to co-operate, they would have to be taken in. Lord Linlithgow felt that any transfer of power would have to be effective and that the risks would have to be taken with open eyes; that such transfer should be based on the existing organs and machinery of government, Parliament retaining eventual control to ensure that His Majesty's Government would be in a position after the war to discharge its obligations as defined, and that during the interim period the Viceroy should be supported in resisting any developments that might impede the war effort. Co-operation between British India and the States was essential and it was equally essential to ensure that His Majesty's Government did not break its pledges to the Princes, Muslims and other minorities.

With regard to the problem of reconstructing his Executive Council, Lord Linlithgow was emphatic in his view that the discontinuance of official membership should not be promised as part of any declaration, having regard to the enormous burden which would be thrown upon any one man who held the office of Governor General and Crown Representative, with the addition of an active cabinet of politicians with no practical conception of the difference between policy and administration.

Due weight was given to Lord Linlithgow's views and the proposed broadcast was deferred. Subsequently, Churchill set up a special India Committee of
the Cabinet under the chairmanship of Attlee, with the Secretary of State, Viscount Simon, Sir John Anderson, Sir Stafford Cripps and Sir James Grigg as members. This Committee decided to abandon the original scheme and proposed a new form of declaration, the principal features of which were:

(a) Explicit acknowledgment that the future Indian Dominion can secede if it so wishes; (b) setting up of the most suitable future constitution-making body immediately after the war if Indians had not previously come to an agreement on the subject themselves; (c) option to any province not wishing to accede to the new constitution to stand out;\textsuperscript{11} (d) the whole field of British obligations, as well as such continued military assistance as India might need, to be dealt with by a separate treaty to be concluded with the constitution-making body and to come into force simultaneously with the new constitution; (e) the negotiation of revised treaty arrangements with Indian States.

Lord Linlithgow's preliminary reaction was that the revised draft scheme had certain commendable features. It had the advantage of leaving intact the pledges in the Declaration of August 1940 without the necessity of repeating them in the same or different terms; it contained clear promises without any specific commitments, such as the replacement during the war of an Executive Council of selected and representative individuals by one of a purely political complexion. But he had himself fought shy of advertising local option. This was almost certain to produce protests from the Bengal and Punjab Hindus, from the Sikhs, and probably also from the Bengal Muslims. He was nevertheless prepared to take the risk for the sake of a precise and brief declaration which did not tie his hands in advance regarding the

\textsuperscript{11} This was intended to placate the Muslim League. It was based on the provision in the Government of India Act, 1935, governing the accession of Indian States
immediate future of the Executive Council. Lord Linlithgow thought that the Indian States should also have a free choice to adhere or not to adhere to the Union.

Following an exchange of telegrams on certain controversial details, the Viceroy received from the Secretary of State the text of a draft declaration `as finally revised' by the Indian Committee of the Cabinet. The Viceroy had in the meantime taken the opportunity of consulting the Commander-in-Chief and of obtaining the views of provincial Governors. In the light of their reactions, he felt bound to re-define his position. It had been stressed that the `local option' proposal, while it adequately met the case of Muslims in the provinces in which they were in the majority, was no substitute for existing pledges in the eyes of Muslims elsewhere (e.g. in the United Provinces, where communal feeling was bitter), or of the other minorities, such as the Sikhs, Scheduled Castes and backward communities, who also regarded the undertakings given in August 1940 as a charter of their rights: Local option would be interpreted as the acceptance of Pakistan and the effect would be particularly bad on the Punjab. The prospect of a predominantly Muslim and independent Punjab would seriously upset the Sikhs. In time, local option would threaten the internal security of the Punjab, would affect the Services and would grievously damage the capacity to wage war Lord Linlithgow therefore felt it necessary to warn His Majesty's Government against the consequences of a precise declaration of local option in the terms proposed. He suggested an alternative draft declaration which followed generally the lines of the India Committee's draft but which omitted `local option' and instead placed the responsibility on the constitution-making body to produce a constitution acceptable to the various parties and interests. While leaving to Indians the prime responsibility for setting up a constitution-framing body, it provided that if Indian leaders themselves invited His Majesty's Government, either to frame a new constitutional
structure, or to refer this task to some other appropriate authority, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to do so.
Meanwhile, the Viceroy proposed to try and bring about a political truce so as to enable him to reconstruct his Executive Council and give India a strong government for the prosecution of the war. The draft contained a reference to the possible return of parliamentary government in the Section 93 provinces. It also dealt with the de facto international status of India during the war and at the Peace Conference.
The Viceroy was informed that the India Committee had given very careful consideration to his views and had amended its draft declaration in certain important respects. But those amendments only gave rise to further controversy. The discussions were in fact abruptly concluded by the communication, on 10 March, of the War Cabinet's decision that in view of the difficulties and objections raised, it was not proposed to proceed with any public declaration. Instead, the Prime Minister would make an announcement to the effect that the War Cabinet had its plan for solving the deadlock; that it was not, for the time being at any rate, publishing anything, but that it was sending Sir Stafford Cripps out to India to endeavour to secure, by negotiations with the Indian political leaders, a sufficient body of agreement upon its policy.
The decision of the War Cabinet, taken in the stress of the war situation, carried certain initial handicaps which were bound to affect the progress of the forthcoming negotiations. In the first place, no definite agreement had been reached between the Viceroy and the War Cabinet on the details of the policy to be pursued. Nor was there, apparently, any understanding between the War Cabinet and Sir Stafford Cripps as to the extent to which he might go in the way of concession to possible demands. Furthermore, though it was Sir Stafford Cripps who was to negotiate a settlement, it would surely be the Viceroy who would have to implement the terms of such a settlement and there was no understanding or agreement on important details of policy
between these two authorities. An atmosphere charged with so much uncertainty held but scant prospect of success for the Cripps venture. On the other hand, the choice of Sir Stafford Cripps was a very special one. He had recently been appointed Lord Privy Seal; he was a member of the War Cabinet and leader of the House of Commons and he was reported to be a personal friend of Nehru. Because of the particularly high esteem in which he was held both in Britain and in India, his arrival was looked forward to with a certain amount of hope and expectation, at least in Congress circles, which included a section which was prepared to welcome a new declaration of policy.

The Muslim League was definitely not pressing for a new policy; its line was to support the August 1940 offer, provided Muslims were given the share they claimed in the central Government. Jinnah doubtless believed that the chance of securing a promise of Pakistan was remote. The rival demand for the independence of India as a unit held more appeal for world opinion and had two generations of popular agitation behind it, whereas the League's demand for Pakistan had been before the public for no more than a couple of years. The League, on the other hand, feared that sharing power with the Congress would reinforce those centralizing and unifying tendencies, inevitable in war, which would stifle in advance its ambition for a separate Muslim State.

By contrast, the Muslim premiers of Bengal and Sind (who relied upon Congress and Hindu support) feared that the play of long-term forces might squeeze them between the upper and nether millstones of the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha on the one hand, and the Muslim League on the other. Other minorities were on the look-out for a declaration of policy which would suit them, and threatened a hostile stand against one that did not. The Sikhs denounced in advance a policy that left them out of the central Government or accepted Pakistan, while the Depressed Classes were against a policy
which, by exaggerating Muslim representation or otherwise, deprived them of a share in power or failed to safeguard their long-term future. It was the Moderate party, comprising members of the Sapru group, the non-Brahmins of Madras and others, who demanded the least terms for the long-term future and made the clearest offer of co-operation. They knew that in the long run they must go to the wall, but their hope lay in seizing the opportunities of present power. Assuming the unwillingness of the Congress majority to form part of a war government save on terms which His Majesty's Government would not be prepared to grant, a division of power between Muslims and the Moderate Hindu group seemed an obvious solution. But Jinnah had already insisted that if the Congress did not come in, he would share power only with those who stood for something in the country, such as Sikh and Scheduled Caste leaders, not with individuals like the members of the Sapru group.

Churchill's announcement of the decision to send Sir Stafford Cripps out to India was made in the House of Commons on 11 March. `The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance,' he said, `has made us wish to rally all the forces of Indian life to guard their land from the menace of the invader.' In order to clothe with precision the policy announced in August 1940 and to convince all classes races and creeds of Britain's sincere resolve, the War Cabinet, he said, had agreed unitedly upon conclusions for present and future action which, if accepted by India as a whole, would avoid the alternative dangers, either that the resistance of a powerful minority might impose an indefinite veto upon the wishes of the majority, or that a majority decision might be taken which would be resisted to a point destructive of internal harmony and fatal to the setting up of a new constitution. In order to ensure that the scheme would win a reasonable and practical measure of acceptance and thus promote concentration of all thoughts and energies upon the defence of the country, Sir Stafford Cripps
was being sent to India to satisfy himself by personal consultation that the conclusions would achieve their purpose.

Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in Delhi on 22 March, armed with the British Government's draft declaration, on the basis of which he was to conduct negotiations with the leaders of Indian political parties and communities. The first two or three days were spent in preliminary talks with the Viceroy, members of his Executive Council and other official advisers. Thereafter, Sir Stafford Cripps proceeded to interview the leaders of the various political groups and communities. Apart from Gandhiji, who attended in his personal capacity, the political leaders included Azad and Nehru, together with other members of the Congress Working Committee; Jinnah as representative of the Muslim League; Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, Fazlul Huq and other Muslims; Savarkar and other members of the Hindu Mahasabha; Ambedkar and M C Rajah (Depressed Classes); Sapru and Jayakar (Liberals); representatives of the Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans; and representatives also of the Indian States, notably the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar (Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes), the Maharajahs of Bikaner and Patiala and the Chief Minister of Hyderabad.

On 29 March Sir Stafford Cripps addressed a large gathering of press representatives, with whom he held a series of frank discussions. `The Constituent Assembly,' he said, explaining the implications of the Cabinet's draft, `can start with a declaration of Independence.' It was completely free to decide whether the new Union of India should remain within the Empire or not. It was free to do anything—even to declaring that it did not want a Governor-General.

With reference to the position of the Indian States, he explained that they could not be forced to participate in the Constituent Assembly, or be compelled to choose their representatives in any particular manner. `We have not the same control over the Indian States as we have over British India.'
The British Government, he said, could not transfer to the Government of India during the interim war period the responsibility for, and the control and direction of, the defence of India. `The defence of India will not be in Indian hands, even if all the parties want it. . . . It would be dishonest to say that an Indian Defence Member would be responsible for the defence of India.'

Regarding the working of the new Executive Council under the proposed interim scheme, Sir Stafford Cripps said that it would have to be within the present constitution, but that a good deal could be done by changing the conventions or adopting new ones. One of the things he is reported to have said was that the Council could function as a Cabinet -- a point which later became the subject of particular controversy.

Finally, Sir Stafford made it clear that `the scheme goes through as a whole or is rejected as a whole.'

It was at this Conference that the draft declaration was released to the press. The object of His Majesty's Government was stated to be `the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect and in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.' The terms of the declaration were as follows:

(a) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

(b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of Indian States in the constitution-making body.

(c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to:

   (i) The right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional
position, provision being made for its subsequent accession, if it so decides. With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty’s Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

(ii) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty’s Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty’s Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities, but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member States of the British Commonwealth. Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation.

(d) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities: Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of provincial legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college. Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British-Indian members.
(e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed His Majesty’s Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for, and retain the control and direction of, the defence of India as part of their world war effort; but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty’s Government desire, and invite, the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help to the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

Sir Stafford Cripps, in a broadcast on 30 March, made an appeal to the Indian people to accept these proposals. `It is with the greatest hope,' he said, `that I look to the events of the next few days which may, if wisely handled, seal for ever your freedom and our friendship.' He concluded with the exhortation:

Let us enter upon this primary task of the defence of India in the now sure knowledge that when we emerge from the fire and the travail of war it will be to build a free India upon foundations wrought by the Indian peoples themselves, and to forge a long, lasting and free friendship between our two peoples. Regrets and recriminations as to the past can have no place beside the confident and sure hopes of the future, when a Free India will take her rightful place as a co-worker with the other free nations in that world reconstruction which alone can make the toil and the suffering of the war worthwhile. Let the dead past bury its dead, and let us march together side by side through the
night of high endeavour and courage to the already waking dawn of a
new world of liberty for all the peoples.

The interim proposals contained in part (e) of the declaration were, except in
regard to defence, vague and nebulous. The long-term proposals contained
certain features which were unpalatable to the Congress, such as `provincial
option' and the inclusion in the constitution-making body of States'
representatives who would not be the choice of the States' people; but it was
contended that such provisions were essential in order to make the scheme
as a whole tolerable to other parties and interests in India, and to fulfil
certain solemn pledges of His Majesty's Government. In any case, the
immediate object of the Cripps mission was to secure full Indian co-operation
in the war effort and Sir Stafford Cripps
was hopeful that this co-operation would be forthcoming, even if the main
political parties rejected the constitutional part of the proposals.
Gandhiji, whose policy was one of `total pacifism', described the declaration
as a `postdated cheque' and decided to take no part in the discussions.
The Hindu Mahasabha rejected the long-term plan on the ground that the
option given to provinces to stay out of the Union would destroy the unity of
the country.
The Sikhs also protested. `We shall,' they said, `resist by all possible means
separation of the Punjab from the All-India Union.'
The Depressed Classes denounced the scheme for its failure to provide the
necessary safeguards for them. `We are all of us absolutely convinced that
the proposals are calculated to do the greatest harm to the Depressed
Classes and are sure to place them under an unmitigated system of Hindu
rule.'
Other political parties also set forth their views. None of them, including the
Muslim League, was prepared to accept the proposals as they stood.
It was clear from the start that the Mission would have to reckon mainly with the Congress and the Muslim League. As actually happened, the negotiations were held almost exclusively with the Congress, represented by Azad and Nehru, while the Muslim League stood by and awaited developments. It was a foregone conclusion that the Congress would not accept the long-term proposals, involving as they did the virtual partition of the country. In fact, the Congress Working Committee had, on 2 April, adopted a resolution rejecting the Cripps offer. Azad brought a copy of the resolution to Sir Stafford Cripps, but they agreed not to publish it and to proceed instead with their negotiations on the interim proposals. Despite, therefore, its opposition to the main scheme, the Congress had apparently made up its mind to put aside questions relating to the future in order to concentrate on the immediate issues. Thus, the discussions centred round the interim proposals in clause (e) of the declaration, with special emphasis on the position of defence.

Sir Stafford Cripps had written to Azad on 1 April suggesting that he would ask the Commander in-Chief to meet him and Nehru in order to explain to them the technical difficulties of the situation connected with the defence proposals and so that they, too, might make any suggestions as to the division of responsibilities in this sphere of government. The Indian leaders saw the Commander in-Chief on 4 April. It was clear enough that there was to be an Indian Defence member, in addition to the Commander in-Chief who would continue to be the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces in India; but the point on which the leaders were anxious to secure an assurance was that an Indian Defence member would have reasonable status and be able to function effectively. On this point, Sir Stafford Cripps, after consulting His Majesty's Government, wrote on 7 April to both Azad and Jinnah as follows:

*I am therefore authorised to propose to you as a way out of the present difficulties that (a) the Commander in-Chief should retain a*
seat on the Viceroy's Executive Council as War Member and should retain his full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India subject to the control of His Majesty's Government and the War Cabinet, upon which body a representative Indian should sit with equal powers in all matters relating to the defence of India. Membership of the Pacific Council would likewise be offered to a representative Indian.

(b) An Indian representative member would be added to the Viceroy's Executive who would take over those sections of the Department of Defence which can organisationally be separated immediately from the Commander in-Chief's War Department and which are specified under head (I) of the annexure. In addition, this member would take over the Defence Co-ordination Department which is at present directly under the Viceroy and certain other important functions of the Government of India which are directly related to defence and which do not fall under any of the other existing departments, and which are specified under head (II) of the annexure.

ANNEXURE

(I) Matters now dealt with in the Defence Department which would be transferred to a Defence Co-ordination Department: (a) Public relations; (b) Demobilisation and post-war reconstruction; (c) Petroleum officer, whose functions are to calculate the requirements of, and make provision for, all petroleum products required for the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and for the civil departments, including storage and distribution; (d) Indian representation on the Eastern Group Supply Council; (e) Amenities for, and welfare of, troops and their dependants including Indian soldiers' boards; (f) All canteen organisations; (g) Certain non-technical educational institution, e.g. Lawrence schools, RG.RI.M. schools, and the Prince of Wales' Royal Indian Military College; (h) Stationery, printing and forms for the
Army; (i) Reception, accommodation, and social arrangements for all foreign missions, representatives and offices.

(II) In addition the Defence Coordination Department would take over many major questions bearing directly on defence but difficult to locate in any particular existing departments; examples are denial policy, evacuation from threatened areas, signals coordination, economic warfare.

The proposal was rejected by the Congress, which regarded the subjects listed for transfer as being of such ephemeral importance as to make the position of the Indian Defence member almost ludicrous.

At about this time, Colonel Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt’s personal envoy, arrived in Delhi as head of the American Technical Mission. With Sir Stafford Cripps’ permission he took an active part in the negotiations on the defence formula. A new formula, sometimes referred to as the ‘Johnson formula’, was presented to the Congress. It read as follows:

In amplification of clause (e) of the draft Declaration, His Majesty’s Government make the following proposition upon the subject-matter of the Defence of India:

(a) The Defence Department shall be placed in the charge of a representative Indian member with the exception of functions to be exercised by the Commander-in-Chief as War Member of the Executive Council.

(b) A War Department will be constituted which will take over such functions of the Defence Department as are not retained by the Defence Member. A list of all the retained functions has been agreed, to which will be added further important responsibilities including matters now dealt with by the Defence Coordination Department and other vital matters related to the defence of India.
This formula was considered by the Congress Working Committee, which amended it to read:

(a) The Defence Department shall be placed in the charge of a representative Indian member, but certain functions relating to the conduct of the war will be exercised, for the duration of war, by the Commander in-Chief, who will be in control of the war activities of the armed forces in India, and who will be an extraordinary member of the national Cabinet for that purpose.

(b) A War Department will be constituted under the Commander in-Chief. This Department will take over such functions as are to be exercised by the Commander-in-Chief. A list of such functions has been prepared and is attached.

(c) The Defence Member shall be in charge of all other matters relating to Defence including those now dealt with by the Defence Coordination Department.

The Working Committee's revised formula was very much on the lines of the 'Johnson formula', but it differed materially from the earlier approach to the problem by His Majesty's Government. Instead of reserving defence as the responsibility of His Majesty's Government and asking the Indian Defence Member to accept certain relatively unimportant subjects, the Working Committees' proposal was to consider the national Government responsible for the whole field of administration, including defence, but to reserve to the Commander in-Chief, for the duration of the war, certain functions essential for the discharge of his responsibilities and the carrying out of military operations.

In forwarding the revised draft to Sir Stafford Cripps, Azad remarked:
The approach made in the draft you gave me this morning seems to us a more healthy one. With some alterations that we suggest, it might be the basis of further discussions. But it must be remembered that a very great deal depends on the allocation of subjects between the Defence Department and the War Department, and until this is done, it is not possible to give a final opinion.

There were further pourparlers between Johnson and the Congress on the one hand, and Sir Stafford Cripps, the Viceroy and the Commander in-Chief on the other. Suffice it to say that on the afternoon of 8 April Sir Stafford Cripps finalized his formula as follows:

(a) The Defence Department shall be placed in the charge of a representative Indian member, but certain functions relating to the conduct of the war will be exercised by the Commander in-Chief, who will be in control of the armed forces in India, and who will be the member of the Executive Council in charge of the War Department.

(b) This Department will take over such governmental functions as are to be exercised by the Commander in-Chief as War Member. A list of such functions has been prepared and is attached.

(c) The Defence Member shall be in charge of all other matters relating to defence in the Defence Department and those now dealt with by the Defence Co-ordination Department in addition to other important matters closely related to defence.

(d) In the event of any new functions failing to be discharged in relation to defence or any dispute arising as to the allocation of any old functions it shall be decided by His Majesty's Government.

The War Department, for which the Commander in-Chief will be Member, will be responsible for the governmental relations of General Headquarters, Naval Headquarters and Air Headquarters which include:
(i) Examining and sanctioning all proposals emanating from G.H.Q., N.H.Q., and A.H.Q.
(ii) Representing the policy of Government on all questions connected with the war which originate in or concern G.H.Q., N.H.Q., or A.H.Q.
(iii) Acting as the channel of communication between the Government of India and His Majesty's Government on all such questions.
(iv) Acting as liaison between these headquarters and the other departments of Government, and provincial governments.

Sir Stafford Cripps discussed the revised formula with the Viceroy. The latter did not agree generally with Sir Stafford Cripps' approach to the problem, nor was he in favour of the proposed allocation of subjects between the Commander in-Chief and the Indian Defence Member. Nevertheless, Sir Stafford Cripps telegraphed the revised formula to His Majesty's Government as the basis on which negotiations were proceeding and with a strong recommendation for its acceptance. He urged that without it there was no prospect of success, but on this basis there was considerable chance of securing the agreement of the Congress. Simultaneously, the Viceroy communicated his own views to His Majesty's Government, who decided that it could not agree, especially during the period of war, to lessening in any material respect the powers of the Commander in-Chief. Sir Stafford Cripps felt that he was unable to proceed further, and the negotiations came to an abrupt end.

Referring to the previous day's interview which he and Nehru had had with Sir Stafford Cripps, Azad wrote in his letter of 10 April as follows:

When we asked you for illustrative lists of subjects for the two departments you referred us to the old list for the Defence Department
which you had previously sent us and which we had been unable to accept. You added that certain residuary subjects might be added to this but, in effect, there was not likely to be any such subject as the allocation was complete. Thus, you said that substantially there was no change between the old list and any new one that might be prepared. If this were so, and we were to go back ultimately to the place we started from, then what was the purpose of our searching for a new formula? A new set of words meaning the same thing made no difference.

Even if there had been any adjustment possible on this issue—and there was not—the negotiations would in any case have broken down on the question of a national government. When Sir Stafford Cripps had first come out, he had used phrases at his meetings with the Press which had been taken as promising a wholly Indian National Cabinet and in conversation with political leaders he had said that the relations of the Indian Government to the Viceroy were similar to those of the British Cabinet to the King. It is true that he subsequently pointed out that no major amendment of the constitution was possible, but it was assumed that by such a convention within the constitution, a national government distinct from the Viceroy would be set up. On 9 April, when Azad and Nehru approached him on the subject, Sir Stafford Cripps made it clear that there would be no essential change between the Viceroy's Executive Council and the new government and that such questions as conventions for the working of the government were matters for discussion with the Viceroy after a settlement had been made. It was in these circumstances that Azad decided to place before Sir Stafford Cripps a detailed statement of the position and attitude of the Congress towards the British Government's proposals. This he did in a long letter dated 10 April, which concluded with the words, 'While we cannot accept the proposals you have made, we want
to inform you that we are yet prepared to assume responsibility, provided a truly National Government is formed. We are prepared to put aside for the present all questions about the future, though, as we have indicated, we hold definite views about it. But in the present, the National Government must be a cabinet government with full power and must not merely be a continuation of the Viceroy's Executive Council.'

Sir Stafford Cripps replied on the same day to the effect that a cabinet government would require constitutional changes which were impossible in wartime, and that such a cabinet (nominated presumably by the major political organizations) would be responsible to no one but itself, could not be removed and would, in fact, constitute `an absolute dictatorship of the majority.' This suggestion would be rejected by all minorities in India, since it would subject all of them to a permanent and autocratic majority in the cabinet. Nor would it be consistent with the pledges already given by His Majesty's Government to protect the rights of those minorities. Sir Stafford Cripps accepted Azad's letter as being a clear rejection by the Congress Working Committee of His Majesty's Government's draft declaration, and the negotiations were thus abruptly terminated.

On 11 April, Azad sent another letter to Sir Stafford Cripps stressing the essential need, in the Congress view, of a truly national government. The Congress President declared:

*We are not interested in the Congress as such gaining power, but we are interested in the Indian people as a whole having freedom and power. How the Cabinet should be formed and should function was a question which might have been considered after the main question was decided; that is, the extent of power which the British Government would give up to the Indian people. . . .

You will remember that in my very first talk with you, I pointed out that the communal or like questions did not arise at this stage. As soon*
as the British Government made up its mind to transfer real power and responsibility, the other questions could be tackled successfully by those concerned. You gave me the impression that you agreed with this approach.

On the same day the Congress Working Committee published its previously-adopted resolution containing its reactions to the British Cabinet's proposals. The following extracts represent the main features of the resolution:

_The Committee, while recognising that self-determination for the people of India is accepted in principle in that uncertain future, regret that this is fettered and circumscribed and certain provisions have been introduced which gravely imperil the development of a free and united nation and the establishment of a democratic State. . . . The complete ignoring of the ninety millions of people of the Indian States and their treatment as commodities at the disposal of their rulers is a negation of both democracy and self-determination. . . . The acceptance beforehand of the novel principle of non-accession for a province is also a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity and an apple of discord likely to generate growing trouble in the provinces, and which may well lead to further difficulties in the way of the Indian States merging themselves in the Indian Union. . . . Nevertheless the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will. . . . Any proposal concerning the future of India must demand attention and scrutiny, but in today's grave crisis, it is the present that counts, and even proposals for the fixture are important in so far as they affect the present. The Committee have necessarily attached the greatest importance to this aspect of the question and on this ultimately depends what advice they should give to those who look_
to them for guidance. For this the present British War Cabinet’s proposals are vague and altogether incomplete, and it would appear that no vital changes in the present structure are contemplated. It has been made clear that the defence of India will in any event remain under British control. At any time defence is a vital subject; during wartime it is all-important and covers almost every sphere of life and administration. To take away defence from the sphere of responsibility at this stage is to reduce that responsibility to a farce and nullity, and to make it perfectly clear that India is not going to be free in any way and her government is not going to function as a free and independent government during the pendency of the war. The Committee would repeat that an essential and fundamental prerequisite for the assumption of responsibility by the Indian people in the present is their realisation as a fact that they are free and are in charge of maintaining and defending their freedom. . . . The Committee therefore are unable to accept the proposals put forward on behalf of the British War Cabinet.

As soon as it was known that the Congress would not accept the proposals, Jinnah published the resolution of the Muslim League Working Committee rejecting the scheme mainly on the ground that the post war provisions permitting the partition of India were so framed as not to give real protection to the Muslims. The following are extracts from the League Working Committee’s resolution of 11 April:

In the draft declaration a constitution-making body has been proposed with the primary object of creating one Indian Union. So far as the Muslim League is concerned, it has finally decided that the only solution of India’s constitutional problem is the partition of India into independent zones; and it will therefore be unfair to the Muslims to
compel them to enter such a constitution-making body whose main object is the creation of a new Indian Union. . . . The right of non-accession has been given to the existing provinces which have been formed from time to time for administrative convenience and on no logical basis. . . . With regard to the interim arrangement there is no definite proposal except the bare statement that His Majesty’s Government desire and invite the effective and immediate participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth, and the United Nations. The Committee are therefore unable to express their opinion until a complete picture is available. Another reason why the Committee are unable to express their opinion on the interim arrangements for participation in the counsels of the country is that Sir Stafford Cripps has made it clear the scheme goes through as a whole or is rejected as a whole, and that it would not be possible to retain only the part relating to immediate arrangements at the Centre and discard the rest of the draft scheme; and as the Committee has come to the conclusion that the proposals for the future are unacceptable it will serve no useful purpose to deal further with the question of the immediate arrangements.

It was Jinnah's complaint that 'the talks had been carried on with the Congress leaders over the heads of the Muslims, and other parties had been utterly ignored.'

At a press conference on 11 April, Sir Stafford Cripps was reported to have said that the negotiations had been prolonged in the case of the Congress only; that there had been many meetings and a number of formulae and suggestions especially upon the question of a defence minister; that the Congress had made it clear that they were not prepared to accept the scheme or to enter a national government; that, as a result, he had most
regretfully to advise His Majesty's Government that there was not such a measure of acceptance of their proposals as to justify their making a declaration in the form of the draft; that the draft was therefore withdrawn. Broadcasting that night from the Delhi station of All-India Radio, Sir Stafford Cripps said:

*The Congress has, since the outbreak of the war, repeatedly demanded two essentials as the basis for its support of the Allied effort in the war. First, a declaration of Indian independence and, second, a Constituent Assembly to frame a new and free constitution for India. Both these demands find their place in the draft declaration. It was in the light of the demands and criticisms of the Indian leaders that the War Cabinet drafted their declaration, with the object of convincing the Indian peoples and world public opinion of the sincerity of their desire to offer freedom to India at the earliest practicable moment.*

Sir Stafford Cripps deplored that in all the spate of criticism, those vital parts of the declaration with which all agreed had never been mentioned. With regard to the interim proposals, he said:

*The immediate difficulties have been as regards the present. First, there was the difficulty as to defence. Upon that the attitude of the British Government was very simple. For many decades the defence of India has been in the charge of His Majesty's Government. That charge has been carried out for over twenty years by a Commander in-Chief who was also Defence Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. This has led to an organisation which places the control of the armed forces under a Defence Secretariat headed by the Commander-in-Chief The Army in India -- containing British and Indian units-the Navy and the Air Force all come under this supreme command.*
The demand has been made that the defence of India should be placed in Indian hands. No one suggests that the Commander-in-Chief, as the head of the armed forces, should be under the Indian Government but, they say, his functions as Defence Member should be transferred to an Indian. This may sound simple but would mean a long and difficult reorganisation of the whole Defence Secretariat an unscrambling of eggs scrambled many years ago—which would cause delay and confusion at the very moment when the enemy is at the gate and the maximum of speed and efficiency is essential in defence. The duty of the British Government to defend India and our duty to our American Allies who are giving such valuable help, makes such a course impossible...

In their final letter addressed to me, the Congress Working Committee have stated that the temporary form of government envisaged during the war, is not such as to enable them to join the Government. They have two suggestions to remedy the situation. First, an immediate change of the constitution, a point raised at the last moment and one that everyone else has admitted to be wholly impracticable while the war is proceeding; and second, that they are prepared to enter a true national government with a cabinet of Indian leaders untrammelled by any control by the Viceroy or the British Government. Realise what this means—the government of India for an indefinite period by a set of persons nominated by the Indian parties, responsible to no legislature or electorate, incapable of being changed and the majority of whom would be in a position to dominate large minorities. It is easy to understand that the great minorities in India would never accept such a system. Nor could His Majesty's Government, who have given pledges to those minorities, consent to their being placed unprotected, while the existing constitution lasts, under a simple and possibly
inimical majority rule. It would be a breach of all the pledges that we have given.

`We have tried,' he added, `by the offer that I brought, to help India along her road to victory and to freedom. But, for the moment, past distrust has proved too strong to allow of present agreement.'

On the following day, April 12, Sir Stafford Cripps left for England. The abrupt end of the negotiations and his sudden departure were the subject of much speculation and conjecture. Even in Congress circles there was a sense of disappointment and surprise that Sir Stafford Cripps should have left so suddenly, without making any further attempt to reach a settlement. Some of them felt that Sir Stafford Cripps had deceived them in the interests of British propaganda in America; that he had made a great show of what he was offering on behalf of His Majesty's Government, but that as soon as it became a question of definite agreement on practical details his attitude had hardened and, at the critical moment of the negotiations when anyone who wanted a settlement would have played his last card for a compromise, he had nothing to offer but, on the contrary, rejected some of the things he had said previously. Others believed that agreement had been reached in principle but that it had been blocked by pressure from the authorities in England.

A simple explanation is the one I have given earlier in this chapter, namely that there was no proper understanding between the Viceroy and Sir Stafford Cripps, nor between Sir Stafford Cripps and the British Cabinet. Sir Stafford had been over-confident of `selling' at least the interim proposals to the Congress, but in their discussions both had reckoned without the Viceroy and His Majesty's Government. Four years later, in the course of his speech in the House of Commons on 12 December 1946, Churchill made it abundantly clear that His Majesty's Government had not been willing to support Sir Stafford Cripps to the extent to which he himself was prepared to go.
Commenting on `That Ill-fated Proposal', Gandhiji wrote on 13 April as follows:

It is a thousand pities that the British Government should have sent a proposal for dissolving the political deadlock, which, on the face of it, was too ridiculous to find acceptance anywhere. And it was a misfortune that the bearer should have been Sir Stafford Cripps, acclaimed as a radical among the radicals and a friend of India. I have no doubt about his good-will. He believed that no one could have brought anything better for India. But he should have known that at least the Congress would not look at Dominion Status even though it carried the right of secession the very moment it was taken. He knew too that the proposal contemplated the splitting up of India into three parts, each having different ideas of governance. It contemplated Pakistan, and yet not the Pakistan of the Muslim League's conception. And last of all, it gave no real control over defence to responsible ministers.

Gandhiji proceeded to draw the following significant conclusions. He said:

But it is no use brooding over the past or British mistakes. It is more profitable to look within. The British will take care ot themselves, if we will take care of ourselves. Our mistakes or rather our defects are many. Why blame the British for our own limitations? Attainment of independence is an impossibility, till we have solved the communal tangle. We may not blind ourselves to the naked fact. How to tackle the problem is another question. We will never tackle it, so long as either or both parties think that independence will or can come without any solution of the tangle. . . . Whether those who believe in the two-nation theory and communal partition of India can live as friends co-
operating with one another I do not know. If the vast majority of Muslims regard themselves as a separate nation having nothing in common with the Hindus and others, no power on earth can compel them to think otherwise. And if they want to partition India on that basis, they must have the partition, unless the Hindus want to fight against such a division. So far as I can see, such a preparation is silently going on on behalf of both parties. That way lies suicide. Each party will probably want British or foreign aid. In that case good-bye to independence.

In the House of Commons on 28 April, the Secretary of State (Amery) stated:

Such a national government (as the Congress demanded) would have been responsible in the last resort neither to Parliament here under the existing constitution, nor to an agreed and fairly balanced constitution in India, but only to its own majority—a majority presumably of Congress or, at any rate, of Hindus. That demand, whether made by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and his colleagues, or by the Congress, was the one thing which the Muslims and other minorities were determined at all costs to reject. They were and are convinced that such a government would, in fact, prejudice the whole future situation to their detriment. There was, therefore, never any question in our view of conceding that demand because it was, in fact, if not in intention, a demand which precluded all agreed co-operation in India.

Sir Stafford Cripps said:

Government have not in any sense closed the door regarding India. . . . They are only too anxious that the matter should be settled at any time when a settlement looks likely or possible. They cannot put
forward any proposals because the proposals they have put forward they believe are the best they can put forward.

Commenting on what precisely was meant by the withdrawal of the draft declaration, the Secretary of State explained:

What we have certainly not withdrawn is our main object and purpose, namely, that India should, as soon as possible, obtain full freedom under constitutional arrangements of her own devising and suited to her own peculiar conditions. On the other hand, the particular method suggested for arriving at a constitutional settlement, more particularly the present provincial basis, both for setting up a constitution-making assembly and for non-accession, is not meeting with sufficient support for us to press it further. It may be that alternative methods might arise which might form a better basis for the definition of boundaries and might give representation for smaller elements such as the Sikhs, whose natural aspirations we appreciate. It is for Indians themselves to improve on our suggestions if they can.

As regards the interim situation, the particular proposals made by Sir Stafford Cripps in order to secure the wholehearted co-operation of the Congress as well as the other political parties have, of course, lapsed. The Viceroy will, no doubt, be willing to consider practical suggestions within the framework of suggestion (e) of the draft declaration put forward by responsible party leaders, more particularly if put forward jointly and based on a broad measure of agreement.

Amery added that the main object of the draft declaration was to set at rest India's suspicions as to the British Government's intentions. `Our ideal,' he concluded, `remains a United All-India.'
The result of the Cripps negotiations, instead of bridging the gulf between the Government and the political parties in India, only served to widen it. The manner in which the negotiations had broken down tended to strengthen the doubts and suspicions in the minds of political leaders that there was no genuine desire on the part of His Majesty's Government to part with power.
The Japanese Menace and its Reaction on Indian Politics

The war suddenly took an alarming turn so far as India was concerned, by the entry of the Japanese into the war on the side of the Axis powers against Britain. The rapidity with which they seized Singapore (15 February, 1942) hitherto regarded as almost impregnable, overran Malaya and entered Burma, raised their prestige as a military power and brought India within the range of actual hostilities. For it was quite clear that the Japanese intended to invade India from the east through Burma and Manipur. No doubt was left on this point by the propaganda through radio that the Japanese were coming to deliver India from the yoke of the British. The Indians had too much knowledge of their own past history and of Japan's treatment of China to believe in Japanese propaganda. They were not, with probably a few exceptions, pro-Japanese. But they were not drawn closer to the British either. To the old causes of anti-British sentiments the Japanese invasion added more. In the first place, they could not but feel that the present predicament was entirely due to the British, who had dragged them into the war against their will. For, it was argued, the Japanese would never have invaded India if she were not a part of the British empire, and even then, if India had enjoyed Dominion status, she could remain neutral like Eire and not forced to become a belligerent. The Indians could not but feel that in their present state of dependence they were destined to share only the evils and sorrows of the British Empire and not its benefits and blessings, Secondly, in spite of the many shortcomings and evils of British rule, the

12 Published by Bharatya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1969, pp. 633-641.
Indians always balanced them against one inestimable advantage it had offered, namely, security from foreign invasions. The fortunes of the war clearly indicated the hollowness of this claim in immediate and possibly remote, future. Thirdly, the Japanese victories had considerably lowered the British prestige and destroyed the myth of their invincibility. Many had come also to believe that the days of the British Empire were numbered.

As regards the Congress, though the Japanese invasion did not change its attitude, it certainly changed its leadership. Once more, as in June 1940, Gandhi feared that the war-conditions would force Britain to offer independence to India on condition of participation in the war, and he rightly felt that the majority of Congressmen would accept it.

The Working Committee of the Congress met at Bardoli on 23 December, 1941, and passed a long resolution, a part of which is quoted below:

"The whole background in India is one of hostility and distrust of the British Government, and not even the most far-reaching promises can alter this background, nor can a subject India offer 'voluntary or willing help to an arrogant imperialism which is indistinguishable from Fascist authoritarianism....

"The Committee is therefore of opinion that the resolution of the A.I.C.C., which was passed in Bombay on 16 September, 1940 and defines the Congress policy, holds to-day still."

By another resolution the Working Committee relieved Gandhi of the responsibility laid upon him (of leading the Satyagraha movement) "but the Committee assures him that the policy of nonviolence adopted under his guidance for the attainment of Swaraj and which has proved so successful in leading to mass awakening and otherwise will be adhered to by the Congress."

The Working Committee issued a series of instructions in anticipation of the
Japanese attack. The general trend of these instructions was to set up the Congress as an independent organization, outside the Government, throughout the country, in order to help and serve people in any contingency arising out of the threatened Japanese invasion. The net position was that although the Congress shook off the pacifism of Gandhi, it reiterated its old policy of non-co-operation with the war-efforts of the Government so long as the independence of India was not guaranteed.

But the Liberals were fully impressed with the gravity of the Japanese menace and took a more realistic view of the situation than the other political parties in India and the British Government. On 3 January, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the spokesman of Liberal opinion, dispatched a lengthy cable to Mr. Churchill, signed by fifteen non-party leaders, insisting that "the heart of India must be touched to rouse her on a nation-wide scale to the call for service and urging the acceptance of the Liberal programme -- a national all-Indian Government responsible to the Crown, and a higher national status for India in international and inter-imperial relations." As could be foreseen, Churchill would be the last man to accept any such programme. He slept over Sapru's cable for more than two months until he was awaked by the booming of Japanese guns. On 11 March, 1942; four days after the fall of Rangoon, Mr. Churchill announced that the War Cabinet had come to a unanimous decision on Indian policy and that, in order to explain it and "to satisfy himself upon the spot by personal consultation that the conclusions upon which we are agreed, and which we believe represent a just and final solution, will achieve their purpose", Sir Stafford Cripps, who had recently joined the Government as Lord Privy Seal and become a member of the War Cabinet and leader of the House of Commons, would proceed as soon as possible to India Churchill did not leave anyone in doubt as to the genesis of this new policy. He said at the very outset of his announcement: "The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance has made us wish to rally all the forces of Indian life to guard their land from the menace of the
invader." But this was only a half-truth. The Japanese invasion began more than two months before, and the fall of Singapore on 15 February brought home to everyone the danger to India. Churchill, however, did not move an inch. But Roosevelt, the President of the U.S., took a more realistic view of the situation and urged upon Churchill to settle matters with India. The help of U.S.A. was then the only hope for the safety of Britain, and Churchill could ignore Roosevelt's advice only at his country's peril. Still he wavered until the fall of Rangoon revealed to him, for the first time, the desperate situation which faced Britain in the east.

That the despatch of the Cripps Mission was mainly, if not wholly, due to the pressure of Roosevelt, was merely a conjecture at the time, but it has since been confirmed as a fact by the publication of the secret documents of the Foreign Office, U.S.A.. As this has been denied by some, the relevant facts culled from these documents may be briefly noted below.

On 17 February, 1942, two days after the fall of Singapore, the Assistant Secretary of State, U.S.A., submitted a long Memorandum containing the following: "It seems to me that the State Department must immediately get to work on the changed situation in the Far East arising out of the fall of Singapore. The first item on the list ought to be to tackle the Indian problem in a large way. ...It would seem that the logical thing to do was to have Churchill announce in London that the British plans contemplated the introduction of India as a full partner in the United Nations."

On 25 February, 1942, the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S.A. Senate discussed Indian affairs. They were impressed by the man-power of India as a source of military strength but fully realized that "the Indians would not have the desire to fight just in order to prolong England's mastery over them.

"Concerning India, the argument was that we are participating on such a large scale and had done so much for England in Lend-Lease that we
had now arrived at a position of importance to justify our participation in Empire Councils and such as to authorize us to require England to make adjustments of a political nature within the framework of her Empire. We should demand that India be given a status of autonomy. The only way to get the people of India to fight was to get them to fight for India... The American people would expect this Government to do everything within its power to obtain military participation by India... even though we had to go to the extent of dictating to England what she should do with regard to India..."

Evidently as a result of this report Roosevelt sent on the very same day a cable to the U.S. ambassador in London suggesting that he or Averell Harriman, his special representative in London, should send him "a slant on what the Prime Minister thinks about new relationship between British and India." Harriman immediately saw Churchill who promised to keep Roosevelt informed of the trend of discussions about India that were taking place. On 4 March, Churchill cabled this information of which the text of the first para is given below:

"We are earnestly considering whether a declaration of Dominion Status after the war carrying with it if desired the right to secede should be made at this critical juncture. We must not on any account break with the Moslems who represent a hundred million people and the main army elements on which we must rely for the immediate fighting. We have also to consider our duty towards 30 to 40 millions untouchab1es and our treaties with the Princes states (sic.) of India, perhaps 80 millions. Naturally we do not want to throw India into chaos on the eve of invasion."

Presumably in reply to this, Roosevelt cabled a long message to Churchill on
10 March. Churchill received it on the same day and the very next day announced the Cripps Mission in the Parliament, as stated above. It is a reasonable inference that Churchill accepted the advice or suggestion of Roosevelt, though perhaps very grudgingly.

According to Attlee, the Cripps Mission was recommended by a Special Committee on India in the war-time Cabinet. Attlee was the Chairman of this Committee and Amery, Simon and Cripps were among its members. Attlee adds that "it was greatly to when he did not like the idea of any change really." All this fully tallies with the theory of Churchill's decision being due to pressure of Roosevelt. The recommendation of the Special Committee on India might have also been influenced by the same source. In any case, the views of both Attlee and Simon, as may be judged from the Simon Commission Report, and of two other members, Amery and Sir John Anderson, as judged by their statements on India, were very different from the instructions with which Cripps was sent to India, and they agree more with the suggestions of Roosevelt.

Roosevelt was highly interested in the fate of Cripps' Mission, and sent Col. Louis A. Johnson as his personal Representative to New Delhi to keep him informed about the progress of the negotiations between Cripps and the Indian leaders. Though Johnson had not any official status to meddle in the affair, he played a very important role as peace-maker throughout the negotiations, as will be shown later.

**The Cripps Mission**

Sir Stafford Cripps arrived at Delhi on 23 March, 1942. The proposals which he brought with him were embodied in a Draft Declaration and may be summarized as follows:

1. In order to achieve `the earliest possible realisation of self-Government in India', the British Government propose that steps should be taken to create "a new Indian Union which will have the full
status of a Dominion."

(2) `Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities', a constitution-making body shall be set up.

(3) The British Government `undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed' on two conditions. First any Province or Provinces which are not prepared to accept the new constitution will be entitled to frame by a similar process a constitution of their own, giving them `the same full status as the Indian Union.' Indian States will be similarly free to adhere to the new constitution or not. In either case a revision of their treaty arrangements will have to be negotiated.

(4) The second condition is the signing of a treaty to be negotiated between the British Government and the constitution-making body to cover all `matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands', particularly the protection of racial and religious minorities in accordance with the British Government undertakings.

(5) Until the new constitution can be framed, the British Government must retain control of the defence of India `as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India in co-operation with the peoples of India.' To that end the British Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations.

There is no doubt that these proposals virtually conceded all the reasonable demands of both the Congress and the Muslim League, as far as it was possible to do so under war conditions. As Sir Stafford unequivocally
declared in one of his Press Conferences, the proposals meant `complete and absolute self-determination and self-Government for India.' The demands of the Muslim League were also met by the first proviso in Para (3) of the above summary.

The rejection of these proposals was due mainly to three reasons. First, the deep-rooted distrust of the British and the consequent suspicion of the genuine character of their offers or promises. Secondly, a growing belief that Britain will be worsted in the battle against Germany and her future was gloomy, at best very uncertain. Apart from these two psychological factors, clause 3 of the proposals, contained in the Declaration, was sure to lead to a partition of India which was opposed by every political party in India except the Muslim League.

Apart from the virtual partition of India which the long-term proposals involved, they were open to another serious objection, namely, that the rulers, not the peoples of the Indian States, would determine their future. As early as 2 April, the Working Committee passed a resolution rejecting the proposals of Cripps. As regards the States it observed:
"The complete ignoring of the ninety millions of the people of the Indian States and their treatment as commodities at the disposal of their rulers is a negation of both democracy and self-determination." To this Cripps replied that the British Government had no control over the States in this matter.

As regards Clause 3, the resolution says: "The acceptance beforehand of the novel principle of non-accession for a province is also a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity." But then it adds: "Nevertheless, the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will." This practically gives away the whole case of the Congress and virtually amounts to a support of Clause 3.

The Hindu Mahasabha declared that 'India is and indivisible', and refused to be party to any proposal which involved the political partition of India in any
shape or form. The Liberal Party else opposed the scheme of partitioning India. Curiously enough, the proposals which alienated the rest of India failed to satisfy even the Muslims whom they were intended to conciliate. The Muslim League demanded "a definite pronouncement in favour of Partition." The proposals of Cripps were also rejected by the Depressed Classes, the Sikhs, the Anglo-Indians, the Indian Christians, and the labour-leaders, who all demanded sufficient safe guards

As a matter of fact, the proposals of Cripps for the future constitution of India received but scant attention of the Congress and other sections of the public. The general feeling was expressed by a pithy saying, wrongly attributed to Gandhi that they were a "post-dated cheque on a crashing bank", implying a growing belief that Britain would be worsted in the battle. As the Congress resolution put it, "in today's grave crisis it is the present that counts and even proposals for the future are important in so far as they affect the present."

The chief difficulty in arriving at an agreement on the interim proposals in Clause 5 was to fix the power and responsibility to be entrusted to Indian members of the Governor-General's Council for the administration in general and for defence in particular. There was also difference of opinion between the Congress and Cripps on the character of Central Government that was immediately to be set up. The Congress insisted that it must be a Cabinet Government with full powers which Cripps had at first suggested but later withdrawn. There was a prolonged discussion or these points and in spite of the best efforts of Johnson, Roosevelt's Personal Representative, the negotiations broke down on 10 April. As soon as this was known the Working Committee of the Muslim League rejected Cripps' proposals. There was a general impression at the time that- the failure of Cripps Mission was due to the reactionary attitude of Churchill. This is now fully corroborated by the secret documents of U.S. Foreign Office to which reference has been made above. It now appears that Johnson had succeeded
in bringing about an agreement on the question of the status and functions of the Indian Defence Minister, and the formula evolved by him was accepted by the Viceroy, Commander-in-Chief, Cripps, Nehru and Azad. But Churchill refused to budge an inch from the original draft declaration sent with Cripps, as Johnson put it, "London wanted a Congress refusal." On 11 April, Churchill sent Roosevelt a copy of Cripps’s cable intimating the reasons which led to the failure of the negotiations and enclosed a copy of his reply heartily congratulating Cripps on his achievements, which "have proved how great was the British desire to reach a settlement." Churchill added: "The effect throughout Britain and in the United States has been wholly beneficial. The fact that the break comes on the broadest issues and not on tangled formulas about defence is a great advantage."

Roosevelt was not, however, taken in by this hypocritical outburst. He immediately (11 April) cabled a long message from which a few extracts are quoted: "I most earnestly hope that you may find it possible to postpone Cripps's departure from India until one more final effort has been made to prevent a breakdown in the negotiations.

"I am sorry to say that I cannot agree with the point of view set forth in your message to me that public opinion in the United States believes that the negotiations have failed on broad general issues. The general impression is quite the contrary. The feeling is almost universally held that the deadlock has been caused by the unwillingness of the British Government to concede to the Indians the right of self-government, notwithstanding the willingness of the Indians to entrust technical, military and naval defence control to the competent British authorities. American public opinion cannot understand why, if the British Government is willing to permit the component parts of India to secede from the British Empire after the War, it is not willing to permit them to enjoy what is tantamount to self-government during the war....I read
that an agreement seemed very near last Thursday night (9th April). If he (Cripps) could be authorised by you to state that he was empowered by you personally to resume negotiations as at that point with the understanding that minor concessions would be made by both sides, it seems to me that an agreement might yet be found." In conclusion Roosevelt again suggested that a nationalist Government should be immediately set up (in India).

Thus even at that late hour Roosevelt tried his best to prevent the breakdown of the Cripps negotiations. But Churchill was adamant. In his reply to Roosevelt he even offered to retire to private life if that would be any good in assuaging American public opinion. He did not trust the Indian Congress, he said in defence of his policy. But the negotiations could not be reopened in any case because Cripps had left India

The British official view was that it was the pacifism of Gandhi that brought about the failure of Cripps Mission. As a matter of fact, Gandhi left Delhi at an early stage of the negotiations and took no further part in them. But some Englishmen asserted that Gandhi telephoned from Sevagram instructing Congress to reject the Cripps offer, and even said they had a record of that conversation. When told about this, Gandhi said, "It is all a tissue of lies. If they have a record of the telephone conversation let them produce it." It is hardly necessary to discuss the British official view after this denial of Gandhi. On the other hand, the Indian intelligentsia, at least an important section of them, doubted the sincerity of the British Cabinet and held that the Cripps Mission was designed merely to placate American opinion. Even Harold Laski observed that the "take it o: leave it" mood of Cripps "was bound to make it look as though our real thought was less the achievement of Indian freedom than of a coup de main in the propagandist's art among our allies who contrasted American relations with the Philippines against British relations with India." There is hardly any doubt that the avail-
able evidence lends the strongest support to this view, though we must revise the current Indian opinion that Cripps was the villain of the piece. He was merely an agent of Churchill who pulled the wires from behind.
Annexure

Mother’s Agenda
Vol 3.
November 17, 1962

Have you read Sri Aurobindo’s last letters on China?13

Oh, yes – he read them to me himself! (Mother laughs.)
But everything Sri Aurobindo said has always come true. You know he also
said (but it was in jest, he didn't write it) ... concerning reuniting with
Pakistan he told me: "Ten years. It will take ten years." The ten years
passed and nothing happened – OFFICIALLY nothing happened. But the truth
is (I learned it through certain government officials), Pakistan did make
some overtures in that direction, asking for a union to be reestablished (they
would have kept some sort of autonomy, but the two countries would have
UNITED, it would have been a UNION), and Nehru refused.

How foolish!
So Sri Aurobindo had seen it.14
He had seen it happen. After ten years, when that man who headed Pakistan
died,1 they found themselves in grave difficulty and were unable to get
organized; so they sent somebody (unofficially, of course) to ask India to
reestablish union on certain bases – but they refused, the Indians refused. It
was a repetition of the same stupidity as when Cripps came to make his
proposal, when Sri Aurobindo sent a message saying, "Accept, whatever the
conditions, otherwise it will be worse later on." That's what Sri Aurobindo
told them. Gandhi was there and he retorted, "Why is that man meddling?

13 See Addendum.
14 This may refer to the death of Liaquat Ali, and the grave economic and political difficulties resulting in
the dissolution of the Pakistani Parliament in October 1958, and General Ayub Khan's seizure of power.
He should be concerned only with spiritual life."\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{They have conscientiously ruined the country. }

Yes.

Yes, as much as they could.\textsuperscript{16}

That's what X saw: that they have been the ruin of the country. And so he said, "These men have ruined the country and they shall be destroyed." That's what was in his head and that's why he is opening the door to this drama – which would mean a frightful destruction.

It's true that they deserve it! They have acted perfectly stupidly all along. Out of ambition, vanity, all sorts of things, but especially out of stupidity and total lack of understanding – a blind vision, reaching no farther than their noses.

Don't keep this. I don't want to keep political memories. I haven't said anything about the world situation for a long time, because I don't want people to know (it's not that I don't know, but I don't want it known). If I

\textsuperscript{15} In April 1942, when England was struggling against the Nazis and Japan, which was threatening to invade Burma and India, Churchill sent an emissary, Sir Stafford Cripps, to New Delhi with a very generous proposal which he hoped would rally India's goodwill and cooperation in the fight against the worldwide threat. In this proposal, Great Britain offered India Dominion status, as a first step towards an independent government. Sri Aurobindo at once came out of retirement to wire his adhesion to Cripps; he wired all of India's leaders, and even sent a personal messenger to Gandhi and the Indian Congress to convince them to accept this unhoped for proposal without delay. One of Sri Aurobindo's telegrams to Rajagopalachari (the future President of India) spoke of the grave danger, which no one seemed to see, of rejecting Cripps' proposal: "... Some immediate solution urgent face grave peril. Appeal to you to save India formidable danger new foreign domination when old on way to self-elimination." No one understood: "Why is he meddling?" Had it accepted Dominion status, India would have avoided the partition of the country in two, the artificial creation of Pakistan, as well as the three wars that were to follow (and which we haven't heard the last of), and the blood bath that ravaged Bengal and the Punjab in 1947 at the time of the partition. (See in Addendum an extract from Sri Aurobindo's message on the occasion of India's Independence.).

\textsuperscript{16} There is another side to the story. When Nehru died, Mother said in a message of May 27, 1964: "Nehru leaves his body but his soul is ONE with the Soul of India, that lives for Eternity."
ever get involved in politics – if things take a positive turn, that is – I will start saying what I know in 1967. But not before.

Prior to that: complete silence. I say nothing. I try to act, that's all.\footnote{All the same, Satprem did keep this conversation, being unable to censor Mother's words or to delete them from History – for where is the borderline between censorship and falsehood?}
Yes, he [Nehru] never understood why Sri Aurobindo did not resume his political life.

No. And then, you see, he takes Gandhi's asceticism for spiritual life – always the same mistake! There's no way to pull them out of it. Unfortunately, the entire world has caught the same idea.

Then when there was that Cripps proposal,\textsuperscript{18} I believe it was Nehru (or Gandhi, I don't remember which of the two) who said, "He has withdrawn from political life, why is he meddling! It's none of his business." They never forgave him. That is to say, completely obtuse, unable to understand that one can have a knowledge higher than practical knowledge.

There you are.

\textit{Do you see new threats hanging over India?}

The Chinese? ... I don't know. There's a lot of talk about them.

Anyhow, X had announced it would be April – nothing happened!

It came a few days ago, I started to think again of "up there." So I looked, and I thought, "But April is behind us, isn't it?" It was just a few days ago – they may be preparing something, I don't know.

But the Chinese are fairly receptive, in spite of their Communism. They are receptive to an idea of human goodwill, in the sense that they think their political organization is the best from a human point of view, and therefore would like the whole world to adopt it – there is a sincerity in their conviction, they believe it's the best way of life. They are not entirely ill-willed. And they are very intelligent.

At any rate, they had the power to do whatever they liked [last October, at

\textsuperscript{18} See \textit{Agenda III}, November 17, 1962, p. 420.
the defenseless northern borders of India], yet they did nothing.
Prime Minister Winston Churchill's Announcement to the House of Commons on Sir Stafford Cripps' Mission To India

Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Official Record, March 11, 1942.

INDIA (LORD PRIVY SEAL'S MISSION)

THE PRIME MINISTER (MR. CHURCHILL):

The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance has made us wish to rally all the forces of Indian life, to guard their land from the menace of the invader. In August, 1940, a full statement was made about the aims and policy we are pursuing in India. This amounted, in short, to a promise that, as soon as possible after the war, India should attain Dominion status, in full freedom and equality with this country and the other Dominions, under a Constitution to be framed by Indians, by agreement among themselves and acceptable to the main elements in Indian national life. This was, of course, subject to the fulfillment of our obligations for the protection of minorities, including the depressed classes, and of our treaty obligations to the Indian States, and to the settlement of certain lesser matters arising out of our long association with the fortunes of the Indian sub-continent.

However, Sir, in order to clothe these general declarations with precision and to convince all classes, races and creeds in India of our sincere resolve, the War Cabinet have agreed unitedly upon conclusions for present and future action which, if accepted by India as a whole, would avoid the alternative dangers either that the resistance of a powerful minority might impose an indefinite veto upon the wishes of the majority or that a majority decision might be taken which would be resisted to a point destructive of internal harmony and fatal to the setting-up of a new Constitution. We had thought
of setting forth immediately the terms of this attempt, by a constructive
British contribution, to aid India in the realisation of full self-government; we
are, however, apprehensive that to make a public announcement at such a
moment as this might do more harm than good. We must first assure
ourselves that our scheme would win a reasonable and practical measure of
acceptance, and thus promote the concentration of all Indian thought and
energies upon the defence of the native soil. We should ill serve the common
cause if we made a declaration which would be rejected by essential
elements in the Indian world, and which provoked fierce constitutional and
communal disputes at a moment when the enemy is at the gates of India.

Accordingly, we propose to send a member of the War Cabinet to India, to
satisfy himself upon the spot, by personal consultation, that the conclusions
upon which we are agreed, and which we believe represent a just and final
solution, will achieve their purpose. My right hon. and learned Friend the
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House has volunteered to undertake this
task. He carries with him the full confidence of His Majesty's Government,
and he will strive in their name to procure the necessary measure of assent,
not only from the Hindu majority, but also from those great minorities,
amongst which the Moslems are the most numerous and on many grounds
preeminent.

The Lord Privy Seal will, at the same time, consult with the Viceroy and the
Commander-in-Chief upon the military situation, bearing always in mind the
paramount responsibility of His Majesty's Government by every means in
their power to shield the peoples of India from the perils which now beset
them. We must remember that India has a great part to play in the world's
struggle for freedom and that her helping hand must be extended in loyal
comradeship to the valiant Chinese people, who have fought alone so long.
We must remember also that India is one of the bases from which the
strongest counter-blows must be struck at the advance of tyranny and aggression.

My right hon. Friend will set out as soon as convenient and suitable arrangements can be made. I am sure he will command in his task the heartfelt good wishes of all parts of the House and that, meanwhile, no word will be spoken or Debates be held, here or in India, which would add to the burden he has assumed in his mission, or lessen the prospects of a good result. During my right hon. and learned Friend's absence from this House, his duties as Leader will be discharged by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.
The conclusions of the British War Cabinet as set out below are those which Sir Stafford Cripps has taken with him for discussion with the Indian Leaders and the question as to whether they will be implemented will depend upon the outcome of these discussions which are now taking place.

His Majesty's Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfillment of the promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.

His Majesty's Government therefore make the following declaration:-

(a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.

(b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body.
(c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the Constitution so framed subject only to:-

(i) the right of any Province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

With such non-acceding Provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new Constitution, giving them the same full status as the Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

(ii) the signing of a Treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This Treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities; but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in the future its relationship to the other Member States of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its Treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation.

(d) the constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities:-

Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral
college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of the representatives of British India as a whole, and with the same powers as the British Indian members.

(e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new Constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.
I've always been a firm friend of India, and I've done my best in the past to work for the freedom of India. When I joined the British War Cabinet and found the British government anxious and willing to put forward a proposal for Indian self-government, I volunteered to travel the twenty thousand miles to India and back, to put the case directly to the Indian political leaders on behalf of the British government and people. We offered to the Indian people complete liberty, the moment the war was over, to devise and set up their own form of government. We suggested the broad outlines of how they should proceed, but there was no rigidity in those suggestions. It was left open to the various religions and races to agree upon some other method. But, to my regret, they neither accepted nor put forward any agreed alternative.

It was not these future arrangements, however, but the immediate situation which caused the Congress Party in India to reject the proposals. We offered the representative Indian political leaders immediate office in the Viceroy’s executive council—a body of Ministers like those who advise your President. Mr. Gandhi has demanded that we should walk out of India, leaving the country filled with deep-rooted religious division and without any constitutional form of government or organized administration. No responsible government could take such a step, least of all in the midst of war.
The Moslems, of whom there are at least 80 million, are deeply opposed to Congress Party domination, as are also the tens of millions of depressed classes. To have agreed to the Congress Party's or Mr. Gandhi's demands would have meant inevitable chaos and disorder. This is not merely my assertion. It has been stated by Mr. Gandhi himself. Quite recently he has said: "Anarchy is the only way. Someone asked me if there would be anarchy after British rule. Yes, it will be there. But I tell the British to give us chaos."

India is now an essential and vital part of the world front against the Axis powers. There are British, American and Chinese forces, as well as Indians, fighting side by side to defend India against Japan. If the obligations of the British government to their American and Chinese allies are to be observed, we must insure that India remains a safe base in and from which to operate against the Japanese enemy. We cannot allow conditions to be created by any political party or leader in India which will jeopardize the safety of the United Nations' army and air forces or open the door to the advance of our enemies into this new and dangerous theatre of war. That is an obligation, not only to the British and American forces in India; it is our obligation to the Indian peoples. That's why your country and my country find themselves both intimately concerned with the condition of India at this moment. Your sons, as well as our sons, are helping to defend India and to wage war against the Japanese. Your policy, as well as our policy, is to defend India.

But Mr. Gandhi and the Congress Party have other views. Mr. Gandhi, I have always regarded with respect, as a great nationalist and religious leader, but I'm bound to say that in the present circumstances he is not showing himself to be practical or realistic. Certainly the action which he is now threatening—mass civil disobedience by his followers—is calculated to endanger both your war effort and our own and to bring the greatest aid and comfort to our
common enemies. Mr. Gandhi's views are not always easy to follow or very consistent. Let me read you two of his recent statements:

"We do not want these Allied troops for our defense or protection. If luck favors us, the Japanese may see no reason to hold the country after the Allies are withdrawn." China would hardly appreciate that. Again Mr. Gandhi has said: "American aid amounts in the end to American influence, if not to American rule. Add it to the British. If the British left India to her fate, probably the Japanese would not leave India alone." These are solemn words. What do they amount to? Mr. Gandhi is not prepared to wait. He would rather jeopardize the freedom and the whole cause of the United Nations. He threatened the extremes of pressure in this most difficult hour to win political power for his own Party. There is not the slightest doubt that other large and powerful political parties in India are opposed to Mr. Gandhi's demands. I regret profoundly that he has adopted this attitude and I am sure that the Indian people as a whole do not support it. He may gain a measure of support from mass disobedience, but for the sake of India, as well as for the cause of the United Nations, it will be our duty to insist upon keeping India as a safe, orderly base for our joint operations against the Japanese. Whatever steps are necessary to that end, we must take them fearlessly.

Once victory is gained, India has been offered complete freedom to provide in whatever way she chooses for her own self-government. But that victory must first be gained. We cannot allow the actions of a visionary, however distinguished in his fight for freedom in the past, to thwart the United Nations' drive for victory in the East. The issues are too grave and too great for the whole world. American, Chinese, Indian, and British soldiers must not be sacrificed in their gallant struggle for the liberty of the world by political
party maneuvering in India or in any other country. It is the interest of India that is at stake, as well as that of China, Britain and the United States.

I am sure that we in this country can rely on you to give us your understanding, your help and your support in doing whatever is necessary to maintain intact the front of the United Nations in India and to reopen the lifeline of our gallant allies, the Chinese.
Sir Stafford Cripps Statement on India

London, August 5, 1942


Many hard comments have been made on my efforts in India from the side of the Congress party, yet I feel content in the deep conviction that the offer I traveled 22,000 miles to discuss with Indian leaders was a real contribution to a solution of our differences.

Concerning the attitude of the British Government there can be no doubt the Secretary of State for India made a statement last week which makes it plain that "His Majesty's Government stand firmly by the broad intentions of their offer in the draft declaration" which I took with me to India, and that they "reiterate their resolve to give the fullest opportunity for attainment by India of complete self-government."

It is, therefore, plain beyond doubt that Indian self-government is assured as soon as hostilities are over and it becomes possible to re-plan life in India upon a new basis. It is of no avail for protagonists of sectional interests in India to deny these simple facts. A promise has been made and that promise will be carried out.

Is it reasonable then for people of India, while hostilities are continuing, to demand some complete and fundamental constitutional change? Is it practical in the middle of a hard-fought war in which the United States, China and Britain are exerting all their strength to protect the Eastern world from domination by Japan?

Gandhi has asked that the British Government should walk out of India and leave the Indian people to settle differences among themselves, even if it
means chaos and confusion. What would this chaos and confusion actually mean? All government which is based on the existing constitution would immediately cease. There would be no Viceroy, no executive council, no legislative assembly and no civil service with any legal authority.

The Governors of the provinces would cease to function; so would all the provincial governments and legislatures. There would be no authority to collect revenue and no money to pay for any government service. The police would cease to have any authority, courts of justice would no longer function, and there would be no laws and no order. The evil-minded could pillage the land, and disorder and crime could run riot.

In this chaos Gandhi proposes to set up a provisional government if he can, but as there would then be no electoral machinery and no law as to representation, it could at best be no more than a government nominated by themselves and such other leaders of Indian opinion as might be willing to work with him. Others might work against him and defy his provisional government.

Chaos in India at this moment would not affect India only. It would affect vitally the whole war against the Axis powers. Gandhi has more recently recognized the need for continuance of British, American and Chinese efforts in India and has suggested that these troops might remain by agreement with some new Indian Government.

But the difficulty of the situation does not lie in whether an agreement can be come to with an Indian Government, but whether in conditions of chaos and complete lack of law and order an Indian Government can establish itself, pass all the necessary laws, lay down a completely new Constitution, and get the agreement of all sections of Indian opinion so as to avoid an immediate civil war.
It was because of these difficulties, inherent in an attempt to change over control of a country so vast as India, that we have recognized that while the war lasts a complete change-over to an entirely new Constitution is impossible.

Apart altogether from our own vital interests, we cannot and must not desert those other nations who have already gone through so much tragedy and suffering to defeat the evil designs of the Axis powers. We have pledged ourselves, and of this the United Nations of the world are witness, to give the fullest opportunity for attainment of self-government by India as soon as hostilities are over. I repeat that that is beyond doubt.

I cannot believe that it is the desire of the Indian people—and I know that it is not the desire of many of them—to use this time of difficulty for the United Nations in order to extract compliance with the views of one section of opinion, however large and important.

Violent statements and threats cannot provide a solution to the problem. They can only exacerbate feeling and make a clash of forces inevitable. Reasoned arguments and suggestions which make allowance for the full difficulties of the state of war that exists may help, and will always be listened to with respect and sympathy.

Mr. Gandhi tells us in a recent issue of Harijan that "we know that if India does not become free now hidden discontent will burst forth to welcome the Japanese, should they effect a landing."

My answer to that proposition is that if Mr. Gandhi and his Congress colleagues were to explain to the Indian people that their freedom was assured before all the world as soon as hostilities cease and, further, that, as indubitably is the case, that freedom depends on the success of the struggle
of the United Nations, then there would be no danger whatever of a burst of
welcome to the Japanese.

The danger, if danger there be, arises from the attitude and propaganda of
Mr. Gandhi and his friends.

Remember Mr. Gandhi's saying at some time in recent years that, once given
the certainty of Indian freedom in the future, he cared little how long the
period of transition lasted.

Certainly that has now been given, and the period of transition has been
reduced to "while hostilities last." Is it not, then, unreasonable to demand
suddenly that there should be no period of transition at all, and make that
demand at a moment of peculiar difficulty for the United Nations?

No practical suggestion—by which I mean reasonable and capable of being
carried out at a time of acute war danger—has been put forward since I left
India.

No one will expect the British Government or the Government of India to
give way to threats of violence, disorder and chaos; and, indeed,
representatives of large sections of Indian opinion have expressly warned us
that we must not do so.

We make no threats, but we must assert unequivocally our duty to India, to
the great minority and to the United Nations to preserve law and order until
hostilities cease, and we can then give, as we have promised, the fullest
opportunity for attainment of self-government by the Indian people.

It is not yet too late for the Indian people to decide on rapid, ordered
progress. I can assure them that the British people are as determined upon
self-government for India as they are themselves. We ask the great masses
of India to be patient a short time longer, while the cause of freedom is being fought out, not because we want to delay, but because the hard facts of war make a complete change impossible at the moment.

I sincerely hope we shall all of us face these difficult questions with calmness, sincerity and mutual trust, because I am convinced that if both peoples so exercise their will to solve our problems there need be no violence.

India has indeed a great and free future before her, in which she can make her special contribution to the well-being of mankind. The first and indispensable part of that contribution is to work with the United Nations for the defeat of fascism and of brutal aggression.
The course of events in India has been improving and is, on the whole, reassuring. The broad principles of the declaration made by His Majesty's Government which formed the basis of the Mission of the Lord Privy Seal to India, must be taken as representing the settled policy of the British Crown and Parliament. These principles stand in their full scope and integrity. No one can add anything to them, and no one can take anything away. The good offices of the Lord Privy Seal were rejected by the Indian Congress Party.

MR. S. O. DAVIES: And by every party.

THE PRIME MINISTER: This, however, does not end the matter. The Indian Congress Party does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organisation built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests. Outside that party and fundamentally opposed to it are the 90,000,000 Moslems in British India-

MR. S. O. DAVIES: Nonsense.

THE PRIME MINISTER: -who have their rights of self-expression; the 50,000,000 Depressed Classes, or the Untouchables as they are called because they are supposed to defile their Hindu co-religionists by their presence or by their shadow; and the 95,000,000 subjects of the Princes of
India with whom we are bound by treaties; in all 235,000,000 in these three large groupings alone, out of about 390,000,000 in all India. This takes no account of large elements among the Hindus, Sikhs and Christians in British India who deplore the present policy of the Congress Party. It is necessary that these main facts should not be overlooked here or abroad, because no comprehension of the Indian problem or of the relations between Britain and India is possible without the recognition of these basic data.

The Congress Party has now abandoned in many respects the policy of non-violence which Mr. Gandhi has so long inculcated in theory, and has come into the open as a revolutionary movement designed to paralyse the communications by rail and telegraph and generally to promote disorder, the looting of shops and sporadic attacks upon the Indian police, accompanied from time to time by revolting atrocities—the whole having the intention or at any rate the effect of hampering the defence of India against the Japanese invader who stands on the frontiers of Assam and also upon the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal. It may well be that these activities by the Congress Party have been aided by Japanese fifth-column work on a widely extended scale and with special direction to strategic points. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the communications of the Indian forces defending Bengal on the Assam frontier have been specially attacked.

In these circumstances the Viceroy and Government of India, with the unanimous support of the Viceroy's Council, the great majority of which are Indians, patriotic and wise men, have felt it necessary to proclaim and suppress the central and Provincial organs of this association which has become committed to hostile and criminal courses. Mr. Gandhi and other principal leaders have been interned under conditions of the highest comfort and consideration, and will be kept out of harm's way till the troubles subside.
It is fortunate, indeed, that the Congress Party has no influence whatever with the martial races, on whom the defence of India apart from British Forces largely depends. Many of these races are divided by unbridgeable religious gulfs from the Hindu Congress, and would never consent to be ruled by them. Nor shall they ever be against their will so subjugated. There is no compulsory service in India, but upwards of a million Indians have volunteered to serve the cause of the United Nations in this world struggle. The bravery of the Indian troops has been distinguished in many theatres of war, and it is satisfactory to note that in these last two months when the Congress has been measuring its strength against the Government of India, more than 140,000 new volunteers for the Army have come forward in loyal allegiance to the King-Emperor, thus surpassing all records in order to defend their native land. So far as matters have gone up to the present, they have revealed the impotence of the Congress Party either to seduce or even sway the Indian Army, to draw from their duty the enormous body of Indian officials, or still less to stir the vast Indian masses.

India is a continent, almost as large as and actually more populous than Europe and divided by racial and above all by religious differences far deeper than any that have separated Europeans. The whole administration of the government of the 390,000,000 who live in India is carried on by Indians, there being under 600 British members of the Indian Civil Service. All the public services are working. In five provinces, including two of the greatest and comprising 110,000,000 people, provincial ministers responsible to their Legislatures stand at their posts. In many places, both in town and country, the population has rallied to the support of the civil power. The Congress conspiracy against the communications is breaking down. Acts of pillage and arson are being repressed and punished with incredibly small loss of life. Less than 500 persons have been killed over this mighty area of territory and population and it has only been necessary to move a few brigades of British
troops here and there in support of the civil power. In most cases the rioters have been successfully dealt with by the Indian police. I am sure the House would wish me to pay a tribute to the loyalty and steadfastness of these brave Indian police as well as of the Indian official classes generally whose behaviour has been deserving of the highest praise.

To sum up, the outstanding fact which has so far emerged from the violent action of the Congress Party has been their non-representative character and their powerlessness to throw into confusion the normal peaceful life of India. It is the intention of His Majesty's Government to give all necessary support to the Viceroy and his Executive in the firm but tempered measures by which they are protecting the life of the Indian community and leaving the British and Indian Armies free to defend the soil of India against the Japanese.

I may add that large reinforcements have reached India and that the numbers of white soldiers now in that country, though very small compared with its size and population, are larger than at any time in the British connection. I, therefore, feel entitled to report to the House that the situation in India at this moment gives no occasion for undue despondency or alarm.
On the Wavell Plan\textsuperscript{19}

Message\textsuperscript{20}

Sri Aurobindo Asram  
Pondicherry  
June 15, 1945

We heard the Viceroy’s broadcast yesterday. Sri Aurobindo says the proposals are decent enough and seem to be even better than Cripps’ in certain respects. An Indian will be in charge of foreign affairs and India will have her own representative in foreign countries. This and other circumstances are an approach practically towards Dominion Status. Of course, there are a few features which personally Sri Aurobindo would not advocate, e.g. the apparent foundation of the Ministry on a communal basis instead of a coalition of parties. Still these should not be a reason for the rejection of the proposals. A fair trial should be given and the scheme tested in its actual working out.

\textsuperscript{19} On 14 June 1945, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, offered Indian leaders a new plan intended “to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government”. Sri Aurobindo expressed his approval in two ways. [1] On 15 June 1945, he dictated to his secretary a message that was subsequently released and printed in the \textit{Hindu} and other Indian newspapers under the date 19 June. [2] Also on 15 June, he telegraphed Dr. Syed Mahmood, a member of the Congress Working Committee, who communicated Sri Aurobindo’s views to Gandhi and the rest of the committee.

\textsuperscript{20} This press release was dictated by Sri Aurobindo and issued over the signature of his secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta.—Ed
2- Telegram to Dr. Syed Mahmood\textsuperscript{21}
PROPOSALS BETTER THAN CRIPPS’ OFFER ACCEPTANCE ADVISABLE.

15 June 1945

Sri Aurobindo thinks it unnecessary to volunteer a personal pronouncement, though he would give his views if officially approached for them. His position is known. He has always stood for India’s complete independence which he was the first to advocate publicly and without compromise as the only ideal worthy of a self-respecting nation. In 1910 he authorised the publication of his prediction that after a long period of wars, world-wide upheavals and revolutions beginning after four years, India would achieve her freedom. Lately he has said that freedom was coming soon and nothing could prevent it. He has always foreseen that eventually Britain would approach India for an amicable agreement conceding her freedom. What he had foreseen is now coming to pass and the British Cabinet Mission is the sign. It remains for the nation’s leaders to make a right and full use of the opportunity. In any case, whatever the immediate outcome, the Power that has been working out this event will not be denied, the final result, India’s liberation, is sure.

24.3.1946

\textsuperscript{21} On 15 June 1945, he dictated to his secretary a message that was subsequently released and printed in the \textit{Hindu} and other Indian newspapers under the date 19 June. \textsuperscript{[2]} Also on 15 June, he telegraphed Dr. Syed Mahmood, a member of the Congress Working Committee, who communicated Sri Aurobindo’s views to Gandhi and the rest of the committee.
Letter to Surendra Mohan

Dec. 16, 1946

Dear Surendra Mohan

I have shown your letter to Sri Aurobindo. It raises some serious misgivings.\(^{23}\)

What do you mean by saying that the Congress may have to accept the group system? Do you mean to say that the Moslem League majority on both

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\(^{22}\) On 24 March 1946, three members of the British Cabinet came to India in order to find a solution to the constitutional deadlock brought about by the unwillingness of the Muslim League to work with the Congress and other Indian parties. After surveying the situation, the Cabinet Mission offered a new proposal on 16 May. Its most salient feature was the so-called group system, by which provinces in the Northwest, the Northeast, and the rest of the country would form semi-autonomous groups within the larger Indian union. (The idea was to grant the substance of the League’s demand for Pakistan without partitioning the country.) [1] In March 1946, before all the details of the proposal were known, Sri Aurobindo was asked his initial reaction by the \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika}. He wrote this response on 24 March. Issued in the name of his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta, it was published in the \textit{Patrika} on 26 March and later reprinted in other newspapers. [2] Nine months later, after the details of the group system had come out, Sri Aurobindo was asked for his opinion by Surendra Mohan Ghosh, the President of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, with whom he occasionally held talks about political developments. He dictated this reply to Surendra Mohan’s letter on 16 December 1946.

\(^{23}\) This letter was sent over the signature of Nolini Kanta Gupta. The recipient was Surendramohan Ghosh, a Bengal Congress leader who was then serving as a member of the Constituent Assembly in Delhi. Surendramohan had written to Nolini explaining some of the provisions of the Cabinet Mission proposals. Sri Aurobindo’s dictated reply was written down by his amanuensis, Nirodbaran. In transcribing this, Nolini made some necessary changes to the opening, putting for instance “what do you mean by” where Sri Aurobindo had said “He might be asked what is meant by”.

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sides of India are to be allowed to have their way and dictate the constitution for all the provinces in the two groups and also a general constitution for each of the two groups overriding the autonomy of the provinces? That would mean that the Sikhs, the Frontier Province and Assam are to be thrown to the wolves, offered as an appeasing sacrifice to Jinnah. It would mean the establishment of a divided Pakistan of which the two portions, Eastern and Western, would ultimately and indeed very soon unite and secede from any All-India Union that might be established; for that is the policy of the League.

Will the Sikhs consent to be thus placed under Mussulman domination? They have declared emphatically that they will not, they will follow the Congress only so long as the Congress keeps to its promise not to support any constitution disapproved by the Sikhs. As for Assam, will the Assamese consent to commit suicide? For that is what the grouping means if it is a majority vote that decides in the group. The Hindus of Bengal and Assam joining together in the section of the Assembly will not have a majority. This opens a prospect that the League in this group may dictate a constitution which will mean the end of the Assamese people and of Hinduism in Assam. They may so arrange that the tribes of Assam are constituted into a separate element not participating in the Assam Provincial Assembly but parked off from it. The constituencies of the province could then be so arranged as to give the Mussulmans an automatic majority. Assam could then be flooded with Mahomedan colonies from Bengal and Assam be made safe for Pakistan; after that the obliteration of Hinduism in the province could be carried out either by an immediate and violent or a gradual process once the separation of India into Pakistan and Hindusthan had been effected.

We hope your leaders are alive to the dangers of the situation. I am eagerly awaiting an answer from you.

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